

Tips for Encouraging Speech and Language Development

Use a high-pitched, sing-song voice. This helps get and keep your baby's attention while you talk.

Play with sounds. Get silly while playing and make sounds that connect with what your child is doing.

Use facial expressions and gestures to communicate the meaning of words.

Describe your actions as you dress, feed, and bathe your child. Pairing the same words with routine activities is a great way to develop language.

Encourage two-way communication. When your child communicates with you using sounds, words, or gestures, be sure to respond and take turns in "conversation".

Read with your child. "Reading" can simply mean describing pictures without following the written words. Choose books with large, colorful pictures, and encourage your child to point to and name familiar objects.

Expand your child's vocabulary by building on the words they already know. For example, if your child says "dog", you could say "Yes, that's a big dog!"

Recast your child's phrases. If your child makes a speech or language error, respond with their phrase in the correct form. This helps them learn proper pronunciation and grammar. For example, if your child says "Doggy big" you can respond with "Yes, the doggy is big"

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About Pathways.org

Founded in 1985, **Pathways.org** empowers parents and health professionals with FREE educational resources on the benefit of early detection and early intervention for children's motor, sensory, and communication development. *Pathways.org is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.*



Pathways.org:

- Develops FREE educational materials (brochures, handouts, videos, etc.)
- Collaborates with Pathways.org clinical staff, Medical Roundtable, and outside experts
- Parents, caregivers, and health professionals can access our FREE resources on a variety of media platforms in 15+ languages
- Works to promote each child's fullest inclusion at home, school, in houses of worship and the community

For more information and resources on speech and language development, you can visit us at www.pathways.org, call us at **800-955-CHILD** (2445), or email us at friends@pathways.org



An Introduction to Speech and Language Development

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Speech & Language

Hearing & Understanding

By 3 Months

- Makes eye contact
- Cries differently for different needs, e.g. hungry vs. tired
- Coos, goos, and smiles

- Turns head towards sound or voice
- Quiets or smiles when spoken to
- Shows interest in faces

By 3 Months

By 6 Months

- Begins babbling with p, b, and m sounds
- Makes different kinds of sounds to express feelings
- Imitates sounds and facial expressions

- Listens and responds when spoken to
- Fears loud or unexpected noises
- Notices toys that make sounds

By 6 Months

By 9 Months

- Uses many sounds in babbling
- Participates in two-way communication
- Begins using hand movements to communicate wants and needs, e.g. reaches to be picked up

- Responds to own name
- Looks at familiar objects and people when named
- Follows some routine commands paired with gestures

By 9 Months

By 12 Months

- Says one or two words, e.g. "mama", "dada"
- Imitates speech sounds
- Babbling has sounds and rhythms of speech

- Understands up to 50 words
- Responds to simple directions, e.g. "come here"
- Pays attention to where you are looking and pointing

By 12 Months

By 15 Months

- May use 4-6 different words
- Imitates simple words and actions
- Combines sounds and gestures

- Consistently follows simple directions
- Shows interest in pictures
- Can identify 1-2 body parts when named

By 15 Months

By 18 Months

- Uses 20 words (mostly nouns)
- Responds to questions
- Continues to produce speech-like babbling

- Points at familiar objects and people in pictures
- Understands "in" and "on"
- Responds to yes/no questions with head shake/nod

By 18 Months

By 21 Months

- Uses at least 50 words
- Consistently imitates new words
- Names objects and pictures

- Understands simple emotion words (happy, sad)
- Understands simple pronouns (me, you, my)
- Identifies 3-5 body parts when named

By 21 Months

By 24 Months

- Uses words more than gestures
- Beginning to use 2-word phrases
- Uses simple pronouns (me, you, my)

- Understands more than 300 words
- Understands action words
- Enjoys listening to stories

By 24 Months

By 30 Months

- Consistently uses 2-3 word phrases
- Uses "in" and "on"
- At least 50% of speech is understood by caregiver

- Follows 2-step directions, e.g. "pick up your coat and bring it to me"
- Understands basic nouns, verbs, pronouns
- Understands "mine" and "yours"

By 30 Months

By 36 Months

- Asks "what" and "where" questions
- Uses plurals, e.g. "dogs"
- Most speech is understood by caregiver

- Understands opposites e.g. "big" and "small"
- Simple understanding of concepts including color, space, time
- Understands "why" questions

By 36 Months