

What to do when you can't understand your child

When your child is trying to tell you something, but you don't understand, it can be frustrating for everyone. Both you and your child are likely to feel more successful when you work together to solve the problem. Here are suggestions for helping your child keep trying, so that you can get as much extra information as possible to figure out the message:

- Be face-to-face. Crouch or sit down, if needed, to be at eye level.
- Reassure your child that you want to understand what he/she is saying.
- Take some of the responsibility for the communication problem (e.g. "It's really noisy in here. I couldn't hear. What did you say?" or "Sorry, my ears aren't working very well today.")
- Be honest. Don't pretend to understand, if you don't.
- Repeat back the parts of the message that you did understand (e.g. "You went to Grandma's, and what happened?").
- Encourage your child to *show* you (with gestures, pointing, pictures) what he/she wants to tell you. If your child can write, ask him/her to write it down.
- Try to clarify the topic (e.g. "Are we still talking about swimming?").

- Sometimes, despite trying all the suggestions above, you might not be able to figure out what your child is saying. Acknowledge that you still want to know what he/she said, and that you will try again later (e.g. “This is a really tricky one, isn’t it. You’re working hard. Let’s take a break. We can try again later.”).