

FAQ: My two year old isn't saying many words



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My two year old isn't saying many words. Does this usually happen? What should I do?

The rate that children learn to talk varies, and all children are different. We do, however, have information about what children typically do at different ages. Usually by the time they are two years old we expect them to use 50 or more single words, start to put short sentences together with 2-3 words, such as 'more juice' or 'bye nanny,' and understand instructions such as 'where is your shoe?' or 'show me your nose'. You can read more information about typical speech and language development on the [Talking Point](#) website and you can also use the [Progress Checker](#) if you would like to check the progress of your child's language development

If you still have concerns you can refer your child for an assessment by a speech and language therapist. Many local speech and language therapy services will take a referral directly from a parent so you shouldn't need to go via your GP or health visitor. Search for the contact of your local service on the internet and give them a call. It is also possible to see a speech and language therapist privately although this comes at a cost. The [ASLTIP website](#) has a database of therapists that you can search to find someone close to you.

In the meantime, there are [some things](#) that we know are really helpful for supporting children's early language skills:

- Follow your child's lead when communicating with them. This might take some pressure off them to speak, particularly if they are finding it hard.
- Try not to ask them to repeat back words to you as they may not be ready to do so. Rather provide a good model, keeping your language simple and pause to see if they will copy you.
- Make the most of everyday routines for language development. Talk about what you are doing during activities like breakfast time, bath time and make these fun, language filled times.

I CAN Help enquiry service www.ican.org.uk/help

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- Give good, simple, language models and if they start to say words extend the things that they say by adding an extra word, so if they say 'car' you add 'yes, big car'.
- Help them to learn words by giving them choices. Offer two things to choose from whilst giving them the word, for example "do you want milk, or juice?" as you hold them up in front of them. Questions like these are better than ones that only require a yes/no response, like "do you want juice?"
- Help develop their listening skills, as these are really important for children when they are learning to talk. So, play lots of games that mean that they have to listen like "ready steady go" games (for example blowing bubbles, listening for the word 'go' before pushing the noisy toy or knocking over the tower of bricks) and go on listening walks around the house or your local area.

I CAN's activity packs [Toddler Talk](#) and [Ready Steady Talk](#) are great resources that are full of communication focused games and activities. If you'd like to talk any of them through with one of our speech and language therapists then do book a call. You can download sample activities from these from the Talking Point website.

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