

# Communicating with your child (3-6 years)

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## Good communication with children

Good communication with your child is about:

- encouraging him to talk to you so she can tell you what he is feeling and thinking.
- being able to really listen and respond in a sensitive way to all kinds of things – not just nice things or good news, but also anger, embarrassment, sadness and fear.
- focusing on body language and tone as well as words so you can really understand what your child is saying.
- taking into account your child's age, what he can understand and how long he can pay attention in a conversation.

## Why is it important to communicate well with your child?

If you communicate well with your child from a very young age, you will both get into good habits. It is good for your bond, and it encourages him to listen to you.

## Tips to communicate well with your child

**Open communication** with your child when he is young might make it easier for him to talk about the details of his life as he gets older. Here are some ideas:

- Set aside time for talking and listening to each other. Family meals can be a great time to do this.
- Talk about everyday things as you go through your day. If you and your child are used to having lots of communication, it can make it easier to talk when big or tricky issues come up.
- Be open to talking about all kinds of feelings, including anger, joy, frustration, fear and anxiety. This helps your child develop a 'feelings vocabulary'.
- Work together to solve problems. For example, if your child likes to change his clothes several times a day, you could agree that he puts away the clothes he's no longer wearing. And remember that you might not always be able to resolve an issue straight away, but you can come back to it later.
- Emphasise the importance of honesty by encouraging and supporting your child to tell the truth – and praising him when he does. And by being honest yourself!
- Use language that your child will understand. Sometimes we forget that children do not 'get' everything.
- Avoid criticism and blame. If you are angry about something your child has done, try and explain why you want him not to do it again.

When your child has something important to say, or has strong feelings or a problem, it is important for him to feel that you are really listening. Try these tips for **listening to your child**:

- Build on what your child is telling you and show your interest by saying things like 'Tell me more about ...', 'Really!' and 'Go on ...' This sends your child the message that what he has to say is important to you.
- Watch your child's facial expressions and body language. Listening isn't just about hearing words, but also about trying to understand what is behind those words.
- To let your child know you're listening, and to make sure you have really understood the important messages he is telling you, repeat back what he has said and make lots of eye contact.
- Try not to cut your child off or put words in his mouth – even when he says something that sounds ridiculous or wrong or is having trouble finding the words.
- Do not rush into problem-solving. Your child might just want you to listen, and to feel that his feelings and point of view matter to someone.
- Prompt your child to tell you how he feels about things – for example, 'It sounds like you felt left out when Ali wanted to play with those other kids at lunch'. Be prepared to get this wrong and ask him to help you understand.

Children often need some **help learning to listen**. Here are some ideas:

- Let your child finish talking and then respond. This sets a good example of listening.
- Use language and ideas that your child will understand. It can be hard for him to keep paying attention if he does not understand what you are talking about.
- Make any instructions and requests simple and clear to match your child's age and ability.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

## Recommended Reads

- [Bah! said the baby](#)
- [Albie's first word: a tale inspired by Albert Einstein's childhood](#)
- [Dinner Talks](#)