

# Two Little Words to Encourage Communication

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You want your toddler to say a word. What do you do? You get out their favorite book and open it up to the brightly colored picture of the ball. You know he knows this word. It won't fail, right?

**Parent:** "What's this?"

**Toddler:** blank stare

**Parent:** "Say ball"

**Toddler:** looks at the picture of the car

**Parent** (goes to get a ball then shows it to toddler): "Do you want the ball? Say ball"

**Toddler:** leaves the room

Sound familiar? The two most common ways we try to get children to say words may be asking "what's this" and commanding "say...". However, these don't always seem to work and they rarely work with new words.

Asking little ones to perform on demand often backfires, especially with little ones who are still learning new skills or those who just don't want the spotlight. Direct questions and commands place a lot of pressure on your toddler to talk or at least try to talk.

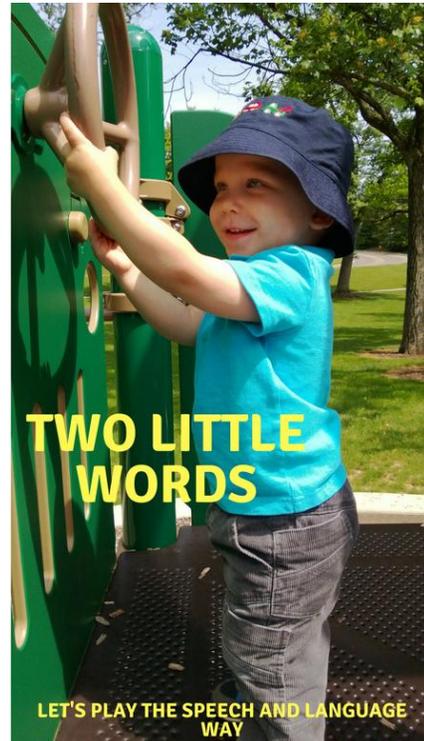
**Taking the pressure off** may be one of the most effective strategies we can use to open the doors of communication. We can do that many ways, but one of my favorites is to start with two little words:

"I wonder"

Rather than ask your toddler "what's this", try wondering aloud while YOU look at the picture of the ball: "I wonder what this is." Sounds simple and maybe you're thinking that won't work. Try it. Take it a step further and wonder aloud if it could be "a car? No. A bird? No." Keep wondering "hmmmm". You may be surprised when your toddler tries to help you by saying "ball!"

By stating "I wonder" you have opened the door to communication without demanding it. Your toddler does not have to do anything, but if they choose to then it will have so much more of an impact and they may even remember that word more quickly the next time. By putting the pressure on yourself to remember the word, you have taken all the pressure off of your toddler. He will thank you. He may even feel sorry for you because you are so forgetful that he will want to help you remember!

When you are hoping your toddler will say a word you think they already know, start with "I wonder."



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\*For the FULL article and more strategies for early talking, go to [www.letsplaythespeechandlanguageway.com](http://www.letsplaythespeechandlanguageway.com).

