



## Constant Conversation



Conversations with children can be cute, curious, challenging, confusing, or complex, but the best conversations are constant! Conversations are an exchange of ideas or feelings. Words, gestures, eye contact, turn taking and actions are part of conversations. Whether the child is three months or three years, a conversation with him can encourage communication and build cognition (thinking skills).

Children with hearing loss benefit from constant conversation. Families can converse during dressing, eating, playing and household chores. Conversations can be short or long. Chats can be child or adult-initiated. When the focus is on his experiences, interests, thoughts or feelings, the child will be more interested. Activities and routines become shared language learning experiences through constant conversations!

Communicating with babies includes cuddling and closeness that enhance connections. When a baby is held, he may smile and the adult smiles back. As the baby coos the adult can coo in reply. Play short social games such as peek-a-boo. Babies love the fun of taking turns and repeating enjoyable actions such as hiding and being seen again. Turn-taking is the basis for all conversational skills.

Communicating with toddlers includes brief exchanges and descriptions of actions. When a toddler points to an object or says a word, the adult responds by describing what the toddler wants or is feeling. Use finger plays for rhymes and songs. Toddlers have fun with words and actions to favorites such as “Itsy Bitsy Spider. When a toddler initiates, imitates or joins in song it is conversation.

Communicating with preschoolers may include explanations and questions. When a preschooler tells an adult about an experience, the adult can respond by affirming his ideas and adding to his information. Read books together and talk about the pictures or what might happen next. Let the child re-tell favorite pages or stories. Relate the stories to his experiences and have conversations!

### Conversation Starters:

- Respond to the baby’s movements, vocalizations and expressions.
- Talk about what the baby looks at, reaches for, or pushes away.
- Encourage the toddler to express what he wants in routines and play.
- Talk about the toddler’s interests and elaborate on what he says.
- Include the preschooler in discussions of family experiences and plans.
- Talk during play with the preschooler. Pause so he can ask, answer or initiate.

A baby uses actions to converse. A toddler begins using simple words and phrases. Preschoolers will discover many new words. All these exchanges can become conversations when parents respond to a child’s communication. Through enjoyable, natural, constant conversations a child learns language, attention skills, and social abilities to expand what he knows and says!