

123

SESAME STREET

Talking is Teaching™

Family Moments: Talking, Reading, and Singing Together

This Kit Includes:

- A Parent & Caregiver Guide
- A Children's Read-Aloud Book





Welcome, parents and caregivers!

Your child may still be tiny, but big things are going on in that little head. Kids learn about the world around them all the time. You can make every moment of these important early years count—and have lots of fun doing it!

Your child's brain starts forming before he's even born. Children learn best when they do things with someone they love—like you! You have the power to shape your child's learning by sharing everyday loving moments together. Babble back and forth. Read a story while cuddling. Sing a lullaby at bedtime. These activities can help your child learn language skills.

Sesame Workshop and **Too Small to Fail** created this guide to help you fill each day with words, stories, songs... and love.

Inside are tips and activities around:

- **talking**—speaking and listening with your child,
 - **reading**—enjoying books and stories together, and
 - **singing**—learning through music and song.
- You will also find **Milestone Cards** to use as your child grows.

You know your little one best. Choose the ideas you want to explore with your child... and let the fun begin!



Brain Food: Between ages 18 and 24 months, most toddlers can say about 50 different words. Soon after, they may say several new words each day!



Talking together

So much brain growth happens through talking and listening.

Your little one is busy learning sounds, words, and phrases. She is also making connections between them and what she sees. Young children naturally explore the world. They touch, feel, see, hear, and taste. To begin rich conversations with your child, draw on her five senses. Here are some ideas:

SPARKING CONVERSATION

● How does it feel?

Touch is often how children experience the world. Let your child feel certain textures. Then help him give each a name ("Your sweater is really soft." "The carpet is fuzzy.").

● Breathe deeply.

When you're taking a walk, point out the smells in your world ("Mmm...this bread from the bakery smells fresh! Let's smell it!").

● Do you see what I see?

Even looking out the window together and pointing at what you see is an opportunity for conversation. (Your child's babbles, coos, and gestures count!)

● It's a matter of taste.

Talk about how things taste in your mouth ("Does that juicy watermelon taste sweet?"). This will help your child to build her vocabulary.

● Listen up!

Sounds are everywhere. When you are out, talk about what you hear ("Do you hear the cars beeping?" "The wind is rattling the branches."). Helping your child tune in to sounds is a way to build listening skills.



A Peek Into Parenting: Sophia is trying different kinds of foods. Each new taste is a surprise! Dad makes eye contact with Sophia. He responds to her coos, babbles, and squeals. He also comments on what's happening ("You really like those pears, don't you? Yummy, yummy in Sophia's tummy!"). Mealtimes might be messy, but Dad is using these moments to help Sophia learn to listen and speak.

Talk About It: Though your child may not be talking yet, she is learning words as you speak to her. At feeding time, have fun with language! Use words to talk about new and familiar foods she tries. And as your child watches you make food, tell her what you are doing.

Tell Me a Story: Tell your child the stories you were told when you were his age. Don't forget favorite stories about your family. (Remember: Grandparents, especially, may be great storytellers.) This will help your child develop his storytelling skills, which are an important part of learning to read. It's also a great way to bond with him, and you can do it anywhere.



Brain Food: Six- to nine-month-old babies will copy adults. They may turn more than one page at a time. By age 1, they are better able to control their hands and can turn single pages.

Reading together

Cuddle up with your child and enter the world of a story. Books are brain boosters. **The more your child is read to from the very start, the more his brain will grow and language will develop.** Here are some tips to help you enjoy sharing a story together.

STORYTIME STRATEGIES

Make connections.

Tie the story to your family's experiences ("Oh, look, the boy in the picture has a balloon. Remember when you and your sister got balloons at the block party?").

Bring the story to life.

Use different voices for each character. Act out scenes with body movements or sound effects. You can simplify the reading in any way that feels right, such as talking more slowly.

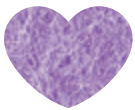
Get to know books.

Help your child explore the difference between the front and back covers of a book. Help her to tell whether a book is upside down. And point out how you read the story from left to right with your finger.

Book break! Visit the library often. Even make a quick stop between errands. Most libraries have books even for the littlest readers. And they might offer a weekly story or singing time for kids.

Read everything around

you. Print is everywhere, not just in books. Together, notice and read signs, cereal boxes, letters that come in the mail, menus, ads on the side of buses, and so on.



A Peek Into Parenting: James is in his favorite place: Mommy's lap! And they've just started reading. Mom asks, "Can you help me turn the pages?"

James excitedly grabs at and turns the pages before Mom has even had a chance to read the words! But that's OK.

The experience is more important than finishing the story. So Mom talks about the pictures on each page. She doesn't worry about reading all the words.

Read About It: Invite your child to get involved each time you read together ("I see a dog on this page. Where's the dog?"). And don't be surprised if your child wants the same book again and again. Reading the same thing many times is great for building language.

Choosing a Book as Your Child Grows:

Babies love sturdy board, cloth, or plastic books. Look for simple rhymes, repeated text, and colorful pictures.

Toddlers might be interested in books about animals, trucks, or food. They also may like to see kids doing familiar things such as playing and going to bed.

Older children like books with simple text that is easy to remember. Counting books, alphabet books, and search-and-find books are also great choices.

Brain Food: As early as zero to three months, a familiar song can help babies feel safe. Songs are as important as a favorite blanket, toy, or stuffed animal.



Singing together

Songs are a great way for your child to learn language and build vocabulary. Singing also helps your child bond with you. Making sounds helps babies and toddlers learn how sounds are put together. These are the building blocks of language and literacy. They also help create a lifelong love of music! Here are some ways you can sing and make music together.

ROCK WHAT YOU'VE GOT

🎵 **Anything can become an instrument.** An empty oatmeal or plastic container makes a great drum. A paper-towel roll can become a horn. Playing with instruments helps children learn more about rhythm and sounds.

🎵 **My kind of music!** Does your child like a certain type of “your” music, such as rock or hip-hop? Turn it up and dance together!

🎵 **Mellow out with music.** The next time your child is cranky, sing him a lullaby or favorite song. He’ll be comforted by the sound of your voice and be exposed to some new words, too.

🎵 **Traffic jam!** Even a frustrating experience such as being stuck in traffic is a chance to build language skills. Encourage your child to repeat “Beep, beep!” after you (try it loud and soft, fast and slow).

🎵 **Move it!** Encourage your child to clap, jump, jiggle, and stomp to music. Your baby can wiggle her arms, legs, hands, and feet (or you can help).

🎵 **Singin’ my favorite song.** Use a well-loved song to help you move from one routine to another. Even diaper-changing is a chance to communicate and develop language. Make eye contact and sing to your baby.



A Peek Into Parenting: Alisia is splashing around during bath time, playing with her toys. Her mom starts chanting in a singsong voice as she washes Alisia (“Here are your ears, here are your knees, here are your toes, here is your nose”) as she points to those body parts. She’s bonding with Alisia and introducing new words. Alisia doesn’t care—or even know—if her mom’s voice is a little off-key. She and Mom are too busy enjoying themselves!

Sing About It: During bath time, both you and your child can further bond, relax, and have fun together. Try chanting or singing a made-up tune as you splash toys gently in the water (“Rubber Duckie—splash! Little boat—splash! Blue fish—splash!”).

Sing a Song: Your child will love to hear his name sung in a familiar song. Don’t worry about how you sound! He will delight in hearing your voice.

(To the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle”)

Twinkle, twinkle, [child’s name]-star,
How we love you as you are.
We all love to play with you,
Mommy, Daddy, Nana, too!
[Substitute any names of loved ones in your child’s life.]
Twinkle, twinkle [child’s name]-star,
How we love you as you are.

Milestone Cards




Each of the cards on the following pages shows literacy milestones from ages 0 to 3. They suggest ways you can help your child's brain develop. (Keep in mind that your child grows at her own pace.)

✂ Cut out the cards and refer to each as your child grows. You might put the cards on your refrigerator or a bulletin board. As your child gets older, you can pass along the cards to other parents who might enjoy them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more ideas and information about how to make the most of talking, reading, and singing with your little one, visit:

 Talking is Teaching at talkingisteaching.org

 Everyday is a Reading and Writing Day at sesamestreet.org/literacy

 CDC's Essentials for Parenting at cdc.gov/parents/essentials



Newborns to 3-month-olds may

- tell one person's voice from another's,
- tell speech from other sounds, and
- begin to remember things.



3- to 6-month-olds may

- copy sounds and movements,
- turn toward a parent or caregiver's voice, and
- make their own sounds.



6- to 9-month-olds may

- copy or say the same sounds over and over, and say **mama** and **dada**,
- know the names of people and things, and
- clap and use their bodies to speak with others.



9- to 12-month-olds may

- communicate by babbling or pointing,
- understand more words and commands, and
- respond to their own name and connect the names of others.

Talking: Talk to your baby a lot. Look her in the eye. Enjoy her responses: a waving arm, a smile, kicking legs, and so on. Engage her with language (“What a strong arm!” “Thanks for that sweet smile!”).

Reading: Your baby may have favorite books already! Create his own library on a shelf or in a stack near his crib. He’ll soon know that those books are his special things.

Singing: Celebrate the new sounds your baby is making. Echo them and even make up a little song or chant using just those sounds. You can babble back and forth!



Talking: Even feeding a newborn is a conversation. Your baby fusses or cries and you offer him milk—the beginning of communication! Babbles and coos are his language as he strengthens his speech muscles and experiments with sound.

Reading: It’s never too early to read to your child. As part of her bedtime routine, read her a book or two. Soon your baby will associate certain stories with falling asleep.

Singing: Use your body as an instrument: Clap, snap, whistle, and snort! Hearing different kinds of sounds helps your child build listening skills. It also engages his attention.



Talking: Fill everyday routines with talk. Build vocabulary by telling your child what you’re doing (“One sock...two socks. Now we can put on your shoes. One shoe...two shoes.”).

Reading: Point out signs around you (“Let’s buy some apples. See the sign? It says ‘apples.’”). This teaches that print has a purpose and words are everywhere, not just in books.

Singing: Babies enjoy wordplay as they form a sense of humor. Use your baby’s name in a rhyming chant or song (“Silly Lily, Silly Lily, Silly Lily.”).



Talking: Lovingly acknowledge your baby’s “nonsense” words, such as **ba ba** or **ma ma**, by repeating them or extending the idea (“Yes, ba, ba. Baa, baa black sheep!” “Mama’s right here! Peek-a-boo!”).

Reading: On your desktop or smartphone, make a “Who Loves Baby?” slide show of photos of family and friends. Talk about each photo (“Who loves Alex? Uncle Jorge loves Alex.”).

Singing: Let your baby make some noise! Give her a wooden spoon and a plastic container. She’ll love making simple rhythms.





12- to 18-month-olds may

- enjoy touching, grabbing, squishing, and tasting just about everything,
- say more names of familiar people or objects, and
- rely more on memory for words or songs.



18- to 24-month-olds may

- be able to act more on their own,
- use simple two- and three-word sentences and start asking questions, and
- learn new words quickly while understanding a lot more than they can say.



2-year-olds may

- use sentences of two to four words,
- point to things or pictures when they are named, and
- repeat your words and phrases.



3-year-olds may

- carry on conversations using two to three sentences,
- complete a sentence or rhyme in a favorite story, and
- know by sight the first letter of their name.

Talking: Your toddler may be very interested in your cell phone. Give her a toy phone to play with and to copy your "conversation" style.

Reading: Read street signs while you drive around or take a neighborhood walk ("Look at the big, red stop sign. S-T-O-P spells stop.").

Singing: Sing the alphabet song with your child until he can sing it by himself. Praise your child for trying and succeeding.



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Talking: Close your eyes and explore with your ears! Say, "Let's listen carefully. What do you hear?" Take turns naming the sounds around you (cars moving, doors closing, people talking).

Reading: Let your child hold anything that can be read: menus in a restaurant, the mail as you bring it from the mailbox. Point to words and read them aloud.

Singing: As you sing your child's favorite songs, substitute new words for familiar ones ("Row, row, row your stroller, gently down the street...").



Talking: Notice sounds around the neighborhood. Talk with your child about who or what might be making them.

Reading: Help your child start to recognize letters in the alphabet. Point them out when you see them ("Look, there's the letter A. A is for apple!").

Singing: Make up songs while you wait in line or run errands. Try putting new words to a familiar song or create a chant ("Waiting, waiting for the bus, come on, bus and pick us up!" or "Going, going to the store to buy carrots. We need more!").



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Talking: Even writing an e-mail can be a conversation starter! Talk to your child about whom she would like to send a message to and what she would say.

Reading: Together, make a storybook of your child's drawings (just staple them together and have your child draw a cover). Then have him "read" you the book.

Singing: If your child is in childcare, she is likely learning new songs there. Have her teach you a song she knows!



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The nonprofit educational organization behind
Sesame Street and so much more.

Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street which reaches 156 million children across more than 150 countries. The Workshop's mission is to use the educational power of media to help children everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. Delivered through a variety of platforms, including television programs, digital experiences, books and community engagement, its research-based programs are tailored to the needs of the communities and countries they serve. For more information, visit us at sesameworkshop.org.

Produced in collaboration with



Too Small to Fail, a joint initiative of Next Generation and the Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation, aims to help parents, communities and businesses take meaningful actions to improve the health and well-being of children ages zero to five, so that more of America's children are prepared to succeed in the 21st century.

Too Small to Fail is focused on closing the "word gap." Studies have found that by age four, children in higher-income families hear approximately 30 million more words than children in low-income families. This disparity in hearing words from parents and caregivers translates directly into a disparity in learning words. And that puts our children born with the fewest advantages even further behind. Among those born in 2001, only 48 percent of poor children started school ready to learn, compared to 75 percent of children from middle-income families.

The "word gap" is a significant but solvable challenge. Too Small to Fail is about parents, caregivers, other concerned individuals, and the private sector coming together to take small, research-based actions with big impacts. Learn more at toosmall.org, and on Twitter @2SmalltoFail.

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