

*Especially for practitioners working with toddlers!*

# Hear This!

## Talking and Listening

Toddlers are beginning to experiment with all the different uses of language. One of the most important skills for them to learn is how to listen. In order to become fluent speakers, toddlers need to learn to tell the difference between sounds. They need to understand what others are saying to them.

### What is the practice?

You can give toddlers the opportunity to listen to language in different contexts, and to act on what they hear. Helping them listen for sounds — including rhymes — is an important part of toddlers' developing language. Sounds occur in everyday speech and in songs, nursery rhymes, stories, and poems.

### What does the practice look like?

There are many everyday examples of ways to increase toddlers' listening skills. Play Simon Says and other listening games. Provide toddlers with music and stories on tape or CD. Be sure to reinforce their understanding with prompt feedback.

### How do you do the practice?

Toddlers learn listening best when they are actively engaged in a fun, developmentally appropriate activity geared to their interests.

- Simon Says is a game that has infinite variations for toddlers. It can help them learn body parts, directional words (up, down, over, under, etc.), and descriptive words (fast, slow, etc.). Give your children the chance to take turns being Simon. Encourage them to listen to each other, not just to you.
- Play games that allow toddlers to listen to and produce variations in speech. Include whispering and shouting, talking quickly and slowly, and making high and low voices. Help them practice identifying the differences when they hear them.
- Recite short poems or nursery rhymes with your children while encouraging them to act them out. They have to figure out what actions to do as they listen to the words. Songs or fingerplays with movement are also good for encouraging listening and keeping toddlers interested.
- Help toddlers listen for individual sounds. Draw out words very slowly and then ask them to speed them up, or say them just as slowly. Emphasize rhyming words in songs or poems and point out the sounds that are the same.



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### How do you know the practice worked?

- Do the children in your care enjoy playing listening games like Simon Says?
- Do they begin to identify the difference between 'loud' and 'soft' noises, and other opposites?
- Do they take part in acting out movements corresponding to the words in stories, poems or songs?

# Take a look at more verbal play with toddlers

## Listening and Transitions

To help with transitions in Ella's toddler class, she and Mike, the center's early interventionist, make up some listening games. These help focus the children. When it is time to move from one activity or location to another, Ella or Mike starts a game. One of them says to the whole class, "If you can hear the sound of my voice, clap your hands." The adult claps once to demonstrate. Soon all the children begin clapping. They are then given the next instruction, "If you can hear my voice, put your hands over your head." The game goes on with different movements until all the children are focused and participating. Sometimes Mike and Ella change the game by whispering instead of talking, or using only hand movements or silly movements. The children know this game means they are about to do something new. The adults even see the toddlers imitating the game with each other.



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## Rhyme Time

Eloi, 30 months old, is working on a bear puzzle with his home visitor, Dave. The three bears are Eloi's favorite characters right now. As Eloi works on finding the right puzzle pieces, he sing-songs quietly, "Bear, bear, bear." He looks up and says, "Bear, hair." "You're rhyming, aren't you?" Dave asks. "Do bear and pear sound the same?" "Bear, pear, bear, pear" Eloi says. "All the same." "What about bear and dog?" Dave asks. Eloi laughs. "Not same," he says. They try out different rhyming and non-rhyming words as they work on the puzzles.

## Signs Aid 'Listening'

Maggie is a 32-month-old with a hearing impairment in an inclusive toddler class. Her early interventionist, Ms. Shannon, comes to Maggie's class to work with her. She is also helping Maggie's teacher, Mr. David, with his sign language. Maggie loves playing games at circle time. Mr. David plays a song about different animals. The children all imitate his signs along with the movements in the song. "Fly like a bird, everyone," Mr. David signs and says, and the children pretend to fly in their circle. The signing in this game allows Maggie to "listen" to the song's instructions. She can act out all the animal parts along with the other children. Ms. Shannon lets Maggie touch speakers to feel the vibrations and taps out rhythms on Maggie's arm. They also play together with different instruments.



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