

Connecting (0-3 years)

What is connecting?

When you smile or cuddle your baby or toddler, and when you talk or sing to him, you are connecting. These simple, enjoyable interactions strengthen the bond you share.

Why is connecting important?

Hugging, smiling, singing and chatting with your baby or toddler are more than just enjoyable. When you give your child lots of love, attention and interesting experiences, you create the best conditions for his brain growth, learning and development. This also helps your child learn to connect with the wider world.

Tips to connect with your child

A loving relationship with you is the most important part of your child's environment. Here are some ideas to help you **connect with your baby**:

- Hold your baby. He knows your smell and this reassures him. Try cuddling him close to the left side of your chest so he can hear your heartbeat.
- Touch your baby. Gentle touch is pleasurable for most babies and makes them feel secure.
- Babies often love warm skin-on-skin contact and soft reassuring stroking – try a baby massage using a few drops of an edible oil, like olive oil.
- Smile. When your baby sees you smiling, it releases chemicals in his body that make him feel good. The chemicals also help his brain grow.
- Talk, sing, and read to your baby. Your baby loves the sound and rhythm of your voice, and it can soothe him when he's upset.

Toddlers want to be independent, but fear being separated from you. They have big feelings but cannot always control them or find the words to express them. Here are some ideas to help you **connect with your toddler**:

- Support your toddler's need for independence by letting him make simple choices, like choosing between a banana and an apple.
- Talk to your toddler about the times you need to be away from him. He will feel more secure if you tell him when you are going, where you will both be, and when you will be back.
- Help your toddler deal with frustration and strong emotions by teaching him words that express big feelings. For example, 'You're upset because you ripped your picture'.
- Read and tell stories with your child every day if you can.
- Share songs and nursery rhymes.

- Notice what your child is paying attention to and talk about that. For example, if he is playing with blocks, talk about the blocks.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

For some suggestions on rhymes, click [here](#) to download a booklet on rhymes!

Recommended Reads

- [The everything baby sign language book with DVD: get an early start communicating with your baby!](#)
- [Baby sign language basics: early communication for hearing babies and toddlers](#)
- [Beyond baby talk: from speaking to spelling: a guide to language and literacy development for parents and caregivers](#)