

Tips for Talking: children aged 0 - 3 months

As parents, you are the most important people in your baby's early development. The way you talk and play with your baby can make a real difference to how they develop and learn. By trying a few simple ideas you can make a significant contribution to your baby's communication skills.

When babies are born they respond differently to the stimulation around them. Some babies are 'easy' to stimulate. Others are 'sensitive' and quickly become over stimulated. They are not able to interact with you for long so are best talked to in short, frequent sessions and you need to use a calm, soothing voice with them. Other babies take time to warm up and need you to be lively and entertaining. You may feel that they are not interested to begin with, but if you persist they will soon respond.

Watch your baby to see how they respond to you.

Children will develop language skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:

• Telling the difference between happy and sad expressions

• Crying to express how they feel

• Recognising familiar voices such as their mum and dad

• Smiling at around 5-6 weeks old

• Sticking out their tongue and move their lips when you speak to them



• Making cooing noises by about 3 months

• Laughing at around 3 months old

• Responding to loud noises such as the vacuum cleaner, the door slamming

• Showing a real interest in your face

For more information, visit the Talking Point website at www.talkingpoint.org.uk

Tips for Talking: children aged 0 - 3 months

Long before babies start to use words, they are trying to communicate with you. They do this through looking, making noises and crying, using different facial expressions and body movements. By watching your baby you can start to understand what they are telling you. By responding to your baby you are teaching them how to communicate in a really important way.

Here are some ideas to encourage your baby's communication development at this stage:

- Stroke and cuddle your baby – this will make them feel secure and happy and stimulate their physical development.
- Sing and chat to your baby using a gentle voice. Babies love nursery rhymes and lullabies. This will help your baby develop good listening and talking skills.
- Using interesting facial expressions will hold your baby's attention and will often make them smile.
- Look through books together. Babies are especially interested in simple black and white shapes and will enjoy looking at the pictures and listening to your voice.
- Spend some 'quiet time' with your baby every day. This means reducing background noise as much as possible by turning off the television or the radio. Give your baby your undivided attention. This will help them learn to concentrate and listen.



If you have concerns about your child's speech or language at this stage, let your Health Visitor know. She can make an appointment with a Speech and Language Therapist for you.



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Tips for Talking: children aged 3 - 6 months

As parents, the way you talk and play with your baby can make a real difference to how they develop and learn. By trying a few simple ideas you can make a significant contribution to your baby's communication skills.

At this stage, babies are still interested in faces and voices but start to show interest in their surroundings. They begin to look at toys and watch other adults and children. As parents, you are still the most important people in your baby's life.

Children will develop language skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:

- Babbling and making sounds such as 'ba ba'.
- Taking turns making sounds. Taking turns means that your baby makes a noise, you say something back and then your baby makes another noise.
- Making a wider range of different sounds.
- Recognising familiar voices – people they hear frequently.
- By 6 months, recognising very familiar words that you use with actions such as 'no', 'up you come'.
- Making noises to get your attention.



Tips for Talking: children aged 3 - 6 months

Here are some ideas to encourage your baby's communication development at this stage:

- Sing and chat to your baby. Babies love nursery rhymes. This will help them develop good listening and talking skills.
- Look through books together. Let your baby hold the book and try to turn the pages.
- Spend some 'quiet time' with your baby every day. This means reducing background noise as much as possible by turning off the television or the radio. Give your baby your undivided attention. This will help them learn to concentrate and listen.
- Encourage your baby to take turns with talking. When they make a noise, smile and say something back. Then wait for your baby to make another noise (keep looking and smiling at them). These are the first stages of a conversation.
- Play physical games that involve facial expressions, e.g. 'peek a boo'.
- Introduce musical instruments such as bells and rattles.
- Play repetitive games so your baby can learn what happens next, e.g. action songs, bouncing.
- Help your baby to express themselves. Encourage them to ask for more, e.g. shake the rattle and wait for them to show you they want more by looking at you, making a noise, reaching towards the toy. Offer your baby choices e.g. show them an apple or a banana so they can choose what to eat, offer two toys so they can choose what to play with.



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Tips for Talking: children aged 6 -12 months

At this early stage, children will begin to pay more attention to people and become more interested in what is going on around them.

Children will develop language skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:

- Listening attentively
- Babbling strings of sounds
- Making noises to get your attention and looking at you when doing so



- Smiling at people who are smiling at them
- Looking at you when you speak
- Starting to understand words like 'bye-bye' and 'up'

Here are some simple ideas to encourage children's language development at this stage:

- Use lots of different sounds to interest a child. These can be sounds you make or sounds that things make, such as a rattle or squeaky toy. By drawing a child's attention to sounds in his or her environment, you can help to develop their listening skills and their awareness of things around them.
- Make good use of everyday activities, like getting dressed, feeding or nappy changing. This is a great opportunity to encourage a child to look at you and make good eye contact. It helps to establish their attention and basic communication skills.
- Talk about and comment on everyday activities that your child is involved in, like getting dressed, eating and bathing. These are useful ways to encourage their language.
- Copy the child's babbling sounds. This is a very good way to show how we take turns in language and will often encourage children to make even more sounds.
- Use actions and gestures with words, for example, waving as you say 'bye-bye' or pointing to or picking up their cup as you say 'drink'. The more that you use gestures and actions with words, the easier it is for them to relate what they see and do with the language that they hear.

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Tips for Talking: children aged 12 -18 months

At this stage, children will be starting to use language. They will also become more sociable towards others.

Children will develop language skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:

- Enjoying games like 'peek-a-boo', 'pat-a-cake' and 'clap hands', and toys that make a noise.
- Using a few simple words (e.g. cup, daddy, dog) although these may not always be easily recognised by unfamiliar adults.



- Starting to understand a few simple words, for example, drink, shoe, car, and simple instructions like 'kiss mummy', 'kick ball' and 'give me'.
- Using gestures or pointing often with words or sounds to show what they want.

Here are some simple ideas to encourage children's language development at this stage:

- Singing nursery rhymes (those with actions like 'in-cey-wincey-spider' are especially good) and playing games like 'pat-a-cake' and 'peek-a-boo'. These connect language to actions and help your child's understanding and memory. Playing games involving 'more' or 'again' can help develop attention and support language too.
- Use toys and objects that make a noise, as well as noisy books and tapes to encourage children's attention and listening skills.
- Talk to your child about what you are doing (e.g. 'Mummy is putting shoes on'). Any opportunity to speak to your child about something that they can see will help them to connect words to the world around them.
- If your child is pointing at something, tell them what it is! If they try to say the word, say it back to them. This will reinforce their understanding of words.
- Name the objects your child sees – this could be their toys or things like clothes, parts of their body or household objects. The more a child hears a word, the quicker they will remember it.

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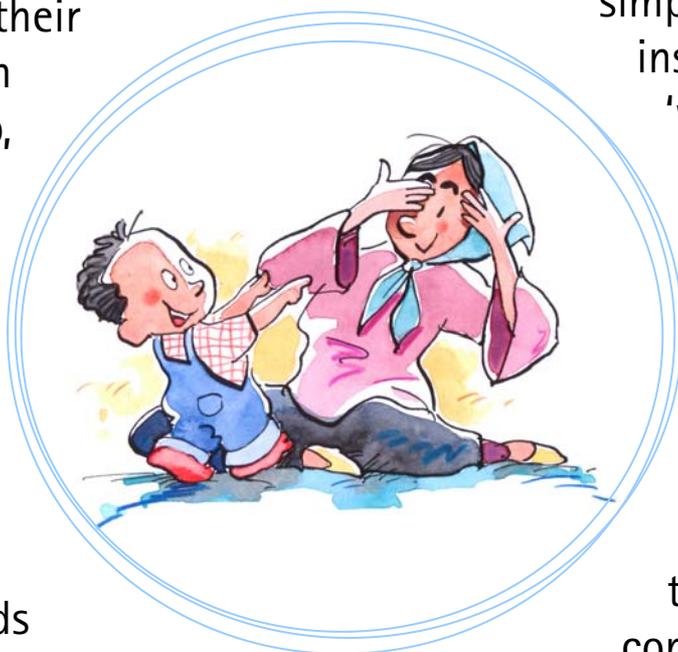
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Tips for Talking: children aged 18 months - 2 years

By now, children will be trying out new activities and exploring their environment more actively. They may not always like being directed by adults!

Children will develop language skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:

- Using a small number of sounds in their words – often these are p, b, m and w. Children will also often miss the ends off words.



- Copying sounds and words.

- Understanding more simple questions and instructions, like 'where is your shoe?', 'show me your nose'.
- Using more single words – maybe as many as 20-50 words – these will also be come more recognisable to others.

- Concentrating on activities for a longer time than before, like playing with a particular toy. Concentration is a key aspect of learning language.

Tips for Talking: children aged 18 months - 2 years

Here are some simple ideas to encourage children's language development at this stage:

- Talk about everyday activities, like putting away the shopping. This helps children to connect language to the world around them.
- To help children to understand, use objects and gestures to help your child's understanding. Or give your child two or three alternatives: 'do you want teddy or the car?', 'is this your nose or your foot?'
- Looking at pictures in books together and describing what is there. This is just as good as actually reading the story. 'Lift-the-flap' books can help to encourage concentration.
- As well as repeating back what your child says, you can also start expanding what they say: if your child says 'juice' you could say 'more juice', 'juice please' or 'juice gone'. This shows your child how words can be put together, making short sentences.
- Children learn speech sounds gradually – saying the whole word back to a child is the best way to encourage language rather than correcting them. Make sure your child can see your face when you are talking to them – this helps the child to watch and copy the movements that your lips make as you say sounds and words.
- Often children can be frustrated when adults don't understand them – this can lead to tantrums. Encourage your child to use gestures for objects or actions. Try to be patient, and wait for them to finish what they are saying or trying to show you.



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Tips for Talking: children aged 2 - 3 years

Children may now be playing more with other children and sharing things with others. Often children will be enjoying familiar stories and rhymes and joining in with these.

Children will develop language skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:

- Understanding simple 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions.
- Understanding longer instructions – for example 'make teddy jump' or 'where's mummy's coat?'
- Using a wider range of speech sounds. However, many children will shorten longer words (like banana – 'nana') or have difficulty where lots of sounds happen together in a word – for example spider – 'pider'.
- Using up to 300 words.
- Listening to simple stories with pictures.
- Asking lots of questions – keen to find out the name of things and learn new words.
- Putting words together to make short sentences – for example, 'daddy cup' or 'want more juice'.
- Children will often have problems saying more difficult sounds



At this simple stage, children will sometimes sound as if they are stammering, trying to share all of their ideas before their language skills are ready! This is perfectly normal – just show you are listening and give your child plenty of time.

Tips for Talking: children aged 2 - 3 years

Here are some simple ideas to encourage children's language development at this stage:

- Expanding your child's sentences can show how words fit together – for example, if a child says 'dolly hair' you can expand this to 'brush dolly's hair' or 'dolly's hair is brown'.
- Often children enjoy helping – sharing your daily activities provides excellent opportunities for commenting about objects and actions, as well as extending your child's vocabulary.
- Use puppets, pictures of characters in a story, as well as pictures in a book to help your child listen to and enjoy stories. Don't be afraid to tell a story more than once; repetition helps children to understand and remember the language that they hear.
- Give your child the correct example or model for speech sounds and words. This is especially important if they are having problems saying a certain word or sound. If you correct them or make them say it again, you can make them feel anxious or frustrated. Simply repeat what they have said using the right words and sounds; with time they will be able to do it themselves.



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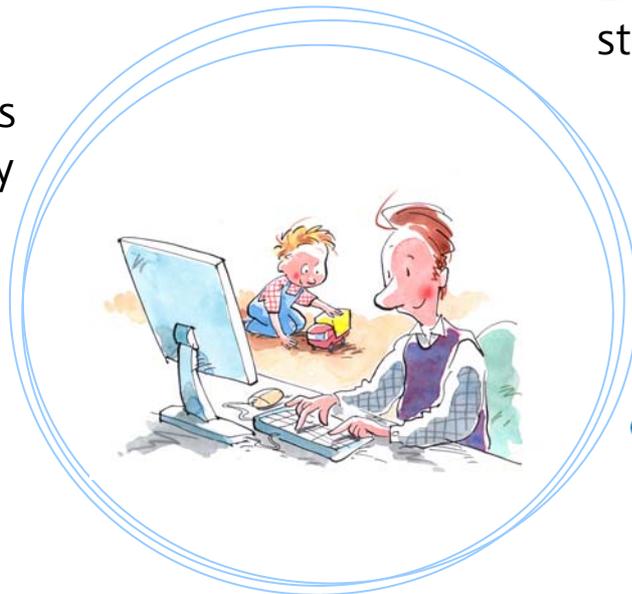
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Tips for Talking: children aged 3 - 4 years

At this stage, children will be actively learning language – being inquisitive and asking many questions.

Children will develop language skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:

- Still making mistakes with tense, for example, saying 'runned' for ran and 'swimmed' for swam
- Enjoying make believe
- Describing events that have already happened – 'we went park'
- Understanding and often using colour, number and time-related words, for example, 'red Car', 'three fingers' and 'yesterday/tomorrow'.
- Listening to longer stories than before
- Continuing to ask many questions
- Starting to like simple jokes
- Using longer sentences and linking these sentences together
- Having a few difficulties with a small number of sounds – for example r/w/l, f/th and s/sh/ch/dz



Tips for Talking: children aged 3 - 4 years

Here are some simple ideas to encourage children's language development at this stage:

- Having a special time to talk about the day can be useful as it gives them a time to talk. Talking about what has happened that day will help your child's memory skills. It also helps them to talk about things they cannot immediately see and to talk about the things which happened in the past.
- Wherever possible, use pictures or objects to aid children's attention and interest, for example, pictures in books, puppets acting out stories or gestures and facial expressions to support questions.
- Talk about or play games involving opposites like 'on and off' or 'big and little'.
- Join your child in pretend play – let the child take the lead and see what their imagination brings. It will help you expand their language beyond what they can immediately see and develop their creativity. Try to comment on what they are saying and doing rather than asking lots of questions. This not only reinforces their language skills, but also shows them that you are interested and listening to them.
- Reversing roles with a child can be great fun for them – where they are the 'mummy' or the 'teacher' and asking adults to do things. This sort of thing makes using language fun and broadens their use of language to new situations.
- Talk about time and sequences – play with and talk about sequences of coloured bricks or shapes as well as numbers and days of the week.



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