



Using Your Words

The preschool years can be hard for kids. Being able to use words to say what you think and feel, and to ask for what you need, can make them a little easier. A major skill children need to learn is to use language to express themselves and get their needs met. Kids at this age act out when they want to communicate. But with practice, preschool kids can move away from this behavior and learn to use their words instead.

Our Hedgehog friend Nina was able to use her words to tell her friend Sam why she was upset. And then they were able to work together.

Important skills from the video

- All feelings are okay to feel — it's what we do with them that matters.
- It's normal for preschool kids to have strong reactions sometimes. When kids act out, adults can use the situation to teach them about using words instead.
- When kids face problems or have big feelings, they need a little help finding their words.

PRACTICE SKILLS

- Preschool kids learn from watching adults. Show them how you use words to talk about how you feel and ask for what you need. You can also use words to describe what you see your child may be feeling or needing.
- Angry, sad, happy, or excited. Whatever feeling you are feeling, talk about it in a calm voice. You might say:



“I am feeling angry, but I’m going to talk to my friend about ways that we can solve this problem.”

“I’m feeling a bit sad. I think talking to a friend will make me feel better.”

- Show kids how to use words to say what you like. You might say:



“I really liked how you helped me clean your toys.”

“I like books that describe fun places to visit.”

- When your child is calm, practice words and phrases that they can use when they are upset. This can help kids feel ready to use words when they have a problem. When they are able to use their words in hard situations, give praise right away and every time you see them do it. This is the best way to grow helpful behavior. You might say:

“I’m proud of you for calmly using your words to tell me you’re not ready to leave the playground.”

“I love how you’re using your words to ask for a turn with that toy.”

“Thank you for telling me that you loved that show. Me too!”

- Use books, movies, or real-life situations to show how people clearly using their words to say how they feel or ask for things they need.

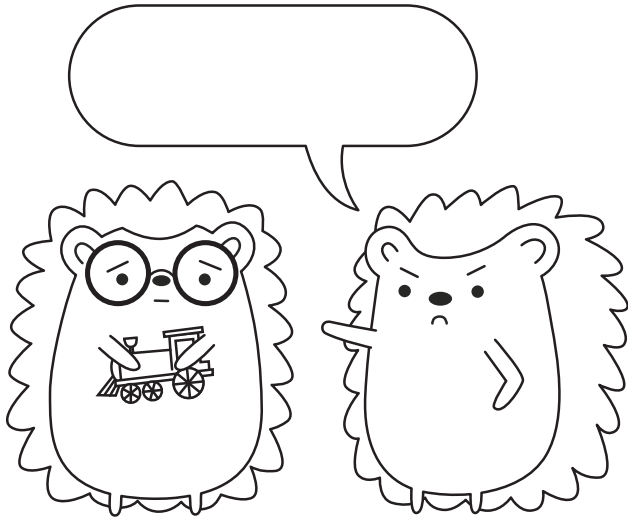
START WITH THIS →

- Watching what adults do and say is an important way preschool age kids learn. Model how you use your words. This means letting them see you talk about your feelings, say what you like, and ask for what you need.
- Be a narrator. This means using words to say what you may think your child is feeling and wanting. Being a narrator helps kids connect words to how they are feeling and what they are wanting.
- When your child is calm, practice words they can use when they are upset or have a problem. Praise them every time they use their words to say how they feel and what they want.

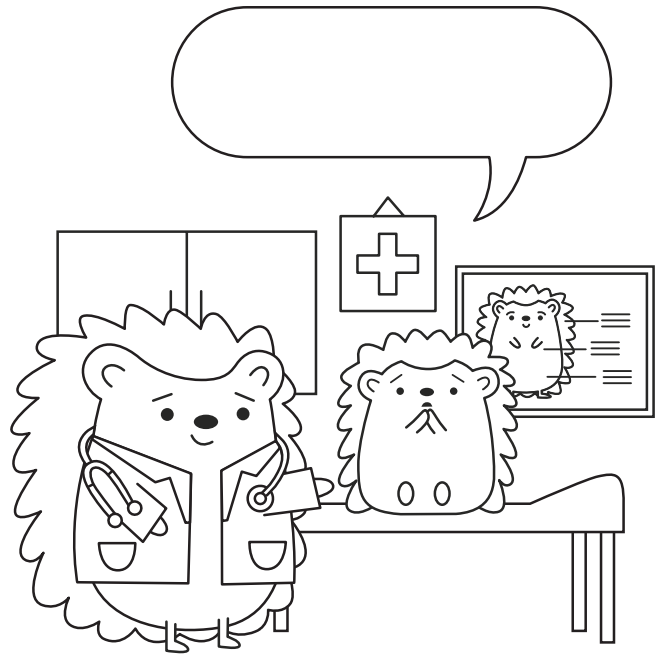
Using Your Words

♪ You can use your words! ♪

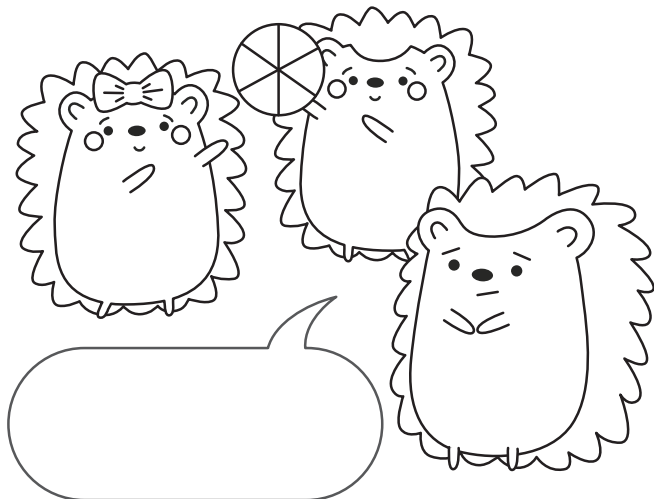
Take a look at the hedgehogs in different situations below.
Think about what words the hedgehog can use in that situation.



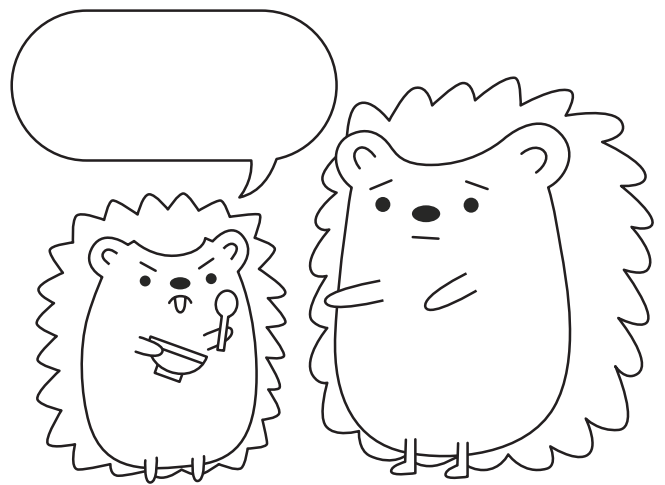
The hedgehog is mad at the other hedgehog for taking their toy.



The hedgehog is nervous at the doctor's office.



The hedgehog is nervous to join the other hedgehogs playing.

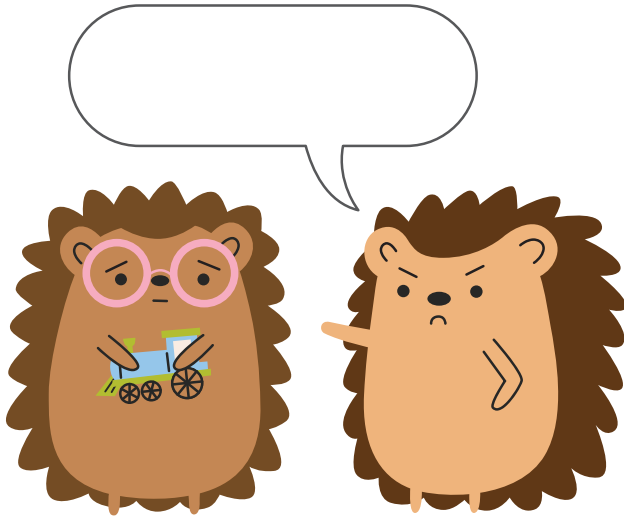


The hedgehog does not like the meal.

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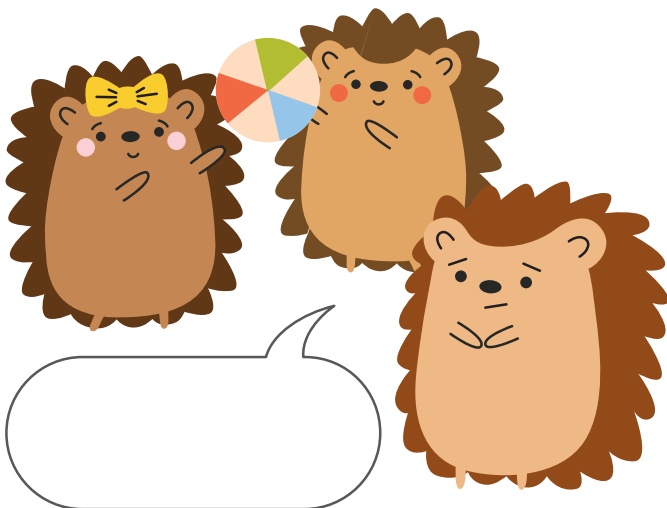
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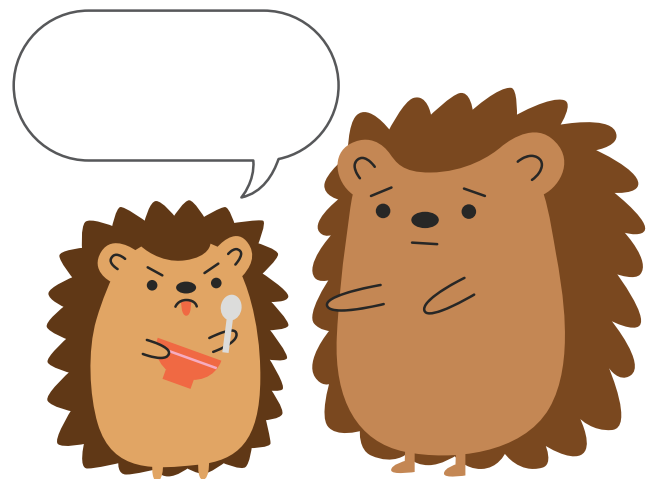
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