

NEVER STOP LOVING YOURSELF



5 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR BABY'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Parents play an important role in a child's speech and language development. Research has shown that children who are spoken and read to during early childhood have larger vocabularies and better grammar. All of us are doing the best job we can in raising our babies and helping their development. One of the most common questions I received while working as a speech and language pathologist was how to boost a child's speech and language development.

Before you can even start working on language skills, your baby needs to interact with you. He/she needs to be able to pay attention to you, listen to you, smile/laugh and get excited when being spoken to. So for this first stage, encourage your baby to interact with you. Get down to his/her level and play with your baby. If he/she is interested in an activity, try to participate in it repeatedly. Teach your baby to imitate what you do/how you play with the toys. The goal is to connect with him/her. Sing, talk, tickle, be silly and have fun. Some of the things you are looking for are if he/she is showing you things, looking back and forth at you and an object, smiling at you, maintaining eye contact, and directing your attention toward something. By the time your baby turns one, he/she will develop many of the necessary skills for speaking. Today, I am sharing with you 5 ways you can encourage your baby's speech and language development.



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1. Work on gestures

Words are not the first way babies communicate. Initially, babies cry to communicate their needs. The next step is nonverbal communication. With young babies, the best way to boost their language development is by working on gestures and responding to their communication attempts. If your baby raises his/her arms to be picked up, say “You want me to pick you up?” These immediate responses tell babies that what they are doing (communicating their own way) are important and effective. This in turn keeps them motivated to communicate. Teach him/her to wave hi/bye, clap his/her hands, and point to items. Sing songs that involve hand movements like “pat-a-cake” and “wheels on the bus” to help connect the words with the actions. Help him/her imitate your actions by doing it hand-over-hand.

2. Work on receptive language

Before babies can speak, they need to understand the meaning of words. To help him/her learn new words, a baby needs a lot of repetition and lots and lots of stimulation. Label and point to toys (e.g., “That’s a car”), people and items that surround your baby. Start teaching him/her to follow simple directions like “Come here”, “Give me ball”, or “Touch nose”. Pair your directions with gestures to make it more clear for your baby to understand. Repetition is the key. Model these directions and help your baby follow them.



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3. Work on imitating simple syllables

Encourage your baby to repeat simple syllables like baba, mama, papa, dada. Look at your baby when he/she makes sounds and imitate them. Start building a foundation for turn-taking (basis of conversations). Often times, when you imitate their sounds, they will babble back. Pretend to have a conversation and vary your intonation and inflection.

Another way you can encourage speech and language development is by talking about animal sounds. As you look at different animals, ask your baby what sounds the animal makes and encourage him/her to imitate it. This helps the baby connect the sounds to the animal. For example, say “The cow says moo”.

4. Be a commentator – give a play-by-play.

Talk to your baby throughout the day. Talk to him/her as you make breakfast (naming the items you use, describe how you cook it, etc.), give a bath, dress him/her (talk about the clothes, colors, body parts they go on), go to the store (describe the items you see, the smells, the taste). Point out colors and shapes that you see. If your baby labels items, expand on it. Pointing to and naming objects is important, but descriptions add loads of meaning and value. For example if the baby says “apple”, you can say “This is a green apple.

It tastes sweet. It is crunchy.” When you talk to your baby, talk in parentese. Stretch out vowels, use a high-pitched tone of voice, and speak in simple sentences. People usually talk this way to babies. And babies truly prefer this type of speech. Do not confuse this with baby talk. Parentese uses actual words while changing the sound and intonation of it, while baby talk uses nonsense syllables (goo-goo-gaga). Baby talk is not recommended and does not have the same language benefits as parentese or regular speech.



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5. Read to your baby.

As I have mentioned before, reading to your child is super important. You don't have to read every word, but talk about the pictures. Choose books that have colorful pictures and less text. Ask your baby, "What's this?" and try to get him to point to or name objects. Help your baby turn the page. Use books with lots of repetition such as "Brown Bear – Brown Bear" and pause for your child to finish the phrase.



I HOPE YOU FIND THESE SUGGESTIONS HELPFUL. MOST IMPORTANTLY HAVE FUN WITH YOUR BABY. EVERY BABY DEVELOPS AT HIS/HER OWN PACE, SO DO NOT WORRY IF HE/SHE ISN'T TALKING YET. EVERY BABY IS DIFFERENT AND HE/SHE WILL COMMUNICATE WHEN READY. IF YOU ARE CONCERNED WITH YOUR BABY'S DEVELOPMENT, CONTACT YOUR PEDIATRICIAN.

