



The Repetition Observation Guide

*What your toddler may be learning when they say the same thing again
and again.*

● AN OBSERVATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

● NOT A WORKSHEET · NOT A CHECKLIST

— A COMPANION TO: WHY TODDLERS REPEAT WORDS

Repetition is not a behaviour problem. It is a learning signal.

When a toddler says the same word ten times in a row, they are not doing nothing. Something is being built. Here is what it might be.

Making a memory

Each repetition deepens a pathway in the brain. What looks like looping is actually anchoring — the word moving from temporary into lasting.

Practising the sounds

Saying something again and again is how a child tests how a word feels — its rhythm, its weight, where it belongs in a sentence.

Coming back to you

Sometimes the repetition is relational. Your voice in return, your presence, your calm — these are part of what they are returning to.

Holding something new

A new experience, emotion, or idea can take days to absorb. The repeated word is the thread they are pulling until it makes sense.

This guide does not measure what your child should be doing. It invites you to notice what is already happening — with curiosity rather than concern.

ON REPETITION

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Children rarely repeat
because nothing
is happening.

*They repeat because
something important is.*

CHICHIBERRY PARENTING

The Repetition Observation Guide

What to notice when repetition appears

The instinct to correct, redirect, or respond every time your child repeats is natural. But observation — quiet, unhurried noticing — gives you richer information than any correction could. These prompts are not questions to answer out loud. They are invitations to watch.

OBSERVATION PROMPTS — CARRY THESE WITH YOU

- What is happening in their body when they repeat — are they still, moving, agitated, or calm?
- What happened just before the repetition began — was there a transition, a new experience, or a moment of emotion?
- Are they looking at you when they repeat, or looking elsewhere — what does the direction of their attention tell you?
- Does the repetition change over time — does the word shift, grow more confident, or eventually stop on its own?
- What do they do when you respond with calm acknowledgement — does the repetition continue, soften, or resolve?

A GENTLE REFRAME

Instead of: "You already asked me that." — try simply being present. Your willingness to receive the repetition is itself a form of language support.

THE OBSERVER'S SHIFT

FROM — REACTIVE

Why do they keep saying that?

When will they stop?

I already answered this

Something must be wrong



TO — OBSERVATIONAL

What might they be building?

What does this pattern show me?

What are they rehearsing here?

Something interesting is happening

What repetition might be building right now

Repetition shows up differently depending on what a child is working through. When you notice the kind of repetition happening, you often find the domain it belongs to.



DOMAIN 01

Language

They say a word slowly, then faster. They try it in different sentences. They correct themselves quietly. They are not reciting — they are rehearsing.

Notice: Do they seem to be testing how the word sounds in different places?



DOMAIN 02

Movement

The words come with rocking, tapping, or pacing. The body and voice are working together. Taking the movement away often stops the words too.

Notice: Does the repetition calm down when their body gets to move freely?



DOMAIN 03

Practical Life

They narrate what they are doing. They name each step before and after they do it. They are claiming the routines of daily life as their own.

Notice: Does the repetition appear most during transitions, meals, or getting ready?



DOMAIN 04

Exploration

Something they saw — a bird, a truck, a feeling — comes back days later as a word they can't leave alone. They are placing the new thing inside their existing world.

Notice: Did something unusual or exciting happen a few days before the repetition started?



DOMAIN 05

Social Learning

They watch your face as they repeat. They wait. They adjust. They are practising the back-and-forth of conversation — and you are the person they trust to practise with.

Notice: Do they seem satisfied when you simply receive the word, even without a full response?



DOMAIN 06

Confidence

One day they stop repeating a particular word. Not because you corrected them — but because they have landed. They know it now. It belongs to them.

Notice: Does the repetition carry a different quality as it settles — something more assured?

You do not need to identify the right domain. Simply noticing that something is being built — without needing to name it precisely — is enough.

What I noticed this week

A space for your own observations — unhurried, ungraded.

You do not need to write every day, or write at length. A single sentence — a moment you noticed — is worth more than a page you felt you ought to fill. This is a record for you, not a report.

THIS WEEK'S OBSERVATION

The word or phrase they repeated most this week was...

I noticed this happening most often when...

When I stayed curious rather than correcting, what I observed was...

One moment I want to remember from this week...

KEEP THIS

Their age right now, and the words they are circling — write them here so you don't forget.

Something small that told you they were learning, even when it wasn't obvious.
