



William J. Mesibov MD
Linda H. Jacobs MD

Stuart J. Altman MD
Marcia Rubinos MD

Fellows American Academy of Pediatrics
575 Underhill Boulevard Syosset, New York 11791 516.921.2122 www.kidfixer.com

Helping Your Child Learn to Speak

Birth: Help your baby learn how nice voices can be.

1. Sing to your baby. You can do this even before your baby is born. He (she) will hear you.
2. Talk to your baby. Talk to others when baby is near. Baby won't understand the words, but will like your voice and your smile.
3. Plan for quiet time. Baby needs time to babble and play quietly without TV or radio or other noises.

3 months: Help your baby see how people talk to each other.

1. Hold your baby close so he or she will look in your eyes. Talk to your baby and smile.
2. When your baby babbles, imitate the sounds.
3. If baby tries to make the some sound you do, say the word again.

6 months: Help your baby understand words (even if he or she can't say them yet).

1. Play games like Peek-a-Boo or Pat-a- Cake. Help your baby move his hands to match the game.
2. When you give baby a toy, say something about it like, "Feel how fuzzy Teddy Bear is."
3. Let your baby see himself in a mirror and ask, "Who's that?" If he doesn't answer, say his name.
4. Ask your baby questions, like "Where's Doggie?" If he doesn't answer, show him where.

9 months: Help your baby "talk" by pointing and using his or her hands.

1. Show baby how to wave "bye bye." Tell baby, "Show me your nose." Then point to your nose. She will soon point to her nose. Do this with toes, fingers, ears, eyes, knees, and so on.
2. Hide a toy while baby is watching. Help baby find it. Share her delight at finding it.
3. When baby points at or gives you something, talk about the object with her.

12 months: Help your child to say the words he or she knows.

1. Talk about the things you use, like "cup, juice, doll." Give your child time to name them.
2. Ask your child questions about the pictures in books. Give your child time to name things in the picture.
3. Smile or clap your hands when your child names the thing that he sees. Say something about it.

15 months: Help your child talk with you.

1. Talk about what your child wants most to talk about. Give him time to tell you all about it.
2. Ask about things you do each day - "Which shirt will you pick today?" or "Do you want milk or juice?"
3. When your child says just 1 word, like "ball," repeat it with a little extra - "That's baby's ball."
4. Pretend your child's favorite doll or toy animal can talk. Have conversations with the toy.

18 months: Help your child put words together and learn how to follow simple directions.

1. Ask your child to help you. For example, ask her to put her cup on the table.
2. Teach your child simple songs and nursery rhymes. Read to your child.
3. Encourage your child to talk to friends and family. A child can tell them about a new toy, for example.
4. Let your child "play telephone." Have a pretend telephone conversation.

2 years: Help your child put more words together. Teach your child things that are important to know.

1. Teach your child to say his or her first and last name.
2. Ask about the number, size, and shape of things your child shows you. If it's worms, you could say, "How many are there?"
3. Ask your child to tell you the story that goes with a favorite book.
4. Check your local library for programs for toddlers.
5. Don't forget what worked earlier. For example, your child still needs quiet time. Turn off the TV and radio and let your child enjoy quiet play, singing, and talking.



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