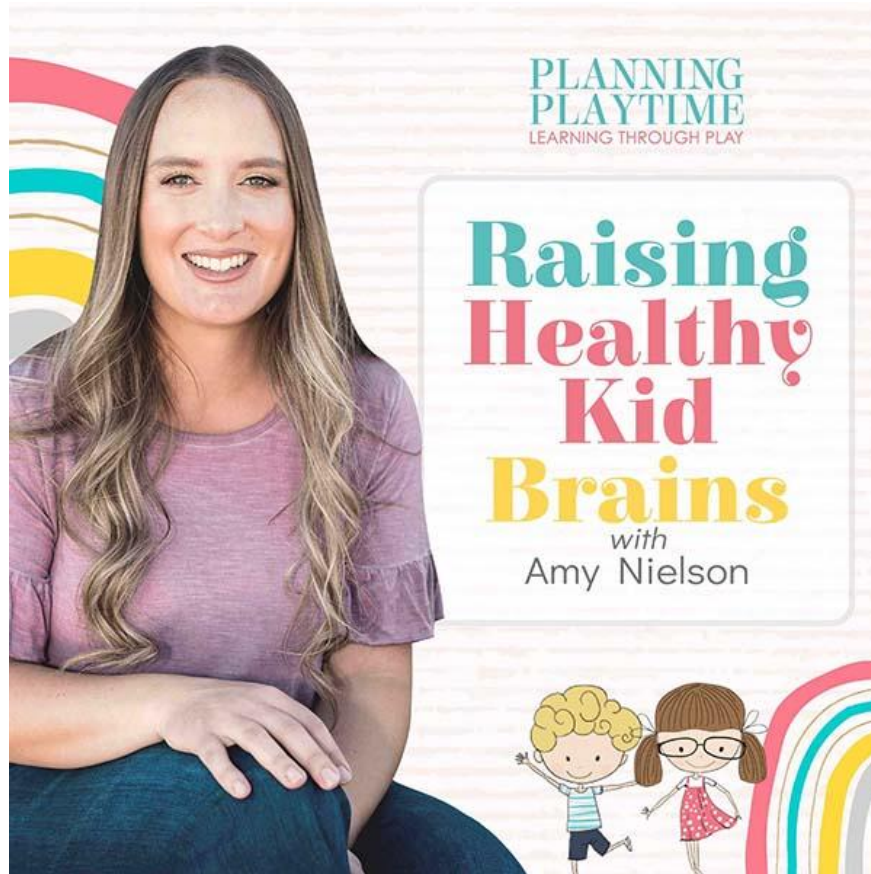


## Ep #066: How to Support Your Child's Speech Development



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Amy Nielson**

## Ep #066: How to Support Your Child's Speech Development

What should your child's speech look like at ages two, three, four, five? Are they hitting their developmental milestones, communication milestones? Today we're going to talk, a few milestones to watch out for, and then of course, give you a couple of tips, just a few things that you can pick from to start working on to help them really develop those communication skills and their speech skills. It's kind of amazing. I think you're going to love it and it's coming up right after this.

Welcome to the *Raising Healthy Kid Brains* podcast where moms and teachers come to learn all about kids' brains, how they work, how they learn, how they grow and simple tips and tricks for raising the most resilient, kind, smart, compassionate kids we can. All while having lots of grace and compassion for ourselves because you know what? We all really need and deserve that too. I am your host, Amy Nielson. Let's get ready to start the show.

Hello friend, I am so excited to chat with you today and so glad you joined me for this. Today we're going to be talking about speech. And while we have had a lot of speech pathologists in our community, in our Planning Playtime community for the last seven/eight years, it's recently become more personal to me. Because my brilliant little, just amazing nine year old was having some issues with some speech things and has been working with a speech teacher in her school. And so it's been so fun to get to see her learning and working through that and graduating from speech and she loves it. And it was the greatest thing ever.

And now she has her graduation certificate. It's been so fun. But it made me think a lot about speech. And I just kind of wanted to go through this with you and talk about some of the milestones that we're looking for in speech when starting with kids that are one and a half/two years old, all the way up through ages maybe five/six and kind of talk about what that's supposed to look like so that we have a basic idea. And obviously children develop at different rates, at different levels. So this is just kind of some general things to look at.

And then when you go and meet with their pediatrician for your annual checkup, you kind of know some things you've been watching for. And if you see something that you feel is maybe not quite right, it's something you can bring up. And then we also know the things we don't have to worry about because we

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have enough to worry about without having to worry about extra things. So let's do it. Let's talk about this.

So before we get into it, I just want to let you know where I'm kind of getting some of my information from. This is available on the American Speech Language Hearing Association website. And we'll have a link for that below so you can kind of go and check that out. But I'm using them as a reference since this is their specialty. And then we'll just kind of do a little bit of a brief overview of some milestones we should be looking for, for our kids. We typically in this community kind of focus on kids from two to five/six. But I wanted to start just a little bit earlier than that, kind of the one and a half up to two to three year range.

So at one and a half to two years, we're looking at, kids can understand at least 50 different words, that are things that they know, that are in their world. So food, toys, animals, maybe body parts, things like that, that they kind of know. And their speech might not always be clear around it. They might mispronounce, but they're trying to say it. So they'll say ma or dada or something. They might not say it exactly right, but they can say something. And then we're looking for them to be able to kind of put two words together, that they need more food or that they want to watch show or whatever. Hopefully they're asking to go outside instead of watch the show.

But they're kids, they're going to ask for whatever they're thinking, which is great, they have no filter. So we want to be able to put those two words together. We also in that same number of two, we're looking for them to be able to follow with some basic two step directions, which is pretty cool that they're starting to be able to do that. And then they're also kind of starting to use possessiveness, saying my toy or mommy's book or things like that. And be able to use words to ask for help. So that's kind of what we're looking at, at that 18/19 to 24 month range, that one and a half to two.

So now let's talk, two to three years old. So this is where it starts getting really interesting. We've got our toddlers, our two and three year olds, kind of toddler, pre preschool, early preschool. So they're going to start using word combinations more. They're going to start growing their language, they're going to add on because remember, at one and a half to two, we were using two

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words. Now we're going to be adding on to that a little bit, but they're going to repeat words some of the time. So I want, I want milk, whatever it is. They're going to do some repeating.

They're going to be trying to get your attention and telling you to look at them sometimes. I remember my kids would actually get my face if I was focused on something. If you're needing a reminder to get off your phone, they'll grab your chin and kind of pull it towards them. But they'll say words like, look at me. They start to say their names when asked, which is cool. We're going to start seeing them be able to use plural words and adding some endings, word endings, so this is getting exciting. They're expanding their ability to use language, which is so exciting.

And they might be able to start giving reasons for things. They're going to say that they need a coat because it's cold outside, things like that. Another thing we notice around this time is they start asking more questions. Have you noticed that toddlers and three year olds ask lots of questions? Yeah. So this is actually a great thing. This is how they grow their brains. This is such a good developmental milestone. So next time you're being asked, but why? But yes, but why? But why? Over and over and over again, just remember, yay. They're hitting their milestones. This is fantastic news.

At this point, they should be able to start correctly using most vowels in words. And then there's some consonants that they should be able to get as well, so consonants like P and B, M, H, W, D and ones like that. And their speech is becoming clearer. I think when they're a year and a half to two, it's a little bit hard.

As they're getting into two/three, their speech should be becoming much clearer. But that doesn't mean it's going to be understandable to everyone. So the more time you spend with this child, probably the more familiar you're going to be with their language. And you're going to be able to interpret for others a little bit better than someone who hasn't spent a lot of time with that child.

Are you ready for some tips for communicating and growing the speech of your two and three-year olds? So a couple of tips for you. Use short words and sentences and speak really clearly. And then we can also repeat what your child

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has said and add on to it. So we're going to help repeat it so they know that we heard them and then grow it a little bit so they learn to add more words on. We want to validate our kids and help them understand, we care what they're saying.

So if they say something you don't understand, we repeat the part that we do understand and then say, "I know you want this something. Can you tell me exactly which thing you're asking for? I know you want a toy, but can you tell me which toy you want?" And then another big thing we're going to do is start practicing words.

And we're teaching kids new words and we're always wanting to introduce new vocabulary because this grows your child's lexicon, which is going to help them as they're learning how to read. It's also going to just allow them to use more speech which is really going to help them. It's also going to help them as they're reading and doing testing all through school. So we're wanting to teach them new words. You do that by reading books or talking about things you see as you're driving along the road, taking them places and giving them experiences like the zoo and the museum.

But just talking about things and describing them. So what are the shapes and colors of the things you're talking about or size? Also, as we're talking, don't be afraid to use words that they don't know yet. And I don't like to talk way above them and use all big words. But as I'm talking, I'll use a word that they know, and then I'll use one word they don't know, and I'll kind of do them next to each other. So that I say a word they don't know and they're like, "I don't know what that word is." But I'm using it naturally in a sentence.

And then right after that, I'll just kind of do a pause, a comma. And then say a word that they do know that's a synonym of the word that they didn't know. To give them context, they can kind of understand what this new word I just introduced was. And this really, really, really helps grow your child's vocabulary.

One of the other ideas I really liked from the [asha.org](http://asha.org) website was, they talk about instead of just giving children yes or no options, ask them questions that are more open-ended than that so that they can repeat back to you in speech. So an example, instead of saying, "Do you want an apple?" You could say,



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“Would you like an apple or a banana?” And then we're having them repeat some language back to us instead of just a yes or a no.

Moving on, we're going to go to age three to four years. So this is starting to get more exciting. They'll be able to do more with language. They're going to start comparing things with words like bigger or shorter, which is so great. This is actually a skill they're going to be learning in math as well, so it's so fun. They're starting to be able to do that comparison and have the language around it too. So good, it's kind of fun how literacy and math can kind of just really work together.

They're going to be able to start telling you stories from a book or video. If you've had a little kid try to tell you stories, you'll have seen some of this, it's really funny. And they can start using more preposition words, location words, which is great. They're going to be using words like a, or the. They're going to say 'a truck', 'the cat'.

And then another one that I love and this is such a good sign that they're getting close to ready to read is, they start pretending to read alone. They'll get a book and they'll start pretending that they're reading it to you. It's such a good sign that they're getting close to being ready to read. And of course, we have a quiz around, is your child ready to read. And if you would like a link to that, we can get that for you. That's a really good sign. That's one of those things we're looking for.

They might also start to recognize signs and logos and basic words that are really common. So one example would be a stop sign. They see that word and they know that word because they see it everywhere, they're very familiar with it. Another one that I love to kind of go along with pretending they're reading is pretending they're writing. Have you ever had kids write stories for you and they just want to put this all together and they drew some pictures and then it's just squiggles, squiggly lines, just page after page of squiggly lines?

I used to do this and it would drive my mom crazy because my cute mom could not stand to waste paper. So she would put stuff in her typewriter because we had a typewriter. That was a thing at my house. We did not have a lot of technology, but she would use one side and we'd type everything up. And then

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she would put it back in a drawer for us to use again. And we'd take it back out and turn it over and use the other side. And we could do that because we homeschooled so it worked out okay for a lot of the time.

In any case, so I would take these papers and I would just draw and do squiggly lines. And I'd pretend to write these big, beautiful books and draw pictures of princesses and their big puffy sleeves and giant bows over the bum. This was my dream dress and I would write stories. And so it's so much fun when we see kids doing that because it's showing their interest and their excitement around literacy. This is something to be celebrated and be excited about because this means you have an aspiring reader and an aspiring writer, which is so good.

One of my favorite ways to encourage this is at the beginning of the school year, when all the back to school supplies are there, I go and buy those really cheap, I don't know, are they 20 cents or something now, the little spiral notebooks? And I'll just kind of buy a big stack of them and I keep them in my closet. And then my kids can come and use those and they can write. And so they'll just write stories. And I've had them actually write story after story, book after book series. And I just have kind of almost boxes of these and my kids have had over the years.

And they tend to increase in complexity as they grow older, their drawing to the point they want an actual drawing book, not lined paper of course. But then now I have these kids that are writers and it's amazing the things that they can write and the things they can do. And I think it comes back to supporting that, those early scribbles and those early, I wrote a book. And we just let that continue to grow.

Let's talk, a couple of other things. So they're starting to correctly be able to pronounce letters like T, K, G, F, Y and the ing ending in words. They're saying all the syllables in a word. And they're saying the sounds at the beginning, middle and end of a word, which is so good because we're starting to talk about phonemic awareness, which is what we really, really need for getting kids ready to read. So we want them to hear all of those sounds and be able to say those sounds.

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By age four, our kids are typically talking fairly smoothly, not repeating a lot of sounds or words or phrases. And at this point most people should be able to understand a lot of what they say. A couple of the really tricky sounds that if your kid's having a hard time with these sounds, you don't need to stress. A couple of them are L, J, R, R is a big one. L is a big one. S, H, CH, S, B, Z and the TH sounds. So some of those sounds are a little bit trickier that kids make mistakes on more often than others. And that's something that can develop a little bit later.

Alright, so what are some tips for helping your children grow their language and speech at age three/four? You can do things like cutting out pictures and gluing them together and kind of creating collage pictures or creating your own pictures out of pictures. That's kind of a fun thing. You can do sorting into categories, so they're kind of relating words that they know with other words.

So when we talk about a dragon fruit, or we talk about a kiwi, we're going to be putting that in a category with other fruits so that they know that a kiwi, they associate that with, we have oranges and apples and bananas and kiwi. So they know that word is a fruit, it's going to go in that group.

Lots of reading, singing, talking about the things you do and where you go, just chatting, it's such a relationship building thing but also really helps kids build their vocabulary. Using rhyming words. I love to make up silly rhyming songs in the car when I drive carpool and the neighbor kids will testify to you as well as my own kids that I make up some really weird songs. It's almost like the goal to see what's the weirdest rhyming song you can make up while you're driving. It's hilarious and we just use tunes that are nursery rhymes or things we already know.

And it's so much fun because we're just being silly, but we're actually practicing a lot of speech skills and a lot of phonemic awareness skills while we're doing that, it's really cool. So some other things that you can do, pretend play is so big here. When kids are acting out daily activities like going to the doctor or cooking or building things. All of those things, they're learning language. They're learning how to communicate. They're learning the vocabulary that goes with those kinds of things and it's so amazing. It's really building their speech and is building it



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kind of by category to some degree. And so it's very natural and it's all very related and it stays in their brain better, which is amazing.

Another thing that we always, always recommend and the research shows is that asking your child the questions really, really helps improve their education and their speech and their knowledge and their thinking. There is some really fantastic research around the importance of asking your kids questions and good questions. So ask them lots of things. And here's a fun game, kids love to feel like they can trick you with their questions.

So see if they can trick you with their questions and you can pretend that you're going to trick them too and you'll ask them something. You're like, "I think I've got you this time." We're going to pretend you trick them. And then, of course they can answer it. They feel so accomplished and amazing and then they can try to repeat a question back to you and see if they can trick you and it's fabulous. You get to ask really good questions.

And you're building a culture of question asking which is so valuable because as our kids grow up and are becoming scientists or trying to learn, one of the most important parts of that is, what questions they ask. It's not just, can they find answers, it's, did they ask the right question in the first place. And so we build that skill as we're asking them questions. And then they ask more questions back to us. The more we ask kids questions, the more they ask questions back. There's research to show that, and it is one of the most valuable things we can do with our kids.

Last one, we're going to do ages four to five. And again just a reminder that kids develop differently. We are unique and it's amazing that we're unique. So this is just a general guideline. If you feel like your kid's not hitting an exact milestone or doesn't match exactly, don't panic. You can, but it's probably not going to help and it might not be necessary, likely isn't. So just make a note of it and it's something you can talk to your pediatrician about.

So at age four to five, we're looking for kids to be producing grammatically correct sentences and their sentences are growing. Remember at the one and a half to two, they were doing two words at a time. Now their sentences are longer. They've been growing since two and one and a half and they're getting

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bigger and more complex, and it's amazing. They're increasing their location words that they can use. They are going to be able to start using words for time. Time is such an interesting one, isn't it? So yesterday, tomorrow, these are words they're going to be able to start using better.

They're going to be able to follow simple directions and rules to play games, which is really good. They can also often use and understand irregular plural forms of words. So remember earlier they were able to start making plural words by just adding an S on the end, like toy to toys. But now they can do something like foot, feet, or man, men. So they're starting to be able to kind of add on to that. Here's where we're really wanting kids to start learning a lot of their letters and be able to hopefully write their own name.

They can imitate reading, they're pretending they're reading, which is so good. Again, a sign that they're ready to learn to read, which is so exciting. Come and take the quiz. And then they are starting to write from left to right, so they might not be really accomplished writers yet, but they're understanding some of the basic rules of writing, we write from left to right. We want them to be producing most consonants correctly. And then also blending word parts, so they're making compound words like space to spaceship. And they can find rhyming words like cat, hat, things like.

A couple of tips to help you with developing speech for your four or five year old and then we are done for today. So talk about where things are in space. We're kind of helping build that awareness of words to describe where things are at, So first and last, right, left, opposites, up and down, big, little, all those kinds of things. Again, we're working with categories because when we put things into categories, kids remember them better. They're making those associations. Those are those extra connections in their brain that are going to help them remember those words and build their vocabulary.

One of the biggest things is, pay attention when your child speaks. So much of our communication is non-verbal. And sometimes, when you have a kid just chattering a little bit and we're busy and we're trying to make dinner, we're cleaning up or we're doing all the things. And it's a little bit hard to always be paying attention. But try to make sure that you are giving them some focused

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attention when they're speaking and we respond and encourage them when they're talking. We're going to praise. We're going to give them attention, we speak back, we're going to pause and let them respond to the things we're saying.

We're going to keep teaching them new words and give them definitions as we're talking. Remember we talked about that thing that I like to do, where I will use a new word that I don't feel like they know and then kind of explain the word or use a synonym of the word afterwards so that they can kind of understand more about it.

And I think another really important thing to do is to help kids understand that if they don't know a word that we used, they can say that. I think sometimes they're trying to be little adults and they're hearing a word and they don't know what it means. But they don't want to act like they don't know what it means because they don't know if it's cool to be ignorant of what this word means. So they kind of just shake their head and nod. Do we do this sometimes as adults? I think we do.

If you're talking to someone who's in a completely different scientific field than you are or whatever, and I mean everyone has their own language in their world. If you go to a construction job site, they're going to have different language that they use than if you're in a nursing station in a hospital. We just have different vocabularies that we use. And sometimes someone's talking to us and they're saying things and we're like, "Oh." And we're kind of nodding a little bit but we didn't really understand what the word they just used meant. This has happened to me so many times.

I'll be in a business conference or in a mastermind and people will be talking. And I'm like, "Can you tell me actually what that is? I don't know that one." So we give kids permission to not know all the words and say, "Oh my goodness, do you know that word? If you don't know that word, let me tell you what this means." And then we talk about it so that they understand it's okay to not understand words. And the best way to learn what they are is to ask and go, "I don't know that word. Can you tell me what that is?"

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We're going to keep doing pretend play, acting out stories, dramatic, all the things, because this is going to really help them build their vocabulary. A couple more I really, really love that were recommendations from the [asha.org](http://asha.org) website. Let your child tell you how to do something. One of the best ways to be really good at knowing how to do something is to try to teach it to others. So let them tell you. Let them give you the instructions of how to do something. Let them draw a picture of what they're doing.

And that's so valuable for them to not only learn how to use language, but to learn how to use sequence, to learn how to explain things in a clear and concise way. There's so many skills in that right there. Playing games with your kids, you guys, I cannot stress enough how important it is to play games. We have Planning Playtime, it's very valuable, play, it matters, it matters so much on so many levels. But one of them is speech development.

So they are learning how to follow rules and how to talk about the game and they're just learning some really good speech things in addition to all the emotional regulation and the math skills and everything else, they're getting strategy. So many good things. And another one, last one, I really, really love this one is, have your kids help you plan activities. Have them help you plan their meals. Have them make a list for the grocery store. Have them help plan their birthday party.

Ask them for opinions about things and let them help make choices. How do they want their hair done that day? Do they have specific clothes they would like to wear? What do they want to do and give them options and let them help plan things. This helps build so many skills, but especially we're focusing on speech today and it helps really build their speech and communication skills.

I hope that was helpful. I'm going to call that a wrap for today. I hope it was amazing and I hope that it gives you some ideas of some things to be looking for around speech for your kids, a couple of things to notice and be watching for and then a couple of things to be working on. And I love having a thing or two to work on, not too many, just think of a couple. What are one or two of those things we talked about today that you could implement this week that wouldn't

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be that hard for you to do? Start there, amazing, 1% gains is what we're going for. It grows over time and makes a world of difference.

I hope you have the most amazing rest of your week. And thank you again for hanging out with me today and talking all about speech. It's been a pleasure to chat with you.

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Don't you just love all the fun things we're learning on the show together? Well, we wanted to give you a chance to practice a little bit of it at home. And so we made you a special freebie just for being a listener here and you can grab it at [planningplaytime.com/special-freebie](http://planningplaytime.com/special-freebie). That is [planningplaytime.com/special-freebie](http://planningplaytime.com/special-freebie). So what this freebie is, I'll tell you, is an amazing alphabet activity that you can start using with your kiddos and it is based in play and is so fun.

You can use dot markers with it, you can use Q-tip painting, you could use circle cereal. There's all kinds of options, but you can print it out today and get started. Just head over to [planningplaytime.com/special-freebie](http://planningplaytime.com/special-freebie) and we'll send that to you right away.

Thank you for hanging out with me today for this fun chat on *Raising Healthy Kid Brains*. If you want to see more of what we're doing to support kiddos and their amazing brains, come visit us on our website [planningplaytime.com](http://planningplaytime.com). See you next week.