

## Talking with Young Children About Adoption and Birth Parents

Jenna Howard, LMSW, has worked in the adoption field since 1994 in both domestic and international adoption. In addition, she is an adoptee and the adoptive mom of a daughter adopted from China.

1. Why is it important to start talking with kids when they are very young about adoption and birth parents?
2. When should you begin to talk with children about adoption if they are adopted at birth or a very young age?
3. How to talk with infants about adoption.
4. What do young children understand about the concept of adoption?
5. What name should be used when referring to birth parents?
6. How to talk with toddlers and preschoolers about adoption. (They are accepting of what parents say and the attitude it was said.)
7. Adoption is cool stage.
8. Oversharing details. Distinction between secret and private.
9. Oversharing as a parent.
10. Helping child explain adoption.
11. Talking about adoption vs. different ways families are made.
12. Keep it short and simple. Laying the groundwork.
13. Positive adoption language.
14. Common questions children this age might ask and sample answers.
15. How to talk about birth fathers and the role of birth fathers when the child doesn't understand conception.
16. How to talk about birth fathers when birth father is unknown or otherwise not in the picture.
17. How to talk about birth siblings.
18. Why do some adoptive parents hesitate to talk with young children about adoption?
19. When should parents share some of the harder parts of their child's adoption story (domestic violence, substance abuse, incarceration, unknown birth father, rape)?
20. Tips:
  - a. Books Creating a Family has a great list of the Best of the Best Adoption books for kids broken out by type of adoption and age of the child.  
([bit.ly/AdoptionBooks](http://bit.ly/AdoptionBooks))
  - b. Movies/TV shows (Sesame Street, Mister Rogers, etc)
  - c. Make a life book
  - d. Parenting Your Adopted Preschooler and the link won't change so that makes it easy. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/preschool/>