Yes! And No!

I LOVE TO TALK. Most children say at least 20 words by the time they are 20 months old. Often, a child’s favorite word is “NO.” You may not understand all of the words your child says. They may be combining two words into sentences. They probably understand hundreds of words.

I CAN RUN, CLIMB and JUMP. Your 18–20 month-old is walking, running, climbing and jumping! (And you are chasing!) Your child probably still walks with legs wide apart and arms spread to help balance.

I LIKE TO BE AROUND OTHER CHILDREN. Your child is beginning to be interested in other children, but needs help learning how to play. It’s too soon to introduce them to screen time. Let children play and explore together in a safe space while you lend a hand. HINT: Put down your phone.

READ READ READ! Reading should be fun. Let your child help decide what you read and how much you read. Let your child turn pages. Talk to your child about what is in the pictures. Most children only pay attention for short times. Don’t worry if you do not finish the book. Your child learns best when reading is fun for both of you. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

Look inside for more information about talking, movements, and friendships of 18–20 month-old children.
Try this!
You can repeat words to your child, saying them correctly. For example, if your child says, “Bah,” for BALL, you can say, “Yes, that’s a BALL.” This way, you are teaching them that you understand. The more they feel understood, the more they will want to talk. You are also showing them the right way to say the word. If you tell them that the word is wrong, they maybe less willing to try new words.

QUESTION: My child says a lot of words in baby talk. How can I teach my child to say the words correctly?
ANSWER: When children are first learning to talk, the words do not sound like adult words. Some sounds are very hard to learn to say. Even many five-year-olds still have trouble with the “R” sound and “L” sound. You probably understand your child better than other adults understand your child.

QUESTION: What language should I speak to my child?
ANSWER: Children who learn more than one language gain something that will help them through their whole lives. If you speak more than one language, talk to your child in all of the languages you know. Or, you can speak one language and someone else can speak another language. Also, sing to them in all of the languages you know. Talk, talk, talk!

QUESTION: My child says “NO” all day long. What should I do?
ANSWER: Saying “NO” is part of normal development, but not always a fun part of development. This is a time when children learn that they can make choices. Your child is not trying to make you mad. 18–20 month-old children want to control what happens to them. They prove it by saying, “NO.” This is a sign of growing up. You can decide when to accept a “NO” and when not to accept a “NO.”

QUESTION: What if my child is not talking yet?
ANSWER: By 20 months, most children say at least 20 words. If your child is not talking yet, watch and see how they respond to you. When you ask them a question, do they understand you? When you smile, do they smile back at you? Do they give you a toy, then wait for you to give it back? Do they hear you come into the room? If your child seems not to respond to you, ask your doctor. If your child needs extra help, it is best to get the help as early as possible. There are special programs for helping children, even very young children.
QUESTION: How coordinated should my 18–20 month-old be?
ANSWER: 18–20 month-old children walk more smoothly. They walk with their tummy out and shoulders back. They can walk backwards, sideways, and can even run. Children this age can jump. When they want to pick up a toy, they can bend down and pick it up. They are beginning to walk up stairs with help. Even though your child may seem to have better balance now, make sure that your child can’t get to the stairs without an adult close by.

QUESTION: Should my child be using forks, spoons and crayons?
ANSWER: Your 18–20 month-old is getting better at using fingers and hands. Children this age still love to eat small pieces of food that are easy to pick up with their fingers, but are also starting to use a spoon or fork, and drink from a cup. They also like to fit objects inside of each other (stacking cups, shape-sorters, puzzles). Scribbling with a crayon helps a child’s fingers grow strong. Scribbles will not look like letters, but scribbling will help them write in Kindergarten.

QUESTIONS: My child sometimes tells me when his diaper is wet or messy. When should my child start using the toilet?
ANSWER: Children who are trained to use the toilet before they are 2 years old are more likely to still have accidents when they are 4. Waiting until your child is really ready will make it easier for both of you. Your next handout (Handout J for 21–23 month-olds) will include ideas about using the toilet.
There are so many fun things to discover and explore in the playground. Most playground injuries come from falls.

Tips to consider:

**Before Play:**
- Make sure the playground equipment is appropriate for your child’s age.
- Look for sharp edges, loose or broken screws on playground equipment.

**During Play:**
- Watch your child carefully. Accidents can happen quickly! Put down your phone.
- Teach your child playground behavior such as no pushing or shoving.
- Keep children under 5 years old in a play area away from older children.

18–20 month-old children do not know how to be friends yet. Some days they might play really well. Other days, they may bite, pull hair, or hit other children. They are not being mean. They do not understand that it hurts when they hit or bite.

Some parents bite or hit their child back because they want their child to learn that these hurt. Doctors say that you should not hit or bite your child back. Biting or hitting them teaches them that bigger people are allowed to hurt smaller people.

**QUESTION:** What are the best TOYS for 18–20 month-old children?

**ANSWER:** You are more important than any toy. **READ** to your child every day. **PLAY** on the floor with them every day. Cuddle them every day. And **TALK** and **SING** in every language you know!

Your child will enjoy fitting things into each other. Stacking cups, shape-sorters, and simple puzzles are still great toys for this age. Crayons, playdough, and other art supplies give your child a chance to practice new finger skills and see how they can create. Your child won’t be able to make a craft that you can recognize, but will have fun painting and playing with colors.

Any media use should be very limited and only when an adult is standing by to co-view, talk, and teach. Remember, screen time includes TV, cell phones, computers, tablets, and other hand-held games and devices.