

Expanding Sentences

by Linda Mawhinney &
Mary Scott McTeague



When should you expect a child to converse in sentences? Children slowly start to string words together when they have developed a collection of single words. Many times it is difficult for a toddler to increase his/her verbalizations from single syllables to two syllables. Syllable repetitions such as *bye-bye*, *pop-pop*, *mom-mom*, *beep-beep* are helpful. When syllables are mastered, two syllable words like *baby*, *bubble*, and *puppy* are attempted. This is why most children say, "Mama" and "Dada" before they say "Mommy" and "Daddy."

There are several functional phrases that frequently occur in a child's daily life. Examples of these are "uh-oh, all gone, all done, my turn, did it." These can be practiced throughout the day. There are also some very useful pivot words, which can be combined with the nouns in a child's vocabulary to make two word sentences. Some great examples of pivot words are *hi*, *bye*, *my*, *in*, *more*, and *want*. These are practical because children are always greeting, leaving, claiming property, and putting things into containers. Examples of phrases using pivot words are:

Hi baby	Bye-bye bear	Want cookie	My cookie
Ball in	In box	More milk	Bye bubbles

Children combine lots of function words and pivot words before they start putting nouns and verbs together. It is easier to say, "My cookie" than it is to say, "Eat cookie." When children are ready to combine nouns and verbs, you can model simple noun-verb or verb-noun phrases for them. Don't worry about *-ing* endings on the verbs. That will come in time. Examples:

Puppy eat	Eat cookie	Bunny hop	Go car	Car go
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When noun-verb and verb-noun phrases are combined, then "puppy eat" and "eat bone" will soon become "Puppy eat bone!" You may start hearing long strings of words and functional phrases which are the beginning of conversation in sentences. ("Uh-oh!, Cookie, All gone, More cookie, Mine")

The best thing that you can do for your child is to string words together in short word combinations in your own speech. Remember, this is not baby talk. Model the important words in the sentence and leave out some of the connectors like *a*, *the*, *with*, *to*, and *for*. Connector words have no meaning to a toddler, but "Daddy read book" says it all!

