



She does not want to repeat

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When a young child starts to say words, parents are often ecstatic and would love the child to say them over and over again. However, that is not always what happens, and once the child has said a word one time, it might be a few days or weeks until he says it again even if the parents insist. But there are ways to encourage your child to say those words without adding frustration for everyone.

Not all kids like to repeat

From past experience and observation, three quarter of toddlers will not like to repeat a word when asked to. For them, repeating is usually a useless task: why would they repeat? You heard them the first time, didn't you? You might be lucky and your child might enjoy repeating just for the fun of it, but that is not always the case.

Children will repeat, in time

There is a stage in the language development when toddlers will tend to repeat whatever they hear (even those words we wish they didn't repeat). It is a time when they practice. Just like someone learning a second language will try to repeat the pronunciation of a word to get the feel of it, the children will also do the same thing. However, they will repeat only when they feel like it, and not when asked from someone else.

Kids need time to process

When talking to another adult, we will often ask a question and get an answer almost immediately. That is not what happens when we talk to a toddler. And it has nothing to do with behaviour but it is related to processing. When young children are talked to, they need a few seconds to understand what you said, and a few seconds to plan their answer or what to repeat. That adds up to a few seconds we, as adults, are not used to wait for. But that is exactly what the young child needs: time.



Count to 3

Whenever you are talking to your young child and say something, give them time to understand what you said, and plan their response. Don't assume that they didn't understand because they didn't say anything as fast as you wish. In your head, count to 3 (or more) before repeating the same sentence or word (in case he didn't pay attention), rephrasing the sentence (in case he didn't understand) or give a possible choice of answers (in case he didn't know what to answer to a question).

That is loooong!

Yes, waiting 3 seconds might seem like nothing, but i bet it will not be as easy as it sound. We are so used to get immediate answers from other adults we talk to every day that it is a new way of talking we need to adopt. Think of it right now... 1... 2... 3... Now you can say something else. Easy? Probably not.

Why wait?

What happens during those 3 seconds? Not only the child will have time to process what he heard and plan his reply, but it will also give him the opportunity to participate in the conversation. If the child never has the time to speak, he will quickly understand that you will continue the conversation for him, and he does not need to make any effort to participate. You want to let him know that he is part of the conversation.

Only 3 seconds?

The 3 second rule is not a hard set rule, but more of a guideline. Some children will reply within 2 seconds, while others will need up to 10 or 15 seconds. Observe your child and keep an eye contact. Waiting is not just waiting. It is expecting a turn from the child and showing the child that we are waiting for that turn; it is showing him that we believe he can participate in the conversation, in his way.

What if he does not answer?

It is possible that the child won't answer the question, or repeat the word we just said. That is fine. Maybe the word is too hard for him. Maybe he does not know what to answer. Maybe he is just not in the mood to say anything. Don't push. Continue the conversation AS IF the child replied. There will be another opportunity in just a few minutes! Don't give up. Try again later, with a different question, in a different context, with a different word.