



Supporting Language Development

Typical Language Development:

- Crying (0–3 months)
- Cooing (2–4 months)
- Babbling (5–7 months)
- Understanding words (8 months on)
- Saying single words (10–18 months)
- Combining words (18–24 months)
- Forming simple sentences (subject-verb-object) (24 months on)
- Expressing complete thoughts (24 months on)

Techniques to help your child learn language

- *Responding and turn taking:*
When babies make sounds, they are trying to communicate. Respond as if you are in a conversation allowing your baby to speak and listen. Try not to interrupt your baby so that they learn that what they have to say is important. Your child will learn how conversations work (back and forth conversation) from your example.
- *Labeling:*
When your baby appears interested in something, point to the object and tell them what it is. By “labeling” objects, you will help him or her to remember all of the hundreds of items they come across each day. It’s a lot to learn at once, so remember to keep it simple.
- *Imitating:*
You don’t always need to talk to your baby in real words. You can also imitate the sounds and faces that they make. By imitating, you are building your bond and letting your baby know that what he or she has to say is important.
- *Providing choices:*
As your baby becomes a toddler, try to let them experience some independence whenever possible. Encourage your baby to communicate their needs by giving choices. Limit the choices to two so that it is not overwhelming (for example, “Do you want the blue or the green cup?”). Try to find opportunities in everyday activities for providing choices (for example, which diaper he or she wants to wear). This will help your baby to feel important and heard.

- *Expanding:*

When your baby points to something and makes an attempt to name it, encourage this by saying the correct word and adding more details. For example, if he points to a duck and says “Du”, you can say “Yes, that’s a duck. That’s a yellow duck”.

- *Questioning:*

As your baby learns to communicate with more words, you can ask him or her to tell you more. Even if the words are still hard to understand, ask your baby to explain what they are saying gives your baby an opportunity to sharpen thinking and come up with more ways to tell you what they want or need.