

BUILDING LANGUAGE SKILLS TOGETHER



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Did you know that babies start to communicate from the moment they are born? Before they have words, they use their actions and sounds to tell you what they need. Your baby might cry when they are hungry or wet, smile when they hear your voice, or laugh when you play peek-a-boo. When you answer them, you teach them that what they are saying matters. This helps them learn to talk as they grow up.

How do children learn to talk?

Children develop language when people talk to them. Language develops in a pattern, starting with gestures and facial expressions. For example, babies smile when they see a familiar face. Or they cry when they need a diaper change. Toddlers point to show what they want.

As your baby grows you will hear them make sounds. First, they coo or babble to get your attention or join in a conversation. Later they say their first words. Then they put 2 words together, like "more juice." This is followed by short phrases.

Remember, children understand more than they can say. For example, your baby or toddler may raise their arms when you say, "Do you want me to pick you up?" or stop what they are doing when you say, "No".



HELPFUL TIPS WHEN YOU TALK TO YOUR BABY OR TODDLER:

- Sit face-to-face so your child can see your face.
- Use a happy, exciting voice.
- Wait a few seconds after you talk to give your child time to respond.
- Say important words clearly, like "Do you want *milk*?"
- Make comments about what your child is doing. For example, "You're making the red car go fast"
- Ask questions to show interest, not to test them. For example, "I wonder where the car is going?" instead of "What color is the car?"
- Try to make two comments for each question you ask.

How can you help your child talk?

Talk to your baby anytime you can. The more you talk to your baby the more words they will learn. Let your child take the lead:

- Talk to your baby about things that interest them. For example, if your baby is looking at a dog say, "I see you like that doggie!"
- Copy their sounds and actions. Make it fun.
- Talk during everyday activities.
 - During diaper changes, say, "I'm changing your diaper. Then we will have lunch."
 - When you see something interesting say, "Look at the big truck!"
 - During play time say, "I'm going to get you!" and wait for them to react.
- Sing songs. Repeating songs helps children learn.
- Read books together. Look at the pictures and talk about them.
- Use sign language, gestures, or pictures to help your child communicate. They can use these tools before they start talking. These tools help your child express themselves. They will not slow down talking or learning.

Can my child learn more than one language?

Yes, it's good for children to learn more than one language. This will not confuse them or make it harder for them to talk or learn. It helps them think in different ways, feel close to their culture, and learn how people talk in different places. The best thing you can do is speak to your child in the language you know best.

Are language delays normal?

A language delay is when a child is not developing language skills. For example, they do not talk, understand, or use words to express themselves at the expected age. Delays in language are normal if your child has a medical condition or has been in the hospital a lot. It is common for them to have delays in their development because their body is focused on healing. If you are worried about your child having a delay, talk to their doctor. Early intervention services are available to help children learn how to communicate with others.

When should I be concerned about my child's language development?

Children grow at their own pace. Some children learn to talk before others. Talk with your child's doctor if you are concerned about their language development. Some concerns might be:

- Your baby does not turn when they hear sounds or your voice.
- Your baby does not make sounds or smile back at you by six months.
- Your 15-month-old does not point to show you things.
- Your child does not say any words by 18 months.
- Your child does not put two words together by 2 years old.

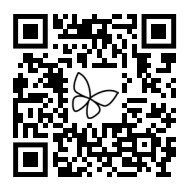




What if my child needs help with their language development?

There are many places that can help your child with their language development. Your health insurance may pay for services to help your child with their language. The Early Start program also helps children with their language development. You can find more information about these services in the Early Connections handout, "Helping Your Baby or Young Child with Special Developmental Needs".

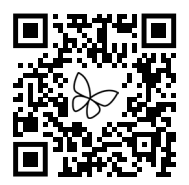
Where can I find online resources for more support?



Communication
Pathways
<https://pathways.org/topics-of-development/communication>



Language
ZERO TO THREE
<https://www.zerotothree.org/?s=language>



Helping Your Baby or Young Child with Special Developmental Needs
Children's Hospital Los Angeles
<https://uscucedd.org/hubfs/Early%20Connections%20Program/Eng-Early%20Intervention-2025.pdf>



Learning More Than One Language
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
<https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/learning-more-than-one-language/>



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