

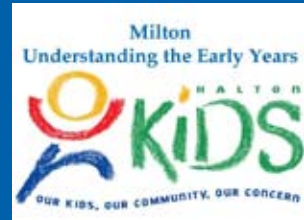
Communication & General Knowledge



What is it? Communication is the ability to clearly communicate one's needs and to understand others (i.e., both talking and listening). General knowledge is an interest in the outside world.*

Why is it important? Children who can communicate well—as both listeners and talkers—and who are curious to learn about the world around them, are children who are prepared to succeed—at school and throughout life.

What can I do to build my child's communication skills and curiosity? Your child is constantly watching and learning from you. This makes you your child's first and best teacher. But you don't need to teach "a lesson"—just look for teachable moments. Start by watching your child. See what he or she is doing, then join in. Children learn by playing, so have fun and be confident that how *you* are *being*—attentive, curious, and a good listener—is what they are learning from you, day after day, and this is the best way to ensure your child enjoys school and is successful throughout life. For fresh, fun ideas on strengthening your child's communication skills and curiosity in the outside world, talk to an early years specialist or try some of the activities listed below.



The activities below are grouped by age:

INFANT

TODDLER

PRESCHOOLER

When holding your baby, respond to what she or he does—if she giggles, you giggle; if he smiles, you smile. Pitch your voice high and low as you make different facial expressions.

Take your child for a walk outdoors. Talk about what you see (e.g., "There's a fire truck, a red fire truck.")


Put a variety of safe and interesting things near your baby (e.g., touch-and-feel books, a child's mirror, a colourful mobile). Describe to your baby what he or she is seeing and touching.

Record the sounds your baby makes and then play them back, while describing the sounds (e.g., "That's your happy sound.")

Play "Name that Thing": Wherever you are, name the items you see around you and your baby.



Give your baby a stroller ride to the library and read one of Barbara Reid's Zoe books (e.g., *Zoe's Rainy Day*). Borrow *Sleepy Bear* by Lydia Dabovich. If there is a baby-parent program that day, then stay, play and have fun.

*This definition is from the Early Development Instrument, which is used to measure the readiness to learn of kindergarten students.





Find time every day to have a conversation with your child, where you give him or her your complete and undivided attention.

While reading your toddler's favourite storybook, change or remove some of the most important words in the story. Do it in a fun and obvious way so that your child will catch on and then provide you with the original story line.



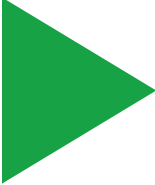

Play "What's your Favourite...?": Take turns asking each other questions, such as "What's your favourite colour?" "What's your favourite animal?" and so on.

Put an item that will make a distinct sound into two matching containers (e.g., two containers with dry rice and two with water). Let your child shake the containers and match the sounds.



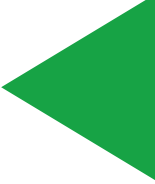
Look at family photo albums with your child and talk about the pictures (e.g., "I wonder what Aunt Sue is drinking?" "Grandpa has no shoes on!").

Take a trip to the library and borrow *In the Tall, Tall Grass* by Denise Fleming or *Butterfly*, *Butterfly* by Petr Horacek. Talk about the pictures and story with your toddler (e.g., "What does that animal do?").



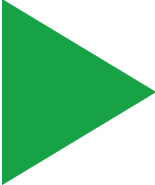

Find time every day to have a conversation with your child, where you give him or her your complete and undivided attention.

Listen to what interests your child and then follow her or his lead. If your child likes animals, go to the library and get some books on animals. Then visit a pet store, the zoo or a farm. Draw pictures and label the different animals.



Play "Name that Emotion": In books and on TV, ask your child to guess what a character is feeling, why they are feeling that, and what they might need.

Take a walk to your local park and have a scavenger hunt, looking for various items in nature (e.g., pine needles, leaves and so on). When you come home, place them all in a scrapbook and label the items you found together.



Ride or stroll to the library and borrow *Bark, George* by Jules Feiffer or *Animal Minis* by Cherie Winner. Have a conversation where you ask each other questions about the book (e.g., "How did that happen?" "What do you think is going to happen next?"). Help your child get a library card.

