



ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

## Use Your Words Tip Sheet: HAVING FUN WITH WORDS

Research shows that a baby's very early years are critical in brain development, and talking to your child is a great way to support language development and family bonding. In fact, it is one of the most important and best things a parent can do!

**You don't have to be an expert or work hard at doing this.** Just talk about what comes naturally.

Here are some easy conversation starters that will help to keep you talking throughout your day. Remember, even if your baby isn't talking back, he or she is still soaking up and processing what you say.

### 1. IN THE MORNING

- **Infant:** "Let me tell you about what we have planned for today."
- **Toddler:** "Here are the things we have planned to do today. Which of these sound like fun?"
- **Preschooler:** "I will need you to help me do some things today. What do you think we should do first? Which things do you think you can do?"

### 2. WHEN GETTING DRESSED/CHANGING CLOTHES

- **Infant:** "We're going to change your clothes because they're dirty. I think a good choice for your next outfit is ...."
- **Toddler:** "I was thinking we might put this on today, since it's warm out. What do you like about it?"
- **Preschooler:** "Can you pick out two things from your closet that would be good choices today? Which shoes would go with your clothes, do you think?"

### 3. AT MEALTIME

- **Infant:** "Watch me while I make my lunch. I'm having a BLT. First, I have to add the bacon ...."
- **Toddler:** "What kind of food is this? Do you like the taste? How do you think it's made?"
- **Preschooler:** "Tell me where this food comes from. How does it taste?"



For more information about Use Your Words, visit: [WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/DHS/USE-YOUR-WORDS.ASPX](http://WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/DHS/USE-YOUR-WORDS.ASPX)

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services is responsible for providing and administering publicly funded human services to county residents. Visit [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs)

#### 4. WHEN RUNNING ERRANDS OR TRAVELING

- **Infant:** “Today you’re going to ride in the car/bus/stroller. Let me tell you about all the places we are going today.”
- **Toddler:** “We’re going to ride in the car/bus to do our errands. Let’s count the number of red cars you see on the way.”
- **Preschooler:** “We’re going to do errands. What do you think we should do first? Do you have a favorite errand that we do?”

#### 5. DURING BATH TIME

- **Infant:** “We’re having a bath. This is water. This is soap. This is a washcloth.”
- **Toddler:** “Why do we take baths? What are your favorite toys to play with in water?”
- **Preschooler:** “What other things can you do in water? Where does the water come from? What kind of animals live in water?”

#### 6. DURING PLAYTIME

- **Infant:** “Let’s play a game. This one is called Pat-a-Cake/Peek-a-Boo.”
- **Toddler:** “What toy would you like to play with? Why is it fun? What does it look like?”
- **Preschooler:** “Let’s play pretend. What animal/person/thing would you like to be?”

#### 7. WHEN TAKING A WALK OUTSIDE

- **Infant:** “The sky is blue. Clouds can be white or gray. Trees can be many colors.”
- **Toddler:** “Let’s count the things we see. How many stop signs have we passed?”
- **Preschooler:** “Why is it important to walk on sidewalks? What sounds do we hear?”

#### 8. ON SNOWY OR RAINY DAYS

- **Infant:** “Look at the snow/rain. It is landing on the ground. It’s giving the trees and the grass a drink!”
- **Toddler:** “What are some things we should take with us outdoors today? What do you think we might see? A rain puddle? A snowplow?”
- **Preschooler:** “Let’s find five fun things to do inside today. My favorite things to do inside are ... what are yours?”

#### 9. WHEN READING

- **Infant:** “Let’s read this book. This book is about ....”
- **Toddler:** “What do you see on this page? What do you think is going to happen in this story?”
- **Preschooler:** “Would you like to make up a story? What would you call it?”

Content for the Use Your Words campaign is sourced from the following:  
The University of Kansas – *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*.  
Brookes Publishing: Boston MA. Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, authors  
ZERO TO THREE  
The National Literacy Trust (UK)