



ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

## Use Your Words Tip Sheet: ACTIVITIES FOR YOU AND YOUR LITTLE ONE

Talking to your baby or young child is one of the best ways to improve his or her brain development. But sometimes you need a little help getting a conversation off the ground! If you have an activity to work around, the ideas for what to talk about flow much more easily.

The following ideas can be adjusted so they are appropriate for the age of your child, whether he or she is a baby, toddler, or preschooler. Remember, as long as you are being positive and supportive, there is no wrong way to talk to your child.

### PHOTO FUN TALK

Photos are a great way to remind your little one of who is important to your family, whether it be other family members, friends, or people in your community. When going through the images, play:

- **Family History:** Be sure to use people's names, explain who they are, why they are important to you and your child, and how you know them. You can then ask your child about what he or she sees.
- **I Spy:** Ask your child about details in the images: who is in the photo, where they are, what they are doing, and when the pictures were taken. You can also talk about why you keep the photos and how these images help you remember people who are or have been close to you.
- **Little Photo Shoot:** Plan the shoot with your little one, from beginning to end. Talk about what he or she wants to wear, what favorite things they'd like in the pictures, and the mood they want to convey. (Show me what "excited" looks like!) Once you've taken the photos, show them to your child and discuss them as well. Consider other things you can photograph in the future, like the backyard, a favorite meal, a collection of toys and books, etc.

### SUPER SHOPPER

Taking your baby to the store is an excellent chance to familiarize him or her with the outside world while also helping nurture development. Not only are most stores teeming with merchandise of different shapes, sizes, and colors, but there are usually many other people in the store who may want to talk to your baby, too. Transform chores into great learning and talking activities by playing:

- **Chef's Assistant:** Use trips to the supermarket as a tool for teaching your child about the foods people eat around the world, where foods come from, differences between food types, and what foods you like to eat at home. As you add each item to your cart, let your baby touch it, helping him or her learn the difference



For more information about Use Your Words, visit: [WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/DHS/USE-YOUR-WORDS.ASPX](http://WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/DHS/USE-YOUR-WORDS.ASPX)

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between smooth, rough, warm, and cold surfaces. You can also talk about the different colors, sizes, and shapes of each item, and how you organize a meal.

- **I Need That!** Use trips to other stores—such as those that sell drugstore items, clothing, hardware, electronics, office supplies, and baby items—as opportunities to talk to your baby and familiarize him or her with items that are important in your everyday life. Pick up the item, explain what it does, and why you need it.

## CONVERSATION CALENDAR

If you have a toddler or preschooler, make a calendar for things to talk about or do each day of the week. For example:

- **“Sing Along Sunday”:** Ask each member of the family to name one of their favorite songs—a simple one, preferably—and have the whole family join in for renditions of each.
- **“Twosday”:** Have a challenge of naming things that come in pairs. Shoes. Salt and pepper. Earrings. EARS!
- **“Thankful Thursday”:** At some point in the day, talk with your child about what you are thankful for and why. It doesn’t have to be super “deep”—you can be thankful that your bagel was really good at breakfast or that it didn’t rain that day. Encourage them to name things that they are grateful for, and make it different each week.

## SPEAKING SPORTS

In Allegheny County, we are fortunate to have many opportunities to watch or, even better, participate in sports. All offer a chance to talk to your baby or toddler. Consider exploring:

- **Tools of the Game:** If you have sports equipment around the house, you can ask your child what each item looks like, feels like, and/or sounds like: “Look at this basketball! It’s so big, isn’t it? Here, feel how bumpy it is!” You can explain how each item is used and made, and even give a demonstration, such as tossing a ball in the air or swatting a racquet. Watch to see what grabs your baby’s attention. Even if he or she doesn’t fully grasp what you are talking about yet, your child will soak in your words.
- **Little Athletes:** Take your baby or small child to a park and talk about the children or adults playing soccer, for example. Once again, babies only need to hear you talking: “Oh, yay! That boy scored!” With toddlers, play chase in the park, or beanbag toss in the backyard. Talk directly to them as you play: “How can you run so fast?!” or “Hooray! You got the beanbag in the hole!”



## WHAT ARE SOME ACTIVITIES THAT FIT YOUR LIFE?

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**Content for the Use Your Words campaign is sourced from the following:**  
The University of Kansas – *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*.  
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ZERO TO THREE  
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