



Module 3: Toddlers
Quantity & Quality Talk Matters
Oral Language & Vocabulary Development
Early Literacy Matters

Module 3: Quantity and Quality Talk Matters

Oral Language & Vocabulary Development

Module 3 at a Glance...

In Module 2, you considered ways positive teacher-child interactions help to foster self-expression, rich conversations, and interest in books and writing. Emphasis was placed on enriching the physical classroom environment and providing multiple opportunities for children to engage in oral interactions.

In this module, you will:

- Explore specific, developmentally appropriate activities for further developing oral language, vocabulary, and conceptual knowledge for children birth to five years old.
- Gain a better understanding of why children need to be actively engaged in vocabulary development from an early age.
- Use oral language activities to build phonological awareness.

Learner Outcomes for Module 3

Learner Outcomes:

- LO1: Learners will learn how to further children's oral language development through intentionally planned activities for increasing the use of descriptive words in conversations.
- LO2: Learners will explore developmentally appropriate activities to frequently and actively engage children in vocabulary development.
- LO3: Learners will explore the ways speaking and listening activities develop children's awareness of the sounds in their language.

Connections to the “Read to be Ready” Campaign:

This module aligns to the current Read to be Ready campaign’s following key beliefs:

- Early literacy matters.
- Teachers are critical.
- It takes a community.

Video link to “Early Literacy Matters” from Read to be Ready website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60J8qRjRPkE>

Module 3 Overview

Overview: Module 3 will consist of three instructional presentations. These presentations will help you reflect on the importance of the quantity and quality of talk for optimal development of oral language and vocabulary for infants, toddlers, and young children.

- In **Presentation 1**, you will learn how to further children’s oral language development through intentionally planned activities for increasing the use of descriptive words in conversations.
- In **Presentation 2**, you will focus on strategies and supports for building and expanding children’s vocabulary. Emphasis is placed on beginning this work early and actively engaging children often in their vocabulary development.
- In **Presentation 3**, you will explore how teachers can increase children’s awareness of sounds in their language through playful listening and speaking activities.

Following each presentation, you will apply your learning through Practice Activities included in the Learning Guide.

Suggested Timeline for Completing Module

Modules contain 4 short presentations that are designed to be completed during relaxed ratios or other times as set by your school or agency. Your director or program coordinator may suggest or establish a timeline for each presentation to be completed within the module. Please take a moment to confirm your site's requirements while noting the submission deadline for the final Learning Application Assignment that you will submit electronically to your literacy coach for feedback and support. All other completed activities will remain in your participation guide and available for your coaches review.

- **Section 1:** Start at the beginning of the module and complete Presentation 1 and Practice Activity 1.
- **Section 2:** Complete Presentation 2 and Practice Activity 2.
- **Section 3:** Complete Presentation 3 and Practice Activity 3.
- **Section 4:** Complete the Learning Application Assignment for Module 3 and submit it electronically to your literacy coach for feedback and support.
- Please refer to your Learning Guide for a detailed Module 3 checklist.

Let's begin with a look at your books...

Before we dive into our Module 3 presentations, let's start by having you look again through the books you received in your Early Literacy Matters start-up bag. This time, you are looking for books that contain descriptive words, new vocabulary words and concepts to build children's knowledge around.

After looking through the book set, select one book that you think contains new vocabulary words and descriptive language. Read the story aloud to yourself and briefly respond to the following questions in the Learning Guide:

- What book did you select?
- What new words and concepts will children be introduced to?
- How does the text inspire lively questions and observations?

Presentation 1: Developing Oral Language Early and Often

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Let's begin with a video clip which highlights oral language development for infants and toddlers and the important role the teacher plays in supporting this development.

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/196-from-cries-to-conversations-the-development-of-communication-skills-from-birth-to-3>

Fostering Oral Language

As you just heard in the video clip, teachers play a critical role in fostering oral language development in infants and toddlers by:

- Engaging in back and forth conversations starting from birth
- Taking time to talk and listen
- Talking about familiar people, objects, and places
- Describing what the child is doing as you talk to him/her
- Describing what you are doing and what you'll be doing next as you go about your daily routines
- Looking at books and pictures together
- Sharing stories

Let's look at some additional strategies you can use to foster oral language development.

Speaking Slowly and Clearly

- **Quantity** of talk matters. Children who are exposed to more frequent language learn language faster. They are like little sponges who absorb language used around them.
- **Quality** of talk matters. To enhance listening and comprehension, it's important to speak slowly and clearly, and minimize distractions and interruptions (Jalongo, 2010). Avoid "baby talk," and always model correct pronunciations of words.
- If a child is asking for more juice and utters, "mo joo-joo peas," smile and positively respond by slowly and clearly saying, "You want more juice please...let me get you some more juice."

Creating Opportunities for 1:1 Conversations

- It's important to create opportunities to talk with children one-on-one. Even if brief, the language modeled is enduring.
- In your 1:1 conversations, follow the child's interest and use guiding questions which will encourage interaction, thinking, and use of descriptive words. This is also a great time to model use of new nouns, verbs, or descriptive words. Words used in meaningful contexts are remembered and help to build knowledge.



Building Familiar Classroom Routines

- It's important for teachers to build familiar classroom routines through modeling, displayed visual sequences, and practice so that children are comfortable with the procedures for meals, stories, learning centers, washing hands, and cleaning up.
- If time is spent ensuring children are familiar with classroom routines, then teachers will use less directive talk and more facilitated and interactive talk that models use of familiar nouns, common verbs, and descriptive words.

Use of Guiding Questions: Story Time

Even if infants and toddlers cannot verbally respond to you yet, they can comprehend much more than they verbalize. Engage in conversation with them through sharing books and stories. As children grow and develop, they will begin to be able to respond through pointing and eventually through talking.

Guiding questions encourage interaction, thinking, and use of descriptive words. Here are some examples:

- Before reading aloud a book on the zoo:
 - I wonder what this book is about. Let’s look at the cover for clues.
 - It looks like there are zoo animals. Have you ever been to the zoo? What is the zoo like? Where do the animals stay? Who cares for the animals?
 - I wonder what happens at the zoo in this story?
 - Let’s take a picture walk through the book for some clues.
 - What do you think happens to the animals at the zoo? What made you think this?
 - Let’s read the story and see if we were good at predicting what happens.

- Guiding questions can also be used during and after the reading of the book.



Looking at Books and Pictures Together

- Looking at books and pictures with children provides opportunities for exposing children to new nouns, verbs, and descriptive words.
- Both literature and informational text (books) should be shared to provide greater exposure to words and the way the words are used to build knowledge of language and concepts.
- Use book illustrations to engage children in turn-taking conversations that encourage use of familiar and less familiar nouns, verbs, and descriptive words.



Emphasize responsive turn-taking.

- It's important to talk **to** and **with** a child often and use a variety of words. This involves pausing and waiting for children to respond. The more you positively respond to them, the more they will engage in conversation.
- Talk with children throughout the day and in various settings to encourage turn-taking as part of every day practice.
- Saying nursery rhymes, songs, and chants **to** and **with** children not only encourage turn-taking, but also provide increased opportunities for using more diverse words.

Modeling Use of Familiar Nouns, Verbs, and Descriptive Words

Children's language will develop when caregivers (Hart & Risley, 1995):

- Use more words and more diverse words
- Provide positive and encouraging feedback
- Describe and explain things
- Give choices
- Listen to children and are responsive

Be intentional with the words you use. Find ways to describe familiar nouns using more diverse words. Let's practice being more descriptive with the following activity.

Descriptive, Naming “Peek-a-Boo” Activity – Young Toddlers

Most young toddlers enjoy playing “Peek-a-boo” especially when the adult uses a high-pitched voice.

“Peek-a-boo” can also be used to enhance language development when descriptive words are combined with naming words. For example, you might introduce the word, “fuzzy” following these simple steps:

- Cover the object with a “peek-a-boo” blanket
- Say, “Peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo” and lift the blanket or fabric to reveal the object.
- In a high-pitched voice, say “a fuzzy bear sees you.”
- Repeat as the toddler continues to show interest.
- Over the next several days, reinforce the new word “fuzzy” by playing “Peek-a-boo” with additional “fuzzy” objects: slipper, rabbit, ball, sock, etc.



Practice Activity 1: Descriptive Naming “Peek-a-Boo” Activity - Young Toddlers

- For this Practice Activity, you will get to practice the descriptive naming peek-a-boo activity you experienced in the previous slide.
- Over the next few days, create an opportunity to engage a child in 1:1 peek-a-boo activity with three to four **fuzzy** objects that are safe for the child to hold and touch.
- Keep in mind that the goal of this activity is to engage the child in a turn-taking conversation to add a descriptive word, such as “**fuzzy**,” to describe the object peeking at the child.
- Begin with this conversation starter, “Let’s play peek-a-boo.” I brought some **fuzzy** things for to play with. Show toddler **fuzzy** objects one at a time, and let him/her hold it, touch it, and place on the floor or table.
- Next, let the child help cover one object with a small soft cloth and uncover the object as you say, “Peek-a-boo, a **fuzzy**.....sees you!” (Be sure to use a descriptive word when you name the object. Use a high pitch voice)



Fuzzy Objects to Explore

Reflection On Practice Activity 1 – Young Toddlers

After completing the Descriptive Peek-A-Boo Activity with the child, answer these reflection questions found in your Learning Guide for Application Activity 1.

- How did you model the use of descriptive words?
- How did the child respond to the 1:1 time to have a conversation with you?
- Why was it important to engage with the child 1:1 rather than doing this as a group activity?
- Based on the child's interests, what objects would you choose next for a 1:1 conversation using descriptive words?

Include your responses in your Learning Guide.

End of Section 1

Congratulations, you just completed Section 1 of Module 3.

- Be sure you completed Section 1 activities in the Learning Guide.
- Continue to practice modeling the use of descriptive words.
- When ready, move on to the presentation for Section 2.