

I Speak Up



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I love to **talk** with people!



I use words to tell how I **feel**.



Activities That Encourage Social Language

Young children need love, nurturing, and a sense of belonging and connection. Spoken language skills are vital for self-expression, having needs met, conversation skills, and problem-solving. Speech is also integral to developing friendships and caring relationships and getting along in our world.

The book *I Speak Up* focuses on *when* children can speak up to express themselves and communicate with others. In addition, the following simple rules can help them know *how* to speak up when talking to someone. Discuss and role-play these ideas together.

1. **Look** at the person.
2. Speak so that everyone can **hear**.
3. Tell what you **like, think, and need**.
4. Say things that are **true** and **show respect**.

Here are some ideas for encouraging toddlers to speak and communicate socially:

Practice volume. Explain that it's important to talk loud enough for others to hear, but that sometimes it's important to talk quietly or *not* to talk (such as in a library or when someone is sleeping nearby). Play a game to practice the volume needed in specific settings. Collect pictures of settings and glue each to an index card. (Examples include playground, library, restaurant, circle time, mealtime, place of worship, grocery store.) When a card is drawn, role-play a conversation together using the volume level required for the setting.

Take time to play together. Teach needed vocabulary. Then model conversation in your play and prompt children to respond. For older children, follow their lead and ask them what they are playing with to bring out conversation. Play games in the car or on the bus, such as naming objects you see or looking for vehicles of a certain color. Role-play conversation with puppets, dolls, and toy characters that represent movie and story characters, family, friends, and community helpers.



Sing songs together. Do this at times such as bedtime, playtime, circle time, while cleaning up, and in the car. Children love music and are often able to learn and retain words set to rhythm. Fingerplays are a fun variation.

Encourage peer play. Playdates, interactions at preschool, and visits to parks, the library, or other places children may be together all offer opportunities for peer play. Model and prompt conversations and problem-solving. Initially, give opportunities to play and talk with another child one-on-one. Later, you can help children navigate small-group settings.

Read together. If children are old enough, ask them to name things on a page or to tell you what is happening in a story. As you read, you might leave out a word occasionally for the child to fill in. Or, let children “read” simple books that they know well and can retell.

Tell stories together. Tell bedtime stories. Also encourage children to tell you stories of things that have happened to them or of things they have read, and imagine them together. Ask children to draw pictures and tell you about them. (If you wish, write the child's story on the back.) Collect these in an experience book for retelling.

For additional activities and ideas, go to freespirit.com/2speak; use the password **speakup**.

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