

# Early Learning

## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Reading is vital to a child's ability to learn and be successful in school. And the skills needed to be a good reader—like speaking and vocabulary—start developing from birth. But it doesn't happen automatically. A child's brain is not pre-wired for reading.

So how does a child develop these skills? It starts with language.

**Children's brains are developing most rapidly in their first five years.**

The first few years of a child's life are when the brain grows and develops the most. And scientific research shows that a child's experiences in these early years affect how the brain develops.

When a child hears words and language, the brain develops important connections needed to learn how to read.



Smart Talk is having quality, back-and-forth conversations with your baby or toddler. It's the best thing you can do to set your child up for success in school and in life.

Babies can't talk, but that doesn't mean they're not communicating. Eye contact, facial expressions, crying, smiles, and touch are all ways your baby communicates with you.

Responding to your child with words, conversation, and attention helps build the brain and creates a lasting impact on his or her ability to learn. Everyday moments—like meal time, bath time, getting dressed, diaper changes, and playtime—are great opportunities for Smart Talk.



## WHAT IS SMART TALK?

Smart Talk is easy to do—it's having back-and-forth "conversations" with your baby or toddler that are loving, responsive, and introduce new and unusual words.

You don't need special tools or training. Anyone can do it—anywhere, anytime.

Here's how:



**Describe** what you're doing as you do it—changing diapers, feeding, getting dressed. Say the names of objects or actions.



**Ask questions**—who, what, where, when—and encourage your child to answer with coos, babbles, and eventually words.



Be sure to listen and **respond** to your child, even if that means imitating babble.



**Reading**, singing songs, and telling stories are simple ways to introduce new and unusual words to build vocabulary.



**Repeat** words and short, simple sentences over and over. Echo what your child says and shows interest in.

These types of back-and-forth conversations will help your child become a strong reader and succeed in school.



Learn more at:

[ReadOnArizona.org/SmartTalk](http://ReadOnArizona.org/SmartTalk)