

*Especially for toddlers with disabilities*

# Look Who's Talking

*Rhymes and Sound Awareness*

Young children like vocalizing or talking. Some toddlers with disabilities do not make many different sounds. This practice guide includes ways to help your children learn to make sounds or "talk" more.

## *What is the practice?*

This practice is about making it easier for toddlers to hear and use sounds to make words. It involves creating opportunities for your child to listen to sounds, and for him to try to make new sounds and rhymes. Hearing words and sounds encourages young children to repeat them.

## *What does the practice look like?*

Sometimes a toddler is only using a few words or seldom repeats the words she hears. Materials like paper towel tubes and simple audio devices like a karaoke machine can be helpful and fun. These devices can encourage your child to speak. If she likes using them, they can help her pay attention. They can also help her understand that sounds and words have meaning.



## *How do you do the practice?*

Here are some things you can try to help your child become a "talker."

- Use any voice recording device (tape recorder, movie camera, etc.) and show your child how to talk into the machine. Using some of her favorite stuffed animals, ask her what sounds they make. Let her listen to her voice from the machine. Then encourage her to tell you what she likes about an animal. Repeat what she says and tell her something you like about her animal. Then play her voice back for her to hear. Stop when she gets tired of the game.
- Make up silly songs with silly sounds. Sing them with your child through the cardboard tubes from rolls of paper towels. You start by making a funny sound in the tube (*la-di-da*). Give your child the tube and ask him to make a sound in the tube. Be sure to give him plenty of time to make a sound, then you repeat it.
- From your library, get a recorded book of rhymes. Listen to it with you child, and say the rhyme while the recording plays. Using one of the rhymes she likes best, encourage her to say it with you as the tape plays it again. Or encourage her to say the rhyme with the tape while doing a little dance with you. The more fun it is the more she is likely to try and copy what you are saying.

## *How do you know the practice worked?*

- Does your child repeat new sounds or say new words?
- Does your child like to play silly sound "games"?
- Does your child make sounds or say words more often?

## Take a look at more rhymes and listening

### *Here, Spot!*

Aala is a 26-month-old toddler who loves her family's two pet dogs. Aala's language is delayed. Her mother looks for ways to encourage Aala to repeat new sounds and words. When it is time to feed the dogs, Aala wants to help put the food in their bowls. First, she must call the dogs' names—Tom and Spot. Aala cannot say the names exactly right. But when she says the names she gets to put the food in the bowls. They take the dogs for a walk. Mom gets Aala to call each of them by name. As they pet the dogs, Aala's mother barks like a dog and encourages Aala to "bark like Tom and Spot."



### *Recordings of Music and Stories*

Gabe is a toddler who was not increasing the number of sounds and words he said. Gabe's aunt, his primary caregiver, had his hearing checked. He did have a mild hearing loss that made it difficult to understand certain sounds. Though he now uses hearing aids, Gabe likes to listen to books on tape with headphones. Often Gabe wants to use headphones to listen to his favorite songs and rhymes too. His aunt sits with him as he listens. When he finishes listening, they look through the book and sing his favorite songs together. Sometimes they make up silly songs or rhymes. Gabe says the first word and his aunt adds the next word or two.

### *Again and Again!*

One of Diego's favorite children's videos has a few simple songs and stories. Diego's dad notices how few new sounds and words his son is making. He uses the video to encourage Diego to use more words. Watching the video with his son, Dad sings the songs with the video to encourage Diego to sing along too. He talks about what the person in the song is doing. At the end of a story, Dad stops the tape and encourages Diego to talk about the story. He asks questions like, "What was the dog doing?" He will then repeat what his son says adding on a little more detail.

