

Birth to
Five

FACILITATING THICK CONVERSATIONS WITH OLDER INFANTS AND TODDLERS

For older infants and toddlers who are just beginning to speak words and put together sentences, you can lay the foundation for “thick” conversations that promote their thinking and encourage them to express their own ideas. Here are four key ways, each with specific strategies you can use, to extend communication and conversation with older infants and toddlers.

<p>Encourage back-and-forth exchanges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions and make comments about what older infants and toddlers are doing or are interested in. • Give them time to respond. • Model taking turns (with several two-way exchanges).
<p>Extend communications with older infants and toddlers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand their vocalizations and words by adding a few more words to what they say. • Use rich language with a variety of words to increase their receptive and expressive vocabularies. • Repeat their vocalizations and language, but use expanded descriptions and correct grammar.
<p>Invite older infants and toddlers to communicate about the routines and experiences they are involved in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on what they are doing. • Interact with them and their play materials, and comment on what you are doing. • Ask questions—respond to what they say, what you see them doing, or what you have planned for them.
<p>Promote connections and understandings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak your thought processes out loud, “self talk,” so that older infants and toddlers can learn how you think and solve problems. • Relate what they are doing now to their previous experiences at the program or at home. • Introduce new concepts and skills.