

# Words for Time

Use words about time such as *before*, *after*, or *next* when you talk with your child.

Words describing time help her begin to predict when events will happen.



*After your snack,  
it will be time  
for a story.*



## Why this is important

A child this age has no concept of time as it is defined by hours, weeks, and years. She can only relate time to her actions, such as when the blocks are put away, or to a part of her day that is routine, such as lunchtime. Words about time give your child a tool for sequencing events and predicting what will happen next. Understanding time is important for the literacy skill of recognizing the order of events in a story.

## What you do

- Use words that talk about time. *We will eat before we read a story together. After our story it will be time for a bath.* Do not expect your child to understand periods of time. She may recognize what is happening now, a little earlier, or a little later.
- Relate familiar events in her life by using specific language such as *the next time we go to the beach*, instead of *next summer*.
- Use time words throughout the day, such as when you go shopping, make dinner, or visit a friend.

## Another idea

When reading a book together, talk about the order of events. After reading a story several times, ask a question such as *Which pig's house did the wolf visit first?* or *What happened after it began to snow?* Your child may respond with simple words or by finding a picture in the book that answers the question.

### Let's read together!

*A Day With Nellie*  
by Marthe Jocelyn

# Listen and Support

*I'm sorry that big dog scared you.*



When your child tries to tell you what he needs, listen carefully and provide words to expand what he says.

Your added language and show of sympathy help him feel loved and may help him to express himself the next time.

*I think you need a hug.*



## Why this is important

Listening carefully to what your child says and responding to what he needs let him know he deserves attention. When his needs are met with care, he will become more conscious of the needs of others. Through repetition, he may also learn how to be a good listener.

## What you do

- Listen to your child as he begins to express his needs. If necessary, add some words to build on what he says.
- Pay attention to feelings that suggest he has a need that he cannot properly express in words.
- Take his hand and let him guide you when he cannot convey his need with language. Help him use words to express himself. *You did need help with the buggy. I'm glad you came to tell me.*
- Show patience and support as you work to understand his needs.
- Respond to your child's needs with appropriate attention. At times you will act quickly and decisively. At other times you can offer a leisurely, less intense response. Your reaction will help him gauge the importance of his needs.
- Help him think ahead and plan his needs. *What will you need to take with you when you go to Auntie's house?*

## Another idea

When your child does use language to express his needs, you may need to interpret his few words. For example, *book* may mean he wants you to read to him. It could also mean his book is out of reach or he might be looking for a specific book. You can reduce his frustration by actively trying to help meet his need.

### Let's read together!

*The Way I Feel*  
by Janan Cain

# Pair and Sort Pictures

*You found one  
that looks just  
like mine.*

Invite your child to look for a pair in a small group of pictures.

Pairing and sorting helps your child notice similarities and differences.





## Why this is important

Playing with sets of pictures gives your child practice sorting and matching pairs by noticing similar parts of pictures. Looking carefully for similarities and differences in the pictures will help him get ready to recognize letters and numbers by their similar or different shapes.

## What you do

- Cut identical pictures from two copies of the same magazine, catalog, or advertisement. Make the pictures sturdy by taping each one to a piece of cardboard. Show your child two matching pictures.
- Point out details in one picture and encourage him to find those same characteristics in the other picture. *I have a bird with blue feathers. Can you find another bird that looks like mine?*
- Show three pictures, two of them matching. Invite him to find the pair.
- Mix two sets of pictures and encourage him to look for the two matching pairs.
- Help him get started by holding up a picture and asking, *Can you find one that looks just like this?* Give him the cards to play with as he matches them.
- Add another pair to the game after he matches successfully.
- Invite him to sort the pictures any way he chooses. He may stack them in random piles or find a new way of categorizing them.

## Ready to move on?

Hide one picture so the game will end with one odd card. Let him go on a treasure hunt to find the missing picture.

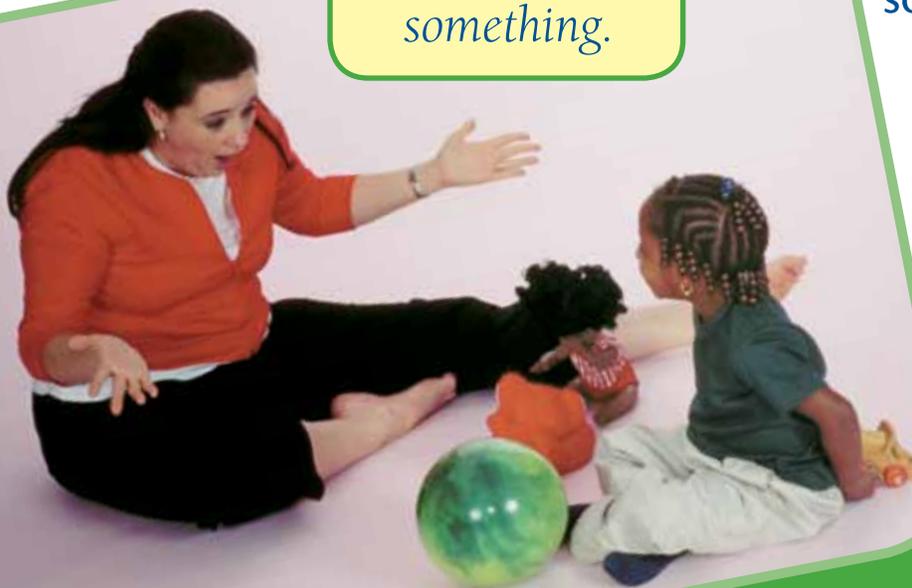
### Let's read together!

*Dinosaurs Dinosaurs*  
by Byron Barton

# What's Gone?

*Let's see if I can remember all the toys.*

*You've hidden something.*



Take away a toy from a group and let your child tell you which one is gone.

Your child will notice things a little more carefully and begin to remember and name something when it is missing.



## Why this is important

In the past, your child may not have had a reason to remember a missing item. Playing this game encourages her to pay attention to her surroundings, and to notice and remember objects. Knowing what is missing is a sign that her memory is developing.

## What you do

- Leave two toys on the table or floor during clean-up time.
- Name each item and talk about them. *I see a green ball and a brown teddy bear on the floor.* Invite your child to name the toys.
- Ask your child to close her eyes. Remove one toy while her eyes are shut.
- Invite her to open her eyes and tell you which toy is missing. If she cannot remember, put the item back and play again.
- Give your child a chance to lead the game by hiding a toy for you to notice.
- Add more items to the game as she becomes skilled at noticing the missing object. She may name the absent object before you prompt her.

## Another idea

Try to play the game throughout the day: You can purposely give her one sock with two shoes or put out her toothbrush and ask her what is missing. Talk about family members who are not present. *I'm here, you're here; who's gone?*

## Let's read together!

*Five Little Ducks*  
by Dan Yaccarino

# Cut and Paste

*You're making nice snips  
with your scissors!*

Show your child how to make small cuts in a strip of paper or around the edge of a larger sheet.

Cutting with scissors provides a great way to have fun while creatively improving eye-hand coordination.





## Why this is important

When a child can use his fingers and wrists well, he can begin to use scissors. Your child will improve his skill in using his fingers and hands through experience with scissors. Children need to know how to use the basic tools of their culture. He will need to know how to use scissors throughout his life, and the fine motor control he develops will be helpful when he begins writing.

## What you do

- Offer your child safe, children's scissors, and sit with him as he uses them.
- Let him hold the scissors in a way that is comfortable for him.
- With another pair, show him how the blades open and shut.
- Help him by holding a thin strip of firm paper and letting him snip it. He may cut all the way across the strip and split it into pieces, or he may cut small snips in the edge.
- Offer positive feedback for his efforts. *You cut a lot of snips in the edge of the paper! You're cutting very carefully.*
- Allow him to try to hold the paper as he cuts, but offer more help if needed.

## Another idea

Demonstrate how to put paste on the scraps of cut paper and stick them to a larger piece of paper. Let him explore the paste with his fingers.

### Let's read together!

*Alphabet House*  
by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace

# Help Him Help Himself

*You're pouring carefully.*

Allow your child to serve himself at meals from bowls or containers that are small or are not full.

Your child will increase his independence as you give him opportunities to do things for himself.

*You're putting three carrots on your plate.*



## Why this is important

By arranging food and utensils so that he can serve himself, you allow your child to make simple choices about the food he adds to his plate. This also allows him to complete a task independently.

## What you do

- Put food on the table in small bowls with large spoons. If you need to use a large bowl, make sure that it is not very full.
- Invite your child to serve his own plate. Show him how to use the serving spoon. Provide a small plastic pitcher and cup so that he can pour his own drink. Be sure to place all items within his reach.
- Guide his choices about which foods to take and how much to add to his plate. Encourage him to eat a smaller amount at first and to take more later if he still wants it. *I see you put three small carrots on your plate. After you eat them, you can have more if you like.*
- Expect a small mess with each attempt. As his skill develops, he will be able to serve his food more neatly.

## Another idea

Letting your child serve himself is not appropriate all the time. The needs of the entire family determine which mealtimes will be most convenient for this learning experience. Let your child help plan meals that will work best for practicing his new skills. Talk about healthy food choices as you plan, prepare, and eat each meal together.

### Let's read together!

*The Carrot Seed*  
by Ruth Krauss

# What Would Happen If...?

Create some silly situations from daily life for your child to figure out.

Your child will understand a little more about the logic of familiar routines and in what order things must happen.

*Do shoes go on first?*



*Noooo, socks.*



## Why this is important

Your child may now be able to use her imagination to understand make-believe situations. By asking her *What would happen if...* questions, she may begin to notice and understand what must happen first in a situation and to think about logical order. Recognizing the necessary order or sequence in which events happen helps with reasoning, problem solving, and understanding the plot in a story.

## What you do

- Create situations that present time or space in an incorrect order and share them with your child. Pretend to make mistakes when doing simple tasks. For example, you can zip her coat before she puts her arm in the sleeve, or hold her glass upside down as you start to tip the milk carton to pour.
- Ask her, *What would happen if... you put on your shoes and then put on your socks?* Or ask, *What if you got in the bath and then we took off your clothes?*
- Give your child time to answer with words or gestures to show the proper order of events.
- Repeat her words in a full sentence. For example, if she says all wet. You might say, *You're right. Your clothes would get all wet!*
- Listen every day for the words *first, then, next, and until.*
- Encourage her when you hear them in her speech.  
*Yes! We do need to get a plate first!*

## Ready to move on?

Encourage your child to make up a few silly situations for you to solve. Challenge her by offering a few wrong answers for her to correct.

### Let's read together!

*Blue Hat, Green Hat*  
by Sandra Boynton

# Run and Walk Together



*Let's run!*

Talk about what is happening as you and your child run fast, walk slowly, gallop like a horse, or shuffle like an elephant.

Your child will learn words at the same time he learns to coordinate his body and control his actions.



## Why this is important

Playing outside provides an opportunity for your child to develop his skills in running and moving. When you talk about each motion, you help him learn the words for his actions. Becoming aware of his body movements is an important first step in forming an intentional plan about how to move and when. Moving quickly from running to walking makes him aware of his body and how to direct it.

## What you do

- Go outside with your child and show him a few special ways of moving.
- Exaggerate your walking steps and say, *Look at me walking*.
- Start to run as you say, *Now I am running*.
- Take your child's hand and repeat the motions with him.
- Use the words *run* and *walk* as you perform the action so that your child will remember the difference between the words.
- Encourage your child to invent some special ways of moving such as running in a circle, galloping like a horse, running in circles, or walking very slowly.
- Listen for the words *run*, *walk*, *fast*, and *slow* in your child's speech. Offer an encouraging response when he uses them. *You're right, Jeremiah. We walk inside and run outside.*

## Another idea

Let your child lead in a game of "Follow the Leader." Encourage him to try new ways of moving such as walking backwards or walking sideways.

### Let's read together!

*Run, Jump, Whiz, Splash*  
by Vera Rosenberry

# Tell Family Stories

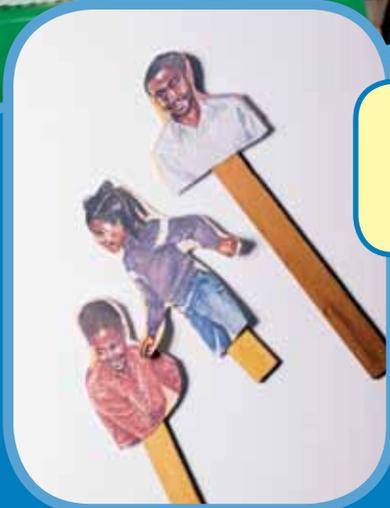
*Mama says, "Let's play Hide-and-Seek." Show me what Latisha does.*

Let your child move stick puppets to act out a family story that she and you tell together.

Telling stories will help your child understand the relationships among people in families.



*We'll pretend these are our family.*





## Why this is important

Handling the puppets helps your child to see her family as a group. Playing with the family puppets may help her to see herself as an important part of a family. She can use her place in the group and her knowledge about her family members to make up stories using familiar information. Having an understanding of how stories are made will later help her better understand the stories she reads.

## What you do

- Collect some pictures of family members and friends to cut up.
- Glue the pictures to popsicle sticks to make puppets.
- Make up a story about the family. Encourage your child to move the puppets around to act out the story.
- Include a few real events along with imaginary events in your story.
- Ask your child questions to involve her in making up part of the story. *What do you think she did next? How did it make you feel?*
- Talk about the adults so that your child can be aware of them as people with feelings and needs.
- Encourage her to tell her own story with the puppets.

## Another idea

Show your child pictures of herself as a baby and answer her questions about her life then. Talk and ask about people in daily events, such as going to the supermarket. *Who sat in the grocery cart? Which friend did we see there? Who put the groceries in the bag?*

### Let's read together!

*On the Night You Were Born*  
by Nancy Tillman

# I See Something That Is...

*I see something red,  
and you can read  
a story from it.*

Give two clues, one about color and one about the object's use, to help your child find an object.

Your child will notice more than one thing about a familiar article.



*You're looking  
carefully...*



*You found it!*



## Why this is important

Considering two features of an object requires your child to do a two-step evaluation to identify it. He must also listen to your directions in order to determine the important information. Weighing both parts of your description will help him come to a conclusion as he will do with many evaluations throughout his life.

## What you do

- Invite your child to play a simple version of *I Spy* with you.
- Give two hints. The first hint should be about the color of the object and the second should be about the object's use. *I spy something blue. You drink from it.*
- Play the game by facing the general direction of the object. Ask your child to touch the object when he sees it.
- Respond positively to his accomplishment. *Yes, that cup is blue. You can drink from it. You listened very carefully!*
- Repeat the clues if your child chooses incorrectly and offer encouragement. *You're right. That is blue. Now can you find something blue that you can drink from?*
- If you need to, make the game easier by placing three items in front of your child and ask for one of the objects using the same two clues.

## Another idea

Keep this game in mind when you are waiting in the doctor's office, visiting relatives, or any place your child needs extra attention. Be sure to choose objects your child can point to, touch, or bring to you.

## Let's read together!

*Hush! A Thai Lullaby*  
by Mingfo Ho