

Activities to Encourage Speech and Language Development

Birth to 2 Years

- Encourage your baby to make vowel-like and consonant-vowel sounds such as "ma," "da," and "ba."
- Reinforce attempts by maintaining eye contact, responding with speech, and imitating their vocalizations using different patterns and emphasis. For example, raise the pitch of your voice to indicate a question or change the consonant sound they are making.
- Imitate your baby's laughter and facial expressions. Use mirror play for your child to imitate your facial expressions.
- Teach your baby to imitate your actions, including clapping your hands, throwing kisses, playing finger games such as pat-a-cake, peek-a-boo, and the itsy-bitsy-spider. Also encourage funny sounds such as the 'vroom' of a car engine, barking like a dog or simply 'mmmm' while they are eating and imitating sneezes..
- Sing simple songs like "Old MacDonald" and see if your child will do the e-i-e-i-o part of the song.
- Talk as you bathe, feed, and dress your baby. Talk about what you are doing, where you are going, what you will do when you arrive, and who and what you will see.
- Use gestures such as waving goodbye to help convey meaning.
- Acknowledge the attempt to communicate. Reward and encourage early efforts at producing words. First words will be simplified (ca for car; wawa for water).
- Use short words to communicate with your baby and give them time to take a turn in the conversation.
- Give choices to encourage gestures and imitation of words for your child to communicate their wants and needs.
- Arrange opportunities for your child to communicate. Set desired objects out of reach so they will have to request them.
- Expand on single words your baby uses: "Here is Mama. Mama loves you. Where is baby? Here is baby."
- Read to your child books with simple colorful pictures. Flap books and touch and feel books are interesting. Sometimes "reading" is simply describing the pictures in a book without following the written words. Choose books that are sturdy and have large colorful pictures that are not too detailed. Ask your child, "What's this?" and encourage naming and pointing to familiar objects in the book.