



Cari's Top Speech Therapy Tips for Use with **TODDLERS**



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Avoid instructing the toddler to say words

Instead of telling the child to say words, become the child's voice and say the words you wish they would say in the moment; reduce the pressure to talk on command to establish a trusting relationship

Play with things of interest to the toddler

This is best done by following the child's lead and focusing on whatever currently holds the child's attention; communication goals can be embedded into literally EVERY SINGLE interaction

Focus on relationship-based learning with the toddler

Avoid getting distracted by trying to manage the child's behavior at this young age; focus your efforts on building a trusting relationship by being an engaging, intentional, playful, and sensitive communication partner

Explicitly teach parents and caregivers your skilled strategies...they matter more than your favorite toddler toys

There is no magic in the toy itself; the magic is in your strategies; don't let parents be swooned by developmental toys...instead, coach parents on your powerful, highly skilled strategies that make your services more than "just playing with the child"

Embed learning into naturally occurring toddler routines

Playing with toys is one routine that occurs in a child's day...but getting dressed, having a snack, going for a walk, getting the mail, reading books, putting laundry away, playing outside, taking a bath, and running errands in the community provide plenty of learning opportunities too

Avoid doing any type of drill work with toddlers

Repetitive speech practice is important (especially if you suspect apraxia), but drill work is NEVER appropriate with this age group; intentionally select toys, books, and activities that can be naturally paired with repetitive speech

Encourage families to limit screen time for toddlers

Here's why → Screen time is a one-way transaction.....anything that occurs in front of a screen is all input; for learning and development to occur there needs to be input AND output.....reciprocity..... back and forth interactions

Provide toddlers with plenty of opportunities for play-based movement

Toddlers are active creatures who learn best when they are moving; resist the desire to strap the toddler in a highchair so you can "focus on speech tasks"

Be interested and be interesting so the toddler wants to interact with you

When interacting with you becomes a preferred activity, the toddler will step out of their verbal comfort zone and become a communication risk taker
