



Coming to a new country affects your whole family. Taking time to connect with, listen to and talk with your child will help them to feel more secure, and it's also a lot of fun! You'll come to understand your child better when you can see the world through their eyes. You'll also be better able to help them through difficult times and laugh together at funny moments. When you take the time to listen to and talk with your child, it helps them feel special and loved.

## Listening to Your Child

Listening involves more than just your ears. Often, it means observing your child carefully so that you can tell early on if they're hungry, tired, frightened, anxious or need attention. When you respond quickly to your child's needs, it builds trust. Children feel good when the important adults in their lives notice and care about their feelings. It can also be a good way to help them identify and name their emotions. For example, if your child is crying when you pick them up, you might say: "You really missed Mommy. I missed you too."

Children also want to listen to you when you listen to them. Find out what your child likes to play with and join in the fun to help build a strong relationship.

## Helping Your Child to Talk

### BABIES

Babies watch your face and listen to your voice tone. When you look at and talk with your baby, your baby feels closer to you. When your baby smiles or makes sounds, this is the beginning of them learning to talk. Older babies will often make the same sounds you make. You can also echo the sounds they make to encourage communication.

At first, your baby cries to let you know they need something. When you give them what they need, they feel cared for. Sometimes it's hard to know what babies need, but your soothing voice and comforting arms will reassure your baby as you try to find out (e.g., "Are you hurt?" or "I'm here.")

Between the ages of nine months and fourteen months, babies generally begin to use single words, but the meaning is bigger than the word. (e.g., “Mama” might mean “Where is mama?” “Pick me up.” or “Is that mama’s?”)

## TODDLERS

Older babies and toddlers (between the ages of 18 months and 2 years) gradually understand more and more language. They are beginning to use two-word sentences (e.g., “My car.” “What ‘dat?”) When you speak in your home language, your child will understand you better.

Toddlers learn through play. Talking in your home language with your toddler as you play together will help them:

- stay interested in their play longer;
- understand and learn to say words;
- become more involved in their play; and
- feel closer to you.

## PRESCHOOLERS

As children talk more, their words become clearer and have deeper meaning. They begin to use language to make friends. The more others speak with children, the more children try to speak. If you speak to your child only when you tell them what to do, your child is less likely to listen to you.

Young children are very curious and you can use this to start conversations. When preschoolers learn to ask “why?” you can talk about the things that interest them and learn together.

## Suggestions for Improving Your Child’s Language

1. Turn off the TV, the radio and cell phones. Reducing noise helps children to listen. Limit television time to one hour per day. Remove distractions when you want to talk with your child.
2. Keep using your home language and encourage your child to answer in your language. (See the Keeping Your Home Language tip sheet for more information.)
3. Help your child right away if they need you. This shows you notice when they need help.
4. Squat down and give them your full attention when your child wants to talk to you.
5. Talk with your child starting when they are a baby.
6. Use simple words and ask simple questions.
7. Model words and short phrases for your child to learn (e.g., “More.” “Help me.”).
8. Talk about what you are doing and what your child is doing.
9. Share your child’s interests as you play together.
10. Add new play ideas to encourage your child to talk. (e.g., Play store by pretending to buy and sell things.)
11. Add to what your child is saying.
12. Make language playful using different gestures, faces, sounds, voices, stories, games or songs.

Visit [cmascanada.ca/cnc/parents](https://cmascanada.ca/cnc/parents) for more multilingual parent information



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