

What a typical child will be doing at 2 to 3 years

This article gives information on the range of skills usually demonstrated by children aged 2 – 3 years. It also gives some ideas for supporting communication development at this age.

Children may now be playing more with other children and sharing things. Often children will be enjoying familiar stories and rhymes and joining in with these.

Children will develop communication skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:

- Listening to simple stories with pictures.
- Understanding longer instructions – for example 'make teddy jump' or 'where's mummy's coat?'
- Understanding simple 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions.
- Using up to 300 words.
- Putting words together to make short sentences – for example 'Daddy cup' or 'want more juice.'
- Asking lots of questions - keen to find out the name of things and learn new words.
- Using a wider range of speech sounds – However, many children will shorten longer words (like banana – 'nana') or have difficulty where lots of sounds happen together in a word – for example spider – 'pider.'
- Children will often have problems saying more difficult sounds like sh, ch, th and r.

At this stage, children will sometimes sound as if they are stammering or stuttering. They are usually trying to share all of their ideas before their language skills are ready! This is perfectly normal – just show you are listening and give children plenty of time.

Here are some simple ideas to encourage children's communication development around this stage:

- Expanding children's sentences can show how words fit together – for example a child says 'dolly hair' you can expand this to 'brush dolly's hair' or 'dolly's hair is brown'.
- Often children enjoy helping – sharing your daily activities provides excellent opportunities for commenting about objects and actions, as well as extending children's vocabulary.
- Use puppets, pictures of characters in a story as well as pictures in a book to help children listen to and enjoy stories. Don't be afraid to tell a story more than once, repetition helps children to understand and remember the words that they hear.
- Give your child the correct example or model for speech sounds and words. This is especially important if they are having problems saying a certain word or sound. If you correct them or make them say it again, you can make them feel anxious or frustrated. Simply repeat what they have said using the right words and sounds, with time they will be able to do it themselves.