

Under 12 Months

Speech and Language Tips



Do babies talk? Maybe not, but they tell you so much!

A baby may not say their first word for about a year, but they have lots to tell you. Parents and caregivers learn early how to tell what their baby wants or needs. When they're quiet and alert, they tell you they're happy and it's a good time to play. After a month or so, they smile. They get excited when they like what you're doing. They let you know when they don't like it anymore. They cry when they're hungry, tired, hurt, or need to be changed. They're communicating with you.

By 3 months old, your baby makes cooing and gooing sounds. Next, they make raspberries with their tongue and lips. Around 6 to 8 months old, they babble their first sounds, like "bababa" or "mamama." This sound play is very important in learning to talk. Before you know it, your baby will say their first word.

How children learn language

Your baby starts to learn language from the day they're born. They learn about their world by seeing, touching, tasting, listening, and doing. Any activity you do together is a chance to learn language. Talk, read, and sing with your baby in the language, or languages, you use at home.

As a parent or caregiver, you're your baby's first teacher. You already do many things that help your baby learn. How you talk and respond to your baby's sounds and movements makes a difference. Babies learn to talk through back-and-forth interactions. Turn everyday activities into interactions and help your child build their language. Talk, sing, or make sounds during everyday routines like feeding, bath time, getting dressed and diaper changes. Babies are happy and learn more when they know what to expect.



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 lots of expression in your voice.** This will help keep their attention.
- **Talk slowly.** Give your baby a chance to make a sound or giggle.
- **Copy your baby when they make a sound.**
- **Respond to your baby.** Act as if they are saying real words.
- **Get face to face.** Get to your baby's level by sitting on the floor or bending down. You can also bring your baby up to your level.

When playing or doing everyday activities

- **Let your baby be the leader.** When they bang a block on the table, copy them.
- **Talk about anything.** Talk about your day, or what you are doing and seeing. Babies like to hear your voice.
- **Take turns.** Try putting blocks on top of each other or shapes into a bucket. Say, "on," "up," or "in" when you take a turn.

When telling stories and reading

- **Look at books and tell stories every day.**
- **Read anything.** When your baby is younger than 6 months old, you can read a children's book, a magazine or even a recipe. They just like to hear your voice.
- **Pick simple books.** When your baby is more than 6 months old, pick books with simple pictures and only a few words on each page.
- **Choose books that are strong and durable.** Babies like to grab them, throw them, and put them into their mouth.
- **Make up your own story.** Tell your own story to go with the pictures, instead of reading the words on the page.

Telling stories and reading books helps your baby learn language. Good language skills will help them learn to read and write. It's never too early to start.



When singing

- **Sing songs over and over.** Ask your baby if they want to hear it again. Wait for them to smile, giggle, or make a sound.
- **Change the speed of your singing.** Sometimes sing the song slowly and sometimes sing it fast.
- **Make up your own songs.** Put your baby's name into the song.
- **Use actions.** Hold your baby's hands while you do them. Babies love tickles, rhymes, and songs.
- **Sing songs in the language, or languages, you speak at home.**



Babies learn by doing

Activities to try

- While giving your baby a bath, talk about what you are doing. Name the body part you're washing. Talk about the clothes as you dress them.
- While changing your baby's diaper, make sounds that you have heard them babble before, like "bobobo." Wait for them to say a sound, then copy them.
- When you're cleaning, talk about what you are doing. Talk about picking up socks, putting books on the shelf, or putting toys away.
- Watch for clues that your baby has had enough. If they start to cry, fuss, or squirm, they may be trying to tell you that they don't want to play or talk anymore. Remember, you don't have to complete the whole activity, read a whole book, or sing a whole song.

Screens and your child

Babies learn language best from interacting with others and listening to them talk. Time spent on a screen is a missed chance to listen in real life. Screen time is time spent on a tablet, phone, television, or other screen. Screen time is not recommended for children under 2. If you want to learn more about screen time, ask a healthcare provider or visit caringforkids.cps.ca

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.

What to expect

3 month olds:

- respond to sound by startling, blinking, crying, or quieting.
- comfort to your voice when they are upset and crying.
- coo, grunt, gurgle, cry, and make lots of different noises like “ahh.”

6 month olds:

- show interest in sounds, voices, and music.
- look for the source of a sound and watch your face when you talk.
- coo and squeal for attention.

4 to 7 month olds start to make babbling sounds, like “ahah,” “baba,” “mama,” and “gaga.”

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.
- 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 babble or make many sounds.
- used some sounds but seems to have forgotten them or stopped using them.
- doesn't startle to loud sounds.
- doesn't turn their head towards a noise or voice.



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