

How do Babies Communicate--What to expect at 12 Months?

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Are you concerned about your child's language and communication? Don't use the "wait and see" principle. There is help and support to kick start the children's development and give them the help they need in time.

Learning for a child begins from the second they are born. Language is an essential part of your baby's development. Babies use skills like listening to others, recognising different sounds and talking to start recognising language and responding the world around them. The first step for babies is to understand what they hear and then progress to start talking and using sounds in different ways.

Each baby is unique and develops at their pace. There are some guidelines that can be observed for most babies before or around the time they are one year's old. Babies can respond in emotional ways to others around them and are interested in looking at you when you talk to them. They start to laugh at your baby talk and be delighted when you respond to their babble. Babies love to imitate others and start to recognise familiar and unfamiliar sounds and voices. They show an interest in songs, music, and colourful pictures.

Most babies start to respond to familiar words and their name as they hear these constantly. Responses could include looking at you, smiling, cooing or trying to talk back in response. Babies enjoy responding to routines such as mealtimes, songs, bath time, and a bed-time routine. They can start responding to simple instructions such as no and copy their parent's expressions or insist on their demands when an object of interest is removed from them. Most babies start to use words from about 12 to 18 months. These include word approximations such as "moo" for cow" or 'ca' for cat" or "dada" for daddy. Parents are the first teachers and you can have lots of fun helping your child to develop their language.

Talk, talk, talk. Talk as much as you can to your baby and use simple words and emphasise key words when you do. This comes naturally to parents and adults who use "baby talk" with lots of imitation to catch their baby's attention. Repeat familiar words and repeat words that are most commonly used in your baby's routine. Take turns in talking wait for your baby to finish just like we do with adult conversations. This helps babies to understand the concept of two-way interactions from a very young age.

Play, Play, Play. We cannot emphasise this enough. Play is children's work. They learn through play and have playtime set aside for your child and yourself throughout the day. Babies learn to listen and talk through play. They learn to follow instructions and develop important skills such as cooperative play by using play. It is also very important to have playtime with other babies. Babies learn from each other. So, join a playgroup and activities such as Rhyme time and create lots of opportunities for babies to interact or observe peers. Create

a series of songs and music routines that you enjoy with your child as these skills create important learning opportunities for children. Use action songs, join a music group, use books and enjoy this beautiful age of talking and sharing with your baby. Pointing, repeating songs, showing bright pictures helps build connections with the baby's understanding of their world and they will start responding and talking back.

If you have any worries, that your baby does not seem to listen to you, ignores others, enjoy sounds or respond to them, does not look at you when you talk to them, or is only fixated on certain things, it's a good indication to ask for a trained speech pathologist. Speech pathologists are trained to help with a range of skills with babies including communication and learning methods, and help babies with using sounds, gestures, turn taking, making eye contact and use of gestures. So, if you have concerns talk to your GP, psychologist, maternal health nurse, or paediatrician. Let's talk together!