

Speech and Language Development

Being able to communicate your thoughts, needs, ideas and opinions and to understand others is one of the most important things we learn to do.

Language (words and sentences) is the basis for learning, well before children go to school, during school years, and throughout life. Language comes before a child begins to talk.

Talking, singing and reading to your child from birth (even before birth), enriches their language and prepares them to be successful socially as well as communicators and readers.

To help your baby develop language,

- Imitate your baby's cooing sounds.
- Tell your baby what you are doing when you change the diaper; giving your baby food and even when you are making dinner for the family!
- Let your baby make sounds back to you—your baby will begin to imitate you!

A child's language and use of language grows quickly over the first 2 years. Children need to hear language and have the opportunities to talk to others! The first 3 years are very important years to learn language.

We know children learn language and understand and use language differently as they grow. To learn what children understand and how they use language from birth through 5 years, go to www.beyond-words.org. You also will find communication tips that support your child's communication development.

If you want to know if your child is behind in his/her speech and language development, go to .

Public services are available through the Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres. Locations can be found at www.nshsc.ns.ca.

If you want to locate a Speech-Language Pathologist in private practice (fee for service), visit the Speech and Hearing Association of Nova Scotia www.shans.ca or the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists at www.caslpa.ca.

More websites for information on hearing, speech and language development and disorders:

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association at www.asha.org
- First Words at www.pqhcs.com/firstwords. (also available in French)
- The Hanen Centre® at www.hanen.org
- Toronto Preschool Speech and Language Program at <http://www.tpsls.on.ca/index.htm>. Brochures of speech and language information available in a variety of languages; can be viewed and printed from the website.
- York Region Preschool Speech and Language Program (Ontario) at www.beyond-words.org

Emergent Literacy

The stronger a child's understanding and use of language, the more success he or she will have in learning to read. So, learning to read begins from the first time you talk to your baby.

Talk, sing and read to your baby.

As you look at books with your child,

- Don't read all the words—talk about the pictures, what might happen next, the end of the story.
- As you read together, talk about the similar experience your child had. For example, if the story is about camping, talk about when you and your child went camping or that you will be going camping or the neighbor who went camping. Remembering similar experiences your child had will make the interest in books stronger.
- Have fun when you read...let the child start the story in the middle or at the end of the book.
- Let your child help turn the pages.
- Let your child tell part of the story.

Your child may want to hear the same story over and over. You may get bored, but your child is continuing to learn from the story...and is having fun!

To learn more about emergent literacy and how to help your child's development, visit the following websites:

- Every Child Ready to Ready @ Your Library at <http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/ecrr/resourcesab/braindevelopmentearlyliteracymaterials/forparents/forparents.cfm>. This is a United States site, but lots of good information for parents
- Invest in Kids at <http://www.investinkids.ca/ContentPage.aspx?name=homerents>
- Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers. <http://www.pbs.org/launchingreaders/parenttips.html>
- The South Shore Regional Library at <http://ssrl.library.ns.ca/>

No matter how young or how old, it is never too early or too late to have your child seen by a Speech-Language Pathologist for concerns you may have.