

Becoming a Communicator



Babies are tuned in to language from birth. From sighing, cooing and babbling to first words, a baby learns that language is a powerful tool in human society. Children learn language by being with people who encourage their efforts to communicate and who look for opportunities to communicate with them.

Talking is one of the biggest milestones and there is lots you can do to help your child on their journey. From newborn, your baby's primary way to communicate for everything is through crying. This alerts you to knowing they need something but it also strengthens the neural pathways in the brain that are used for speech. Saying something back and talking to your baby will help soothe them and they will become confident that you are listening to them.

Long before children speak their first word they will be communicating needs and feelings in a variety of ways including crying, gurgling, babbling and squealing. Babies will make their own sounds in response when talked to by familiar adults.

There are lots of ways to support and encourage your baby as they develop their use of language. Encouraging babies' sounds and babbling by copying their sounds creates a turn-taking 'conversation'. As your baby practises and develops speech sounds to communicate, you will hear them say sounds like 'baba, nono and gogo'.



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A good place to start is talking to your baby about what you are doing with them for example, “I’m rubbing your tummy”. They will develop their use of language into sounds used in play for example saying ‘brrrm’ for a toy car. When your baby tries to say a word, repeat it back so they can hear the name of the object clearly and pick the object up in response.

Tuning into your baby’s ‘talk’ and trying to make sense of their messages means you can celebrate with them as they develop their language skills.

Babies reach language milestones at a wide range of ages but the average age they say their first word is 12 months, and they are able to manage two-word “sentences” by the time they are 2. It is important not to compare or panic though, as like other big moments in your baby’s life like sleeping through the night or taking their first steps, it will happen when they are ready.

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