

If you would like any information or advice about  
your child's talking, please contact  
**Bright Start Speech and Language Therapy:**



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# Learning to Talk A Parent's Guide

**2 to 3 years**



All children learn to talk at slightly different speeds.  
The information in this leaflet is only a guide.

This leaflet was produced by Whittington Health  
Speech and Language Therapy Early Years Service

# Learning to Communicate The Third Year

Around 2 years of age children start to join words together. Over the next few years their sentences get longer and they learn the rules of language (grammar).

## 2 to 2 ½ Years

- Your child may understand many instructions with two main words, e.g. “Put Teddy on the bed”
- Your child is beginning to understand and ask questions
- Surprisingly, your child may not yet understand negatives in sentences ( e.g. not, don’t, can’t). He may run when you say “Don’t run!”
- At 2 years old he may use 50 words and is learning new words each day. He may join two or three words, repeat your words, or sound like he’s talking in his own language
- At 2 ½ years he can move his attention between two different activities with your help. He may still find it difficult to play and listen to you at the same time.

## 2 ½ to 3 Years

- Your child may understand three main words in an instruction, e.g. “Give the big book to mummy”
- She may use three or more words together, and is beginning to use small words to join sentences
- Your child may talk about what has happened in the past and about what is going to happen
- As her sentences get longer, her words may still be difficult to understand.

# How Can You Help?

Now that your child is 2, he’s becoming more independent and learns new words to express his ideas and feelings.

## Wait for her to start the talking

During playtime try waiting for your child to start the talking. This is hard to do, but it gives your child more time to talk about her interests and feelings.

## Expand what he says

When your child uses short ‘sentences’, you can show him that you understand and help him learn new words. You can do this by repeating what he says and then adding another word.

E.g. Child: “ Mummy, big dog!”

Parent: “Yes, the big dog’s running”.



## Talk about what she is doing

When your child has chosen what to do in play, talk about what she is doing. Using simple, short sentences will help her to understand and use new words. E.g. “Driving the big train”, “ You’re washing baby’s hair”.