

Tips for Encouraging Speech and Language Development

- ▶ **Use a high-pitched, sing-song voice.** This helps get and keep your baby's attention while you talk.
- ▶ **Play with sounds.** Get silly while playing and make sounds that connect with what your child is doing.
- ▶ **Use facial expressions and gestures** to communicate the meaning of words.
- ▶ **Describe your actions** as you dress, feed, and bathe your child. Pairing the same words with routine activities is a great way to develop language.
- ▶ **Encourage two-way communication.** When your child communicates with you using sounds, words, or gestures, be sure to respond and take turns in "conversation."
- ▶ **Read with your child.** "Reading" can simply mean describing pictures without following the written words. Choose books with large, colorful pictures, and encourage your child to point to and name familiar objects.
- ▶ **Expand your child's vocabulary** by building on the words they already know. For example, if your child says "dog," you could say "Yes, that's a big dog!"
- ▶ **Recast your child's phrases.** If your child makes a speech or language error, respond with their phrase in the correct form. This helps them learn proper pronunciation and grammar. For example, if your child says "Doggy big," you can respond with "Yes, the doggy is big."

Two Types of Communication Skills

From birth baby begins to develop the two communication skills they will continue to build on and use throughout their life:

- **Receptive communication** is the ability to receive and understand a message from another person. Baby demonstrates this skill by turning their head towards your voice and responding to simple directions.
- **Expressive communication** is the ability to convey a message to another person through sounds, speech, signs, or writing. Crying, babbling, and using body language are examples of baby's early expressive skills.



An Introduction to Speech and Language Development



Pathways.org empowers parents and health professionals with FREE tools and resources to maximize a child's motor, sensory, and communication development.



800-955-CHILD (2445)
friends@pathways.org
www.pathways.org



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FREE tools to maximize child development

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Speech & Language

Hearing & Understanding

BY
3
MONTHS

- Makes eye contact
- Cries differently for different needs, e.g. hungry vs. tired
- Coos, goos, and smiles

- Turns head toward sound or voice
- Quiets or smiles when spoken to
- Shows interest in faces

BY
6
MONTHS

- Begins babbling with p, b and m sounds
- Makes different kinds of sounds to express feelings
- Imitates sounds and facial expressions

- Listens and responds when spoken to
- Fears loud or unexpected noises
- Notices toys that make sounds

BY
9
MONTHS

- Uses many sounds in babbling
- Participates in two-way communication
- Begins using hand movements to communicate wants and needs, e.g. reaches to be picked-up

- Responds to own name
- Looks at familiar objects and people when named
- Follows some routine commands paired with gestures

BY
12
MONTHS

- Says one or two words, e.g. “mama,” “dada”
- Imitates speech sounds
- Babbling has sounds and rhythms of speech

- Understands up to 50 words
- Responds to simple directions, e.g. “come here”
- Pays attention to where you are looking and pointing

BY
15
MONTHS

- May use 4 – 6 different words
- Imitates simple words and actions
- Combines sounds and gestures

- Consistently follows simple directions
- Shows interest in pictures
- Can identify 1 – 2 body parts when named

BY
18
MONTHS

- Uses 20 words (mostly nouns)
- Responds to questions
- Continues to produce speech-like babbling

- Points at familiar objects and people in pictures
- Understands “in” and “on”
- Responds to yes/no questions with head shake/nod

BY
21
MONTHS

- Uses at least 50 words
- Consistently imitates new words
- Names objects and pictures

- Understands simple emotion words (happy, sad)
- Understands simple pronouns (me, you, my)
- Identifies 3 – 5 body parts when named

BY
24
MONTHS

- Uses words more than gestures
- Begins to use 2-word phrases
- Uses simple pronouns (me, you, my)

- Understands more than 300 words
- Understands action words
- Enjoys listening to stories

BY
30
MONTHS

- Consistently uses 2 – 3 word phrases
- Uses “in” and “on”
- At least 50% of speech is understood by caregiver

- Follows 2-step directions, e.g. “Pick up your coat and bring it to me.”
- Understands basic nouns, verbs, pronouns
- Understands “mine” and “yours”

BY
36
MONTHS

- Asks “what” and “where” questions
- Uses plurals, e.g. “dogs”
- Most speech is understood by caregiver

- Understands opposites, e.g. “big” and “small”
- Simple understanding of concepts including color, space, time
- Understands “why” questions