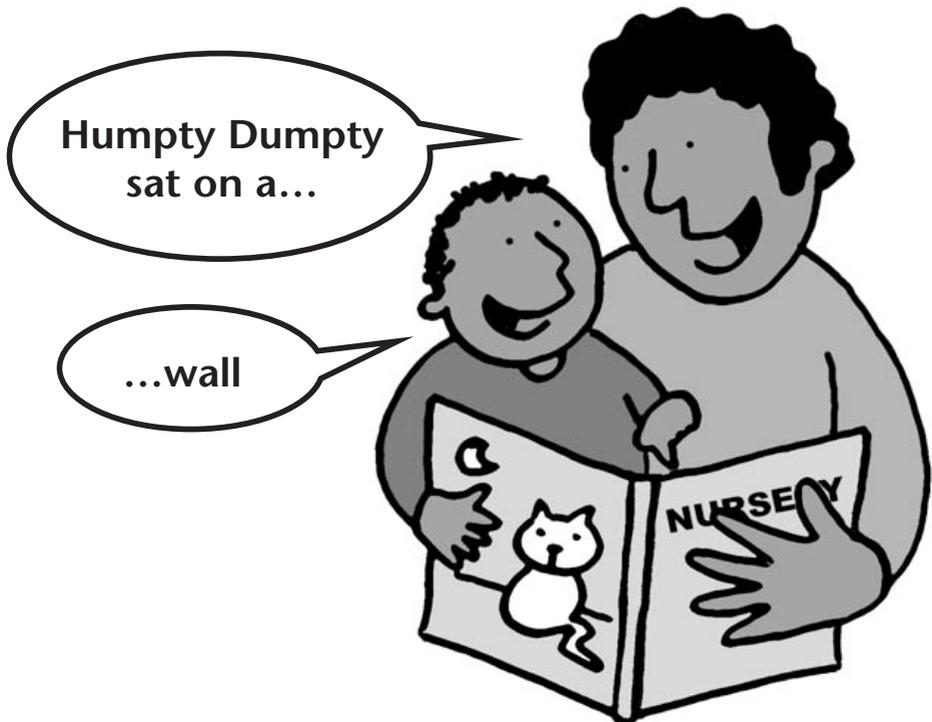


# Talk to your toddler and listen too





# **Introduction**

Your child is now a year old and has been communicating with you since before they were born. This booklet provides tips to help you communicate with your child and will help you get your child ready to learn. If you have any questions about this, please speak to your Health Visitor or GP.

# Help your child to listen

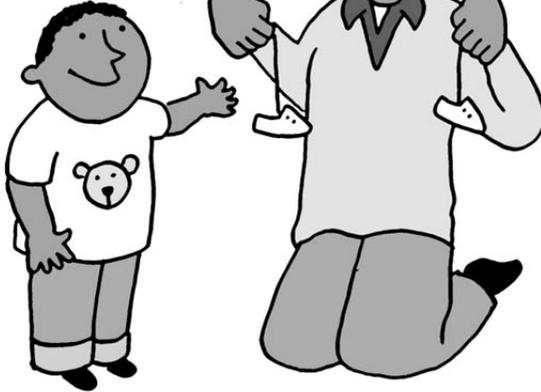
To do this:

- Call their name, touch them or say 'listen'.
- Be where they can see your face.
- If they listen well, say "Good listening!"

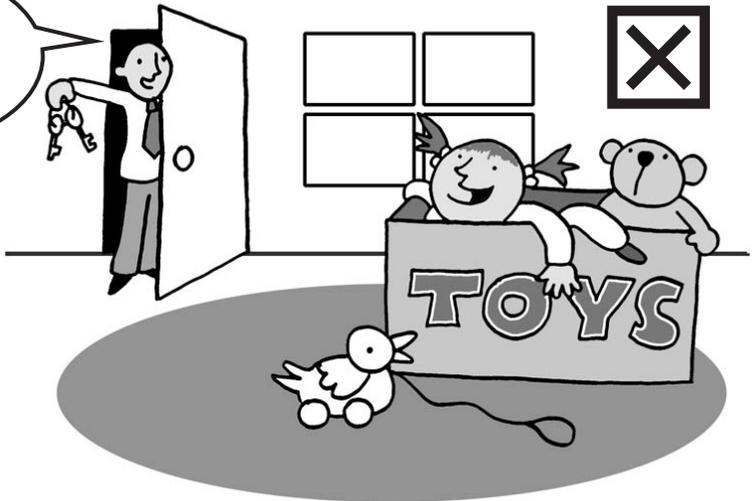
# Try not to

- Talk to them from a long way away. They may not realise you are talking to them.
- Ask them to do something before you have got their attention.

Jordan,  
shoes on



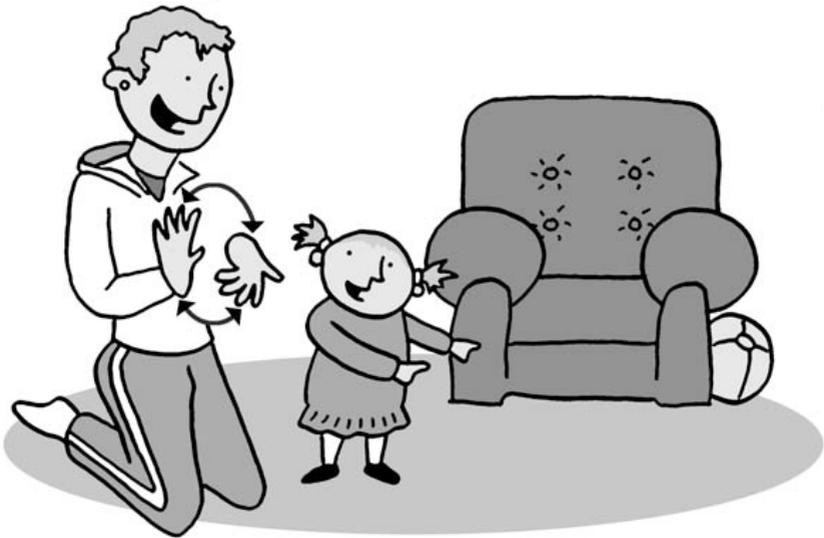
Shoes on, it's  
time to go.  
Hurry up!



# Why use signs and gestures for children who have difficulty understanding?

Signs help children understand you because:

- They give children something to look at as well as listen to when you speak to them.
- Looking can help children listen if they have any language difficulties.
- You can move your hands to where your child can see them.
- Using a sign AND a word gives two clues about what you mean.
- It is easier to guess the meaning of a sign than a word.
- Signing helps you talk more slowly to your child.
- Signing helps you to talk more simply.



## **If a dummy is used, keep it for sleep times only**

If you reduce the use of a dummy or stop it altogether, this will mean:

- Your child will have more chance to practice talking.
- Your child's talking can become clearer.
- It will be better for your child's teeth and ears.



# Get down to talk

When you are face to face it will mean that:

- You can make eye contact.
- You can see what your child is choosing to play with.
- You can also see if your child is enjoying the play.
- You can talk about what you are looking at together.
- You can see if your child points or uses a gesture.
- You can SHARE the play.



# **Speak slowly and simply**

## **Try not to say much**

This means:

- Your child will hear the important words.
- Your child will hear the same words repeated.
- Your child will keep on listening and so have more chance to understand you.



# Comment on what your child is doing

This means that:

- Your child will hear the words that go with the things they are looking at.
- They will be able to make a link between the word and the objects or actions.
- They will feel you are sharing in their play.
- They will hear words to copy if they want.
- They can then take turns at talking.

Teddy is going  
to bed



# **Comment on what your child is doing**

**This helps because:**

- Your child will have a choice about whether to talk or not.
- Your child will hear the words that go with what they are doing or looking at.

# **Try not to ask too many questions**

**This is because:**

- Your child might not know the answer so will say nothing.
- Your child may not feel like answering.



# Copy your child's sounds, words and actions

This means that:

- You are letting your child lead the game.
- You will be taking turns with your child.
- You will be having a “conversation” with your child even if it's without words.
- If you copy your child they are more likely to copy you.



# Give your child the words

This means:

- Your child knows you are trying to understand.
- Your child will hear clear sounds and words.
- You could say it and sign it too.
- Your child can then learn what the words mean and what to say.



# Use short sentences of two or three words

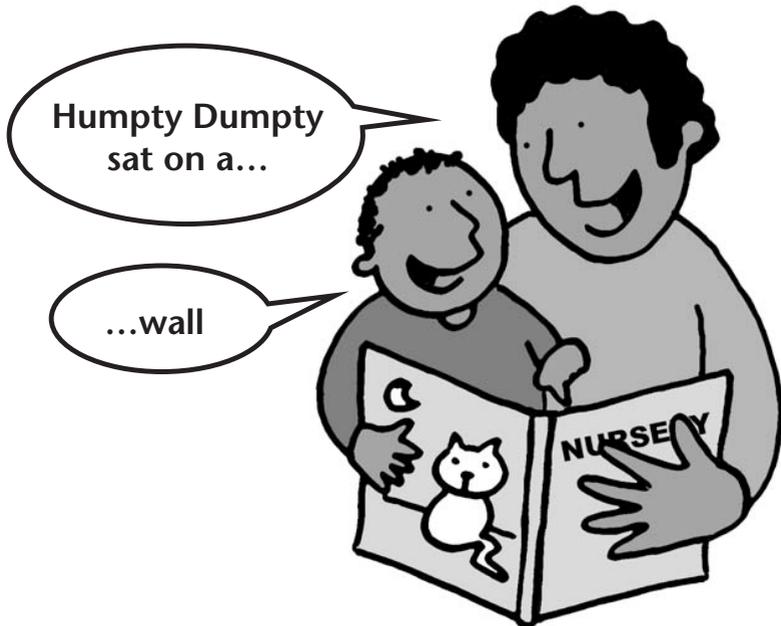
This means:

- Your child is more likely to understand you.
- Your child will be more able to copy you.
- Your child will find it easier to hear the words they know.



## **Use pauses to give your child more time to talk to you**

- Pause so your child can take in what you have said.
- Pause so your child can copy what you have said.
- Pause so your child can answer if he wants to.
- Pause to see if your child will name objects, people or favourite pictures in a book.



# Copy and add to your child's sentences

This means:

- Your child hears the correct way of saying the word.
- Your child feels pleased because you've shown you understand them.
- They hear how to make their own sentence longer without feeling they have got it wrong.
- They hear a longer sentence that they might try to say.
- You are giving them praise this way.



## **Talk about things your child is looking at**

This is because:

- It is best to talk about what your child is doing.
- To learn the right words your child needs to hear you say the words that go with what they are thinking.

## **Avoid talking about what they are not looking at**

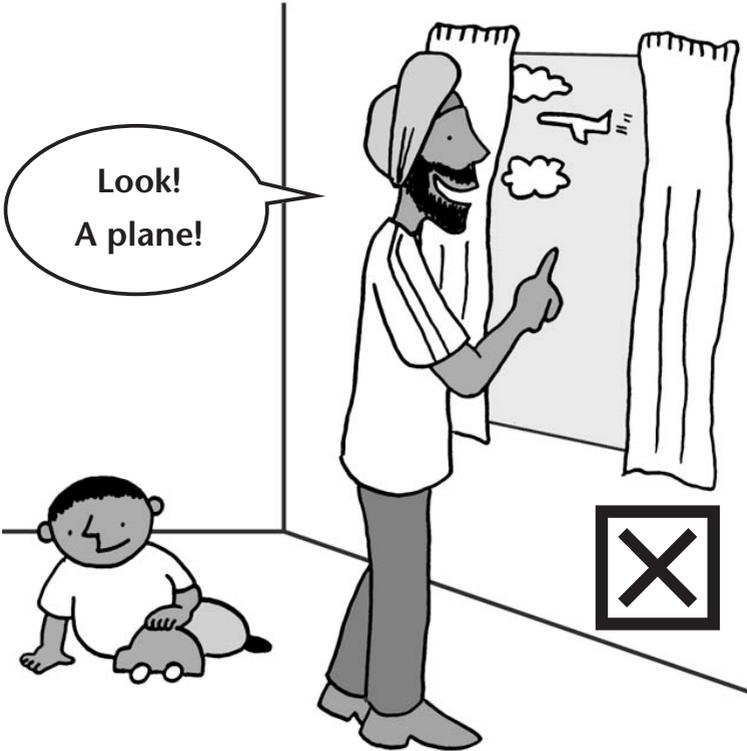
This is because:

- This child will be thinking about the car but may hear you talk about the plane (if they are listening at all)!
- Young children find it hard to change quickly what they are looking at and thinking about.

Your Car



Look!  
A plane!



# Talk about what is happening here and now

This means that:

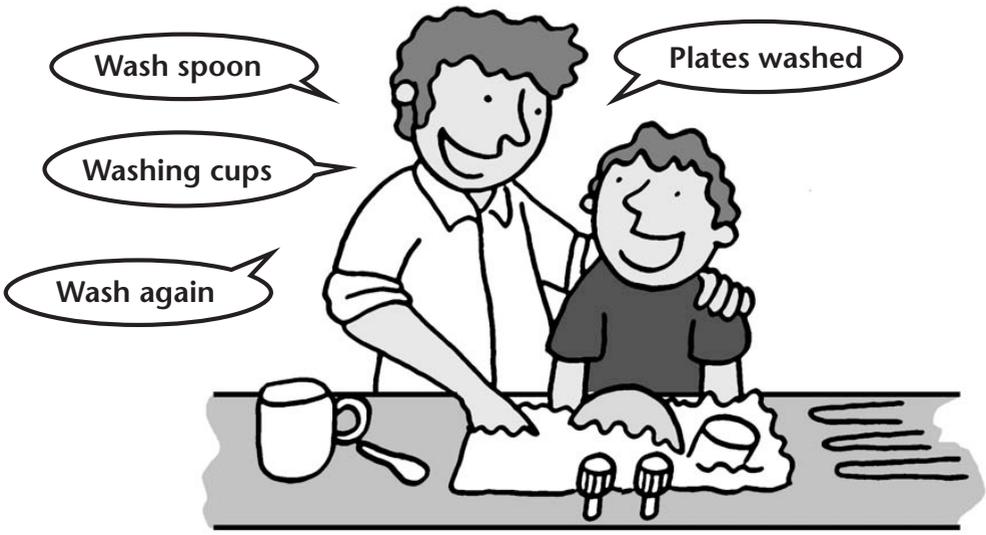
- Your child is more likely to understand you.
- Your child is more likely to join in.
- If you are talking about something they can't see, it helps if you use a picture, photo or object as a clue.



# Say it again and repeat

This means that:

- Your child hears the word enough times to work out which object or action it goes with.
- Your child hears the word in lots of different situations.
- Your child will have a go at saying it, but may need to hear it a hundred times first!



# **Let your child do the talking**

**Try to avoid asking your child to copy you**

This will mean:

- Your child will say words when they have a reason to.



# **When your child gets stuck, give them a choice**

This will help your child because:

- It will give them a choice so they have good reason to talk.
- It will give them the words to copy.

Do you want biscuit or banana?



What do you want?



## **Listen to what your child says, not how they say it**

- Say the words in a grown up way, like he would if he could
- He will then feel you are listening to what he says rather than how he says it.
- He will hear how to say it right.

## **Try not to correct your child**

- This can make your child feel you are not very interested in what he says but only how he says it.
- If this happens too many times he may give up trying to tell you.
- He might also think he has used the wrong word.



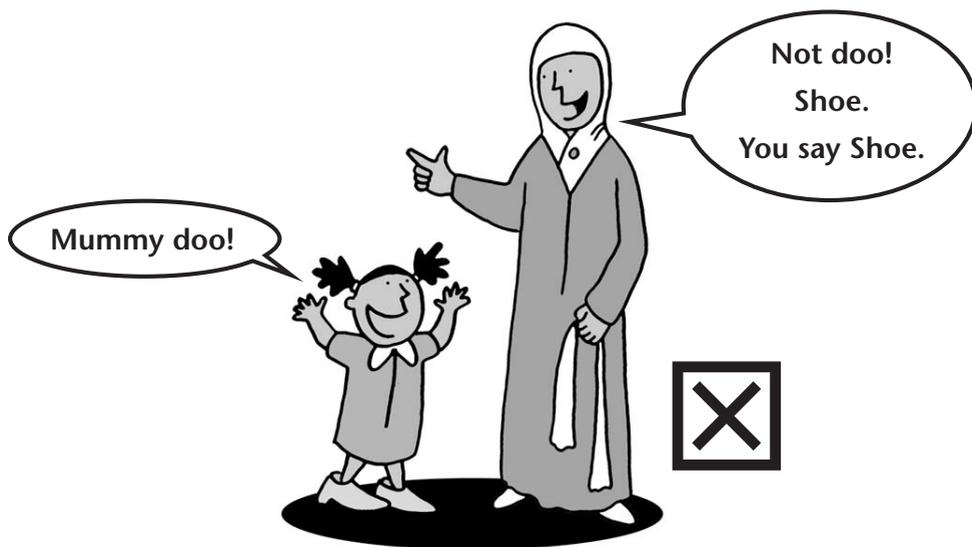
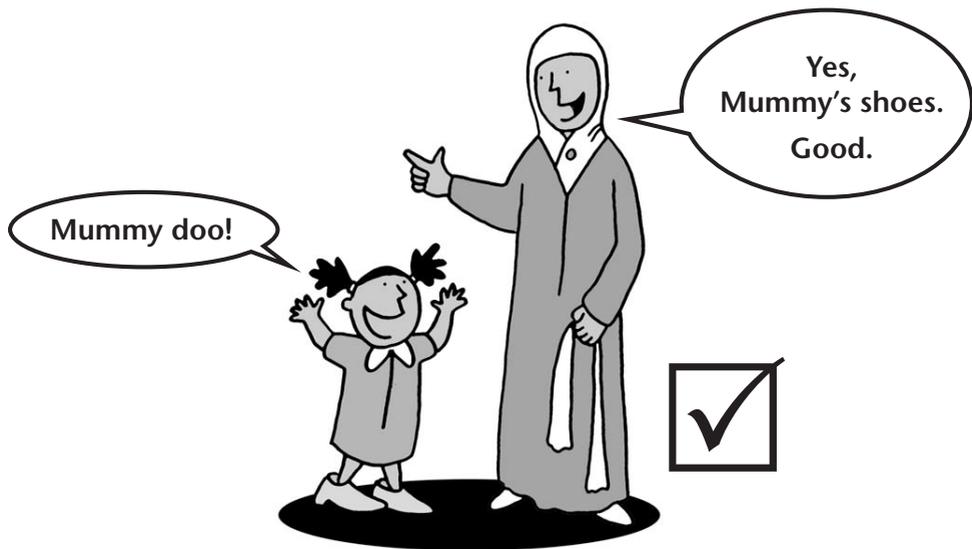
## **When your child says the wrong sound**

Repeat what they have said and stress the correct sound.

## **Don't tell them they are wrong or make them copy you**

This is because:

- They may not be able to say the right sound yet.
- They may not be able to hear that they have not said it right.
- It might put them off trying again.



## **Watch children's TV with your child**

**TV can be good for young children's learning if you:**

- Choose carefully what kind of TV they watch.
- Think about how much they watch.
- Make sure your child has other things to do as well.
- Watch chosen TV programmes with your child.

**This will help because:**

- Your child will enjoy sharing this time with you.
- Your child's looking and listening will be better if you talk about what you see together.
- Your child will understand more if you explain what is happening.
- Your child will hear the words over and over again.
- Your child can learn songs and rhymes with you.
- You can talk about what you saw together.





Further copies available to order from:  
Public Health Resource Directory: [www.phrd.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.phrd.scot.nhs.uk)

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