

Speech and Language Spotlight on: Infants



COMMUNICATION
ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Better Hearing & Speech Month

Although most children speak their first word around their 1st birthday, speech and language development actually begins right from birth. That first year is full of milestones and skill building—a time of rapid brain and communication development.

Birth to 12-Month Milestones: Babies are showing off budding speech and language skills from the very beginning. Milestones include:

- Making cooing sounds (**birth–3 months**)
- Making speech-like babbling sounds, such as *pa, ba, and mi* (**4–6 months**)
- Responding to changes in tone of voice (**4–6 months**)
- Babbling long strings of sounds, such as *mimi upup babababa* (**7–12 months**)
- Imitating different speech sounds (**7–12 months**)
- Understanding words for common items/people, like *truck, juice, and daddy* (**7–12 months**)
- Starting to respond to simple words/phrases, like “No,” “Come here,” and “Want more?” (**7–12 months**)
- Saying 1 or 2 words, like *hi, dog, dada, mama, or uh-oh*. This happens around their first birthday, but sounds may not be clear.

Note about communication development: Children develop at their own pace. These are the average ages when most children have developed these skills.

A Child's First Teacher: Communication is a skill learned by watching, listening, and interacting with parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers teach their children to talk through simple, everyday activities. Some communication tips for parents/caregivers are:

- Mirror baby's laughter and facial expressions.
- Respond to babies' sounds and gestures.
- Talk, talk, and talk some more. Narrate daily activities (“You are eating peas. Peas are good.”)
- Read to children every day.
- Talk to children in the language they are most comfortable using.

Quantity and Quality Count! The more a parent talks, the bigger a child's vocabulary will be. Parents should use all types of words—big and small.

Warning Signs: Even at this early stage, it's a good idea to pay attention to whether a child is meeting milestones. Red flags include not babbling (**4–7 months**) and making only a few sounds or gestures (**7–12 months**). Many speech and/or language disorders can be reversed, or even prevented, if caught early.



Have concerns?

Speech-language pathologists evaluate and treat children for speech and language disorders. Learn more at www.asha.org/public.



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