

Your 1 Year Old

Speech and Language Tips



1 year olds say their first words!

It's exciting when your child says their first word. This is one of the many steps your child makes in becoming a talker. By the time your child is 1 year old, they have learned a lot about talking. They have been practising by making lots of sounds and babbling. Your child has learned how to get your attention and ask for things without using words.

It's exciting to hear your child say "up" instead of raising their arms up. Before you know it, they will be copying you and saying many new words. Your child's first words may be hard to understand. Sometimes a word like "ba" can mean ball, bottle, bus, or bye. Often, you are the only one who understands your child.



How children learn language

Your child is learning language every day, even if they are just learning their first words. They learn about the world by seeing, touching, listening, tasting, and doing. Talk, sing, and look at books with your child in the language, or languages, you use at home.

As the parent or caregiver of a 1 year old, you play an important role in your child's learning. How you talk and respond to your child makes a difference. Children learn to talk through back-and-forth interactions. Turn everyday activities into interactions and help your child build their language. Talk and sing during bath time, bedtime, eating, playing, and cleaning up. Repeat words, phrases, and songs when you do these activities with your child.

It's never too early to help your child with speech and language development.



For more information scan this QR code or visit: ahs.ca/talkbox

Parents and caregivers make the difference.

Try these tips in your language

When talking

- **Use short, simple sentences.** Say, “The sun is up,” instead of “The sun is up and it’s getting hot.”
- **Say words over and over.** Repeating words helps children learn new words. Repeat different types of words, including action words, like “eat,” and “jump,” and describing words, like “cold,” and “soft.”
- **Respond when your child makes sounds or says a word.** Repeat their words. Ask a simple question or simply smile and wait for them to say something else.
- **Take turns with your child and give them time to talk.** Sometimes they need up to 5 seconds before answering you.
- **Get face to face with your child.** Get to your child’s level by sitting on the floor or bending down. You can also bring your child up to your level.

When playing or doing everyday activities

- **Let your child be the leader and join them.** Follow along with what they are doing or playing. Let them show you what they are interested in and talk about it.
- **Take turns.** When they put a block in the bucket, you put a block in. Wait for them to put another one in. Say, “put the block in” or “my turn. . . your turn.”
- **Add a new word to what your child says.** If they say “up” you can say, “go up” or “up high.”

Telling stories and reading books helps your child to learn language. Good language skills will help them learn to read and write. Even though school is a long time from now, these skills are important from a young age.



When telling stories and reading

- **Look at books together every day.** Take turns flipping the pages, naming, and talking about the pictures.
- **Put strong, durable books in a place your child can reach.** Bring a book when you go places like a doctor’s office. Read while you’re waiting. Keep special books out of reach so they don’t get ruined.
- **Choose simple books.** Your child will enjoy books that have only a few words on a page and have big, simple pictures.
- **Read the same books over and over.** Your child likes the repetition.

When singing

- **Sing a song over and over.** Sing while doing everyday activities, like when you're dressing your child, brushing their teeth, cleaning up, or driving.
- **Sing slowly.** Slow down and take lots of pauses to help your child hear the words and try to sing along.
- **Use actions.** Make up actions that go along with the words of the song. Sing songs, nursery rhymes and fingerplays.
- **Make up your own songs.** Put your child's name into the song. Make up your own song using a tune you already know.
- **Sing songs in the language, or languages, you speak at home.**



Children learn by doing

Activities to try

- When you're buying groceries, name the food you're putting into your shopping cart. Talk about the food.
- Name body parts while you're giving your child a bath. Name clothes while they're getting dressed.
- Go for a walk outside. Talk about all of the things you see, like cars, trees, bugs, street signs, and airplanes. Jump over the sidewalk cracks. Talk about what you are doing.
- Use interesting moments to teach new words. These may include going to a celebration, going to the dentist or doctor, seeing a broken toy, or looking at spilled juice.

Some children use apps or devices to communicate, which is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication. These programs are designed to support communication and are not considered screen time.

Screens and your child

Children learn language best from taking turns. Time spent on a screen is a missed chance to talk. Minimize screen time. Screen time is using a tablet, phone, television, or other screen. To learn more about screen time, ask a healthcare provider or visit caringforkids.cps.ca

What to expect

1 year olds:

- understand words for everyday objects, like cup, shoe, and car.
- understand “no” (pause briefly or stop when you say it).
- copy gestures, like waving “bye-bye.”
- respond to their name.
- babble using a variety of different sounds, like “bababa dididi upupbupup.”
- may have first words, like “mama” or “dada.”
- show an interest in books.

1 year olds:

- babble using different sounds, like “bababa” or “putudume.”
- copy different sounds you say.

When to get help

Reach out for help if your child:

- doesn't understand words for common objects.
- doesn't babble or make many sounds.
- used some sounds or words but seems to have forgotten them.
- isn't trying to talk.
- doesn't interact with you or other people.

Where to get help

Are you concerned about your child's speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. For more information go to: ahs.ca/pedrehab

For more ideas

- hanen.org
- firstwords.ca

1 ½ year olds:

- point to people and body parts when asked.
- point to pictures in books.
- understand simple questions and statements, like “Where is your nose?” and “give me.”
- nod their head for “yes” and shake their head for “no.”
- point to make requests, to comment, or to get information.
- say at least 10 words, although they may not be clear. Understands more words.
- take part in imaginary play, like pretending to sleep or feed a doll.

1 ½ year olds:

- may start using sounds like m, p, b, d, w, and h.
- babble sounds together like real sentences, such as “bapotimawabe.”

