

# Supporting Language & Literacy at 18 Months

## The Importance of Asking Questions

At 18 months, your child is saying more and more words every month and will often repeat the last or most important word that you say. They have likely also discovered the power of the word 'no' and will shake their head while they say it.

Asking your child questions teaches them that their ideas, thoughts, feelings, and opinions matter. Giving them the opportunity to share their thoughts teaches them to use their words to express themselves. It gives them an outlet and gives them a voice.

There are two main types of questions: *close-ended* and *open-ended*.

- *Close ended questions* are questions that require 1-2 words to respond, like 'Do you want some yogurt?' or 'What sound does a dog make?'
- *Open-ended questions* allow children to think critically, express their own thoughts, give more than a one-word response, and don't always have a right or wrong answer. For example, 'Why do you think Sammy is sad?' or 'I wonder what the fish is thinking about.'

You can also help your child learn to use their words by encouraging them to use language to ask for things. When they ask for yogurt by pointing at it, respond by saying something like, 'Do you want some yogurt? Can you say yogurt?' They won't get it the first time but will get better every time they practice.

### **Language skills to look for:**

- follows one-step directions without any gestures
- points to what they want
- tries to say three or more words besides 'mama' or 'dada'
- uses some 1-2 word questions, like 'where's kitty?', 'go bye-bye?' or 'what's that?'
- echoes last or most pertinent words spoken by adults
- says and shakes head 'no' meaningfully
- uses their name to refer to themselves

Storytime is a natural time to ask questions. 'What do you think happens next?' or 'Why do you think the frog jumped?' Here's a short list of some books to explore with your 18-month-old:

- *The Pout-Pout Fish* by Deborah Diesen
- *Clifford the Big Red Dog* by Norman Bridwell
- *They All Saw a Cat* by Brendan Wenzel
- *Dim Sum for Everyone* by Grace Lin
- *Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?* illustrated by Jane Manning
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle