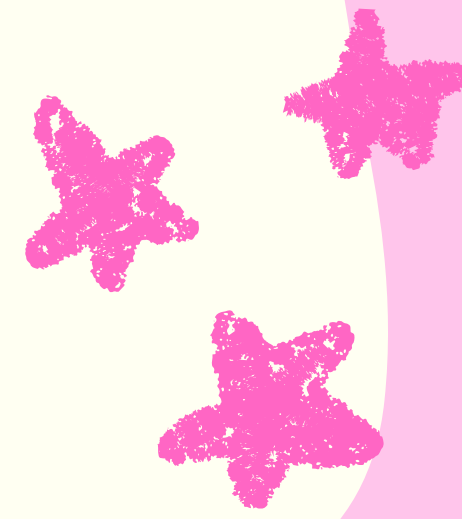




7 days of Toddler Play

Speech & language enriching
activities for your toddler's
development



Introduction

Hi! I'm Eden, a speech pathologist and mum to two little ones.

Like many parents, my days are full of cooking, cleaning, feeding, changing nappies, bath time, and settling my babies to sleep. Life is busy, but I always try to find simple ways to connect and play with my children throughout the day.

The best part? Most of our play doesn't require fancy toys or hours of preparation. We use what we already have at home and turn everyday moments into opportunities for connection and communication. These 7 days of play ideas are designed to be realistic for busy families —no fuss, no mess, minimal setup, and easy for you to join in. They're simple, play-based activities that help support your toddler's speech and language development while making the most of the moments you're already sharing together.

I hope you and your little one have fun!





Day 1: Cereal Dig

Cereal dig is a favourite activity in our house. My toddler frequently enjoyed playing with cereal while I fed & put her baby sister to sleep in those early months. It's really simple. Grab a cheap cereal, or just one you have in the cupboard. I love using crushed Weet-Bix, Rice Bubbles, Cheerios or just plain rolled oats because they're small and great for digging. I put some in a tub (as much as you're willing to sacrifice, although realistically you can serve them up with some milk afterwards!). Then add some utensils such as measuring cups, spoons, construction toys like diggers, toy animals or cardboard tubes. Not only is it a great sensory activity, it encourages exploration, problem solving, curiosity and is a great way to model language.

Here is some vocabulary I would target throughout: action words like "dig", "scoop", "pour", describing words like "crunchy", "hard" and label words like "digger", "bucket" and animal names.





Day 2: Laundry Helpers

Any parent can relate to the laundry mountain sitting in your living room. Here's how you can turn it into a fun, engaging & beneficial speech and language activity:

Matching socks: Sort through the laundry finding all the socks, labelling "same" and "different"

Family Members: Sort through the clothes and identify what clothes belong to each family member. If you find Daddy's shirt, label "Big shirt!" or identify the colour or texture. For example, "Daddy's big red shirt" or "Mummy's soft jumper". This helps build their vocabulary & expand sentence structure & length through addition of adjectives.

Find me: As you're folding items, ask your toddler to find you pieces of clothing. "Find me a small sock. Find me a pink shirt" Find me your Bluey jumper". This practices listening carefully, following instructions and memory recall.



Day 3: Musical Freeze

This is an easy one for all families and loved by all toddlers. Pop music on, dance, move & freeze!

There's a few ways you can play this. You can pause the music & everyone freezes, or you pause the music and yell out an action "clap" "shake" "stomp". Add an extra element by adding a body part "stamp your feet" "touch your nose". I also like this one for taking turns. It's a great way to practice each having a go at freezing the music or giving instructions.

Why do I love this activity for language? It's great for listening comprehension, understanding & giving instructions and building vocabulary on body parts & actions.





Day 4: Teddy's Bedtime

Play imitates life. Children love to engage in play that represents aspects of their everyday experience. I find that bedtime is a commonly loved form of role play that can support language and play skills in toddlers. I like to choose a favourite teddy bear and step by step we go through the bedtime routine. Start off with feeding them dinner, giving them a bath, reading a story then shooshing them to sleep. My daughter loves to add elements such as her sleeping bag and bottle during play.

Here are words to target as you play:

Dinner: Munch, chew, yum, eat, drink

Bath: Wash, dirty, clean, wet, dry

Story: Book, read, bedtime, sleepy

Bed: Cuddle, sleep, good night

Between the ages of 1 and 2, a toddler's vocabulary builds rapidly. When we role play everyday moments, not only are we supporting their play skills, we are also modelling language that they can then use within those contexts. Modelling these words during play can support language during the real moment - supporting both of you in understanding one another.



Day 5: Car Obstacle course

Set up obstacles around the play space for the car to drive through, around, over and under. Using these words during play is a great way to model words that show position, location and movement. When toddlers have a functional & meaningful understanding of these words, it supports a range of areas. This includes listening comprehension, following instructions, spatial awareness and expressive language. Here are some examples of how you can model these words during your living room obstacle course.

- Under the chair
- Around the table
- Through your legs
- Next to the couch
- Over a book
- "Fast car!"
- "Slow car."
- "Blue car."
- "Beep beep!"
- "Crash!"
- "Up the ramp!"
- "Down it goes!"





Day 6: Snack detective

This is an easy one and is great for those days where you are time poor. This was a favourite in our house when I was trying to nurse my newborn and keep my toddler entertained. It's super simple: place their snacks in a muffin tray, covering over the top with magnet tiles, muffin cases or post it notes. As they reveal what is in each hole, label what you see & describe it. Here are some examples:

Apple: red apple, crunchy

Cookie: round cookie, tasty

Watermelon: juicy watermelon, sweet

Cheese: yellow cheese, soft

Cracker: crunchy cracker





Day 7: Decorate the house

I love this activity as it's a great way to repurpose delivery boxes or nappy boxes. We do this activity at least once a fortnight!

Get a cardboard box & cut out or draw windows & a door. Give them washable markers and stickers and get them to decorate the outside of the house. If you want, you can draw furniture inside and they can play with dolls for extra playtime.

Wondering what words to target? Any vocabulary associated with a house. This is generally nouns, such as: door, window, roof, garden, plant, kitchen, bathroom, table, chair.

Target concepts: There are so many concepts to target when decorating a house. Inside, outside, top, bottom, front, back are just a few. Labelling these positional prepositions support understanding of direction & positioning which is great for following & giving directions.

A bonus to this activity without even trying - it teaches categories, which is great for growing vocabulary and organising ideas in their mind. I like drawing trees, flowers & insects on the outside of the house to represent them as things that belong outside.





Final word

Notice how throughout these play activities I talk a lot about modelling. Modelling is the easiest way to build your child's language as you are telling them exactly what the word is, in the appropriate context. Add on the fact that the play is meaningful, and you have the perfect concoction to developing a rich & robust vocabulary in your toddler.

Why do I care so much about toddler communication? Because communication is power. Communication skills being strong in toddlerhood builds the foundations for strong academic and social skills in their school years. This leads to more success in their careers, and healthier and happier lives.

I hope you can make use of these activities & they bring joy to you and your little one. Don't forget to follow me on instagram @soulspeechpathology for more tips!





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