

*Especially for practitioners working with young children!* 

# One at a Time

*Talking and Listening*

The toddlers in your care are beginning to interact with you and each other in more direct, meaningful ways. But often they still need lots of practice using words and communicating effectively. One of the key elements of communication for toddlers is learning to take turns in conversations and in play.

## What is the practice?

Games and activities that help your toddlers use language with you and each other and everyday experiences that help them begin to understand conversational rules (for example, that only one person talks at a time) all give toddlers a head start at learning to communicate. Toddlers who have lots of opportunities to interact verbally with others have an easier time learning to read and write later on.

## What does the practice look like?

Helping your toddlers share a toy while talking about what they are doing, organizing a bean-bag-tossing or ball-kicking game, or giving everyone a chance to speak or share at circle time are all ways to encourage toddlers in your care to practice using language appropriately.



## How do you do the practice?

Your daily classroom routine has lots of opportunities for toddlers to practice turn-taking skills. You can do it formally, at group time or outside for a special game, or help toddlers practice during everyday free play interactions.

- When you have a group of toddlers together for story time, let each child have an opportunity to turn a page and to comment on what is happening on the page. Learning to wait their turn in a group is challenging for many toddlers, so the groups should be small (3-4 children) to start with.
- There are lots of chances outside to practice these skills. With a group of children, have them roll, kick, or toss a ball to each other. Encourage them to use language by asking questions like “Who has the ball?” and commenting on the progress of the game.
- While your children are playing in classroom centers, you can encourage language and further creative play by taking turns with whatever they are playing with. Be sure to follow their interest. For example, if several children are playing with trucks, you can ask one for a turn with the truck. Play with the truck in a manner similar to what the children are already doing, while describing your actions, and then hand it back.

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Do toddlers in your class use and understand language related to turn taking?
- Do they describe to you and to others what they are doing while playing?
- Do they enjoy playing alongside peers and/or adults in a collaborative way?

# Take a look at more taking turns with toddlers

## Ball Passing Plus

Lucie loves playing games with Jorge, her early intervention home visitor, and her mom. Her favorite is when they all sit in a circle and pick one thing to talk about while they roll a ball among them. Today her mom picks: "Everyone say one food you like to eat," she says, and rolls the ball to Lucie. "Cup cakes!" Lucie says. "Good!" says Jorge. "Now roll it to me, and I'll say what I like." They play like that until they run out of foods they like. Jorge finds some bean bags in his box, and says, "We can toss these, and say an animal. You start, Lucie. Toss one to your mom and name an animal." Jorge has taught Lucie and her mom lots of these games, and sometimes they play them even when Jorge isn't around.



## Sharing Doll Care

Katie and her mom eagerly greet Dan, Katie's home visitor, at the door. "What did you bring for us today?" Katie's mom asks with a laugh. "Whenever you come, Katie gets so excited about what you bring." Dan settles himself on the floor next to Katie and encourages her to look through his bag of toys and materials. But she picks up her rag doll from the couch and brings it to Dan. "Baby," she says. "What a beautiful baby," Dan says. "May I hold her?" Katie nods, so Dan rocks the doll for a moment, then asks, "Do you want her back?" Katie reaches for the doll and passes it to her mom, who also rocks it. "Tell Dan your baby's name," Mom suggests. "Her Katie too," Katie says, reaching for the doll again. "Is it your turn now?" her mom asks. They each take turns rocking and pretending to feed the doll, asking Katie questions, and making comments to practice using language.

## I'm Ready for More!

Carmen, a 2-year-old with motor impairments, is always glad to see her home visitor, Danielle. This afternoon, Carmen has lots of energy and doesn't want to sit still for very long. "She's been at it all day," Carmen's mom says. "Lots of energy." "You're in a silly mood today, aren't you?" Danielle asks, and tickles Carmen, who is on her back on the grass in the backyard. Carmen laughs loudly and kicks her legs. "More tickle," she shouts. "Nope," Danielle says. "Your turn. You tickle me." Carmen struggles upright with a little help and tickles Danielle, who makes a production of laughing and falling on the ground. "My turn!" Carmen calls. "What about your mom?" Danielle asks. "Tickle Mommy!" Carmen exclaims, and over her mom's laughing objections, pulls her into the game for her turn.

