

Under 12 Months!

A parent's guide to creating language-rich environments



What's inside...

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Do babies talk? Maybe not, but they tell you so much!

A baby may not say his first word until about a year, but he has lots to tell you. Parents learn early how to tell what their baby wants or needs. When he is quiet and alert, he tells you he's happy and it's a good time to play. After a month or so he smiles! He gets excited when he likes what you are doing. He lets you know when he doesn't like it anymore. He cries when he is hungry, tired, hurt, or needs to be changed. He is communicating with you.

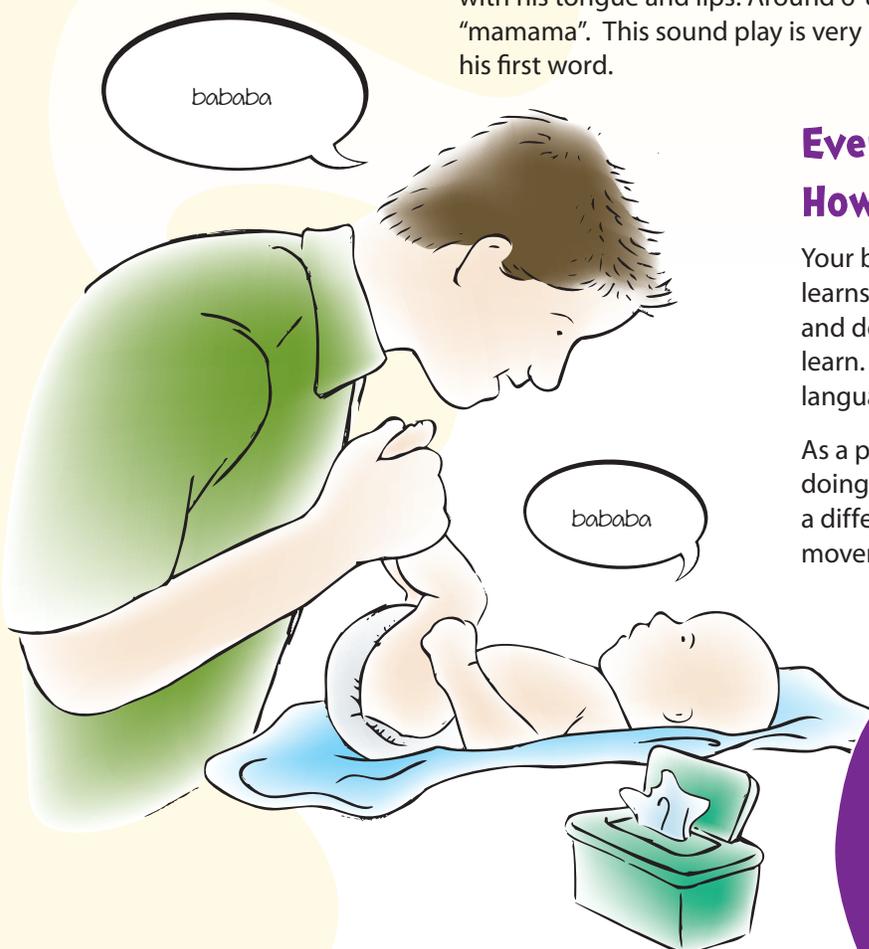
By 3 months, your baby makes cooing and gooing sounds. Next, he makes raspberries with his tongue and lips. Around 6-8 months, he babbles his first sounds, like "bababa" or "mamama". This sound play is very important in learning to talk. Before you know it, he says his first word.

Everyday and everyway - How children learn language

Your baby learns language right from the day she is born. She learns about her world by seeing, touching, tasting, listening, and doing. Any activity you do with your baby is a chance to learn. Speak, sing, and talk about books with your child in your language.

As a parent, you are your baby's first teacher. You are already doing many things with your baby to help her learn. It makes a difference how you talk and respond to the sounds and movements your baby makes.

Babies are happy and learn more when they know what to expect. Talk, sing, or make sounds during everyday routines. Use activities like feeding, bath time, getting dressed, diaper changes, and sitting in a bouncy chair.



Watch for clues that your baby has had enough. If he starts to cry, fuss, turn away, or squirm, he may be trying to tell you that he doesn't want to play or talk anymore. Remember, you don't have to sing the whole song or read the whole book.

Everyday tips - How parents make the difference!

The bond you have with your baby helps him learn. Hold your baby while you talk, play, sing, and read together. Turn everyday moments into language-rich activities. Try these tips in your language.



When talking...

- **Use lots of expression** in your voice. This will help keep his attention.
- **Talk about anything** – your day, or what you are doing and seeing. He likes to hear your voice.
- **Talk slowly** and give your baby a chance to make a sound or a giggle.
- **Copy** your baby when he makes a sound.
- Act as if your baby is saying real words.



When playing...

- **Let her be the leader.** When she bangs a block on the table, copy her.
- **Talk to your baby.** Talk about what your baby is playing with, looking at, or holding.
- **Be face to face.** Sit or lie on the floor while she is on her tummy. Put her in your lap facing you.
- **Take turns** putting blocks on top of each other or shapes into a bucket. Say, "on", "up", or "in" when you take a turn.



When reading...

Reading and language go together. Reading helps with learning language. Good language skills will help with learning to read. This is important, even with babies.

- **Look at books everyday.** When your baby is less than 6 months, read anything with him – a baby book, your book, the TV guide, a newspaper, or even a recipe. He just likes to hear your voice.
- When your baby is more than 6 months, **pick books with simple pictures** and only a few words on each page. Babies like to look at books with other babies in them.
- **Choose books that are strong and durable.** He likes to grab them, hold them, throw them, and put them into his mouth. Keep special books out of reach.
- You don't have to read the words. Make up a story or just talk about the pictures. Keep it simple.



Want more information on speech and language? Read the *Talk Box Resource List*.



When singing...

- **Sing a song over and over.** Ask your baby if she wants to hear it again and wait for her to smile, giggle, or make a sound.
- **Change the speed of your singing.** Sometimes sing the song slowly and sometimes sing it fast.
- Put your baby's name into the song or make up your own songs.
- **Use actions with the songs.** Hold your baby's hands while you do them. Babies love tickle rhymes and songs.
- If you use a different language at home, sing songs in that language too.

Activities to try...

Children learn by doing!

- While giving your baby a bath, talk about what you are doing. Name the body part you are washing. Talk about the clothes you are dressing him in.



Help your baby learn about new things, like going to the farm, seeing snow for the first time, hearing a fire truck siren, or tasting new foods. Use the words that go with these new things.

- While changing your baby's diaper, make sounds that you have heard him babble before, like "bobobo". Wait for him to say a sound and then copy him.
- When you are cleaning, talk about what you are doing. Talk about picking up socks, putting books on the shelf, or putting toys away.

Check out this month's activity sheet for more ideas.

 **For more ideas, go to...**

- www.pbs.org
- www.playingforkeeps.org
- www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/
- www.wondertime.go.com

What to expect

By 3 months your baby should...

- Startle to sudden, loud noises.
- Coo, grunt, gurgle, cry, and make lots of different noises like "ah".

From 4 to 6 months your baby should...

- Turn toward a sound.
- Smile when you smile.
- Make babbling sounds like "mama" and "gaga".

From 7 to 12 months your baby should...

- Respond to familiar sounds like a dog barking or when you call her name.
- Recognize words for everyday objects like *cup*, *shoe*, and *car*.
- Copy actions and sounds that you make.
- Babble using different sounds like "bababa", "dididi", or "upupup".
- Maybe use her first words.

Ask about the *Speech Sounds and Talking and Listening* checklists to get more information about development.

When to get help

You should be concerned if your baby ...

- Does not babble or make many sounds.
- Used some sounds but seems to have "forgotten" them.
- Doesn't startle to loud sounds or turn his head when there is a noise.

Where to get help

Are you concerned about your baby's hearing or speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. To find one in your area...

- Contact your local health unit
- Call Health Link Alberta:
 - Calgary area: 403-943-LINK (5465)
 - Edmonton area: 780-408-LINK (5465)
 - Toll free: 1-866-408-LINK (5465)
- Go to www.healthlinkalberta.ca

By 3 months, babies make noises like "ahh", coo, goo, grunt, and gurgle. By 6 to 7 months, they say sounds like "ah ah", "ba ba", or "goo goo". By 12 months, babies babble many different sounds like "bababa", "bamatia", or "putudume".



Go to www.parentlinkalberta.ca for more Talk Box ideas.

It is never too early to help
your child with speech
and language development.