

Toddler Visit #14

- PIPE: Learning Language



Topics for Next Visit:

- 19 Month Growth & Development
 - Bedtime



Learning Language



Conceptual Overview

1. Learning language begins at birth. A baby may recognize her mother's voice even before birth and will quiet when her mother talks or sings. Very soon after birth, babies learn the rhythm and the tone of language by listening to their parents talk. It is important to help parents feel comfortable talking to their babies. Encourage parents to tell their babies what they are doing or what they are planning to do during their caretaking routines. What is said to a baby does not need to make sense. It is the sound and rhythm of the parent's voice that is important.
2. Language development is an orderly process. In the first 6 months, a baby learns that his voice has meaning when his parents respond to his cries. Soon the baby begins to practice making other sounds. The baby will continue to use those "baby noises" that get a response from his parent. When a parent imitates her baby's noises, the child learns that his voice is important to others.

By 6 to 8 months of age, babies are babbling in a conversational rhythm. They babble to themselves and their stuffed animals. They also babble when they hear adults talking. Then they practice the sounds they hear around them, such as a dog's bark or an airplane's drone.

At about 1 year of age, a baby's babbling becomes more like word sounds and is often grouped into sound phrases that are similar to those she hears her parents use. The first attempts at words may be a word added to actions. She points and says, "W'zhat?" for "What is that?"

Babies learn most about language from hearing it. They copy what they hear around them. Babies learn best from hearing one person at a time. When a baby looks at a speaker who repeats a single word, the baby's brain will register the correct sound and pronunciation. When a baby learns language from many people who are talking in a group, he often drops the ending of words. "I am going" can become, "I gon."

Parents are the primary language teachers. The grammar parents use is what will become the grammar of the baby. Most of us spontaneously use the language forms we first heard and began to use.

By 15 months most toddlers have begun to say some words. They start with one word such as "that" or "bye-bye." When parents reinforce this by imitating or responding, toddlers discover that their words have meaning; they begin to say more.

Language development and especially vocabulary varies widely from child to child, but by 2 years of age, children begin to add words very quickly. There is a spurt of vocabulary that is surprising to most parents. Their children seem to be learning very fast.

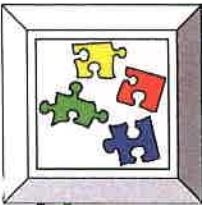
Parents who talk to their children a lot, respond to their child's early sounds,

LISTEN TOPIC 6

and share positive emotional signals have children who begin their word spurt earlier and gain a larger vocabulary. Because of this their children can become better readers. These children also use words more often to solve problems and to work with others. They develop good social skills and are often successful in groups.

3. A parent is a model and mentor for learning language. The human brain is uniquely designed for learning language. Because of this, humans can convey more kinds of information than other mammals and continue to learn more from one another throughout life. Parents don't actually teach their babies to talk. Their babies learn language from hearing it. Babies listen and imitate what they hear. When parents use language correctly, so do their babies. When parents repeat what their baby has tried to say, using the correct pronunciation, the baby will self-correct. For example, when a baby says "gog," her parent says "dog"; a baby says ... "aplin" ... his parent says, "yes, airplane"; a baby says ... "Dad gon too?" her parent says ... "Yes, Dad is going too."

Most parents unconsciously seem to know how to expand their baby's language. Parents who have set the stage early — by responding to baby cues, talking to their babies, and sharing positive play interactions — have babies who process words and communication patterns in their brains very early. These are the babies who will suddenly bubble over with language.



Responses to Build Language

1. Listen to your baby.

Babies will practice all kinds of sounds to gain your attention. When your baby coos and you stop to listen, he or she feels heard. Listening is a form of respect. When you wait and listen, it makes your baby want to make the sound again.

2. Imitate.

The sounds that you answer or imitate are the ones your baby will continue to use. Your imitating his or her mouth games, vowel sounds, and nonsense words makes a young baby feel important and helps him or her learn about patterns of communication.

3. Ignore sounds you don't like.

Many baby noises are "experiments" for the baby, who is practicing with a new voice! Particular sounds will disappear if they are not reinforced. Don't scold your baby or toddler for making odd or ugly sounds. Just ignore it.

4. Use single words.

You should name an object your baby uses with just *one* word. "Cup" or "Ball." This helps your baby learn that objects and words go together. When your baby starts to point, name what he or she is pointing to ... e.g., "Dog."

5. Expand vocabulary slowly.

Be sure your baby knows a *single* word before you add it to other words. For example: say, "cup" or "milk" rather than "Do you want me to get you more milk?"

6. Respond to your child's words or "near" words.

When your baby points to her blanket and says "Be-be," respond with "Blanket? Here is your blanket." When the baby responds correctly to your words (e.g., "Sit down" or "Where's your bear?") react with love.

7. Let your child talk.

Do not interrupt. Let your child try to finish. Then repeat the child's sentence *and* respond. Language increases if you will wait, listen, and allow the child to try to communicate his or her thought before you reply.

8. Be sure you connect.

Be sure your child is listening, and that you are being simple and clear. Most babies and toddlers will continue to communicate with nonverbal signals well past their third birthday. Your child may seem to understand words, but he or she is connecting with emotional cues. You need to use nonverbal cues *with* your words to help your child understand. *Show and do* while you are talking.



Children's Sounds and Words, cont.

AT ABOUT ONE YEAR

First real words emerge: *nana* for *banana*, *bebé* for *blanket* ... "drink," "dog," or "bye." Sounds, words, and simple books often hold a baby's attention longer than toys. Animal, motor, or weather sounds are fun. Respond by naming the word for the thing our child wants. Listen and respond when your baby or toddler uses words. Show your pleasure when baby understands your words.

AT ABOUT FIFTEEN MONTHS

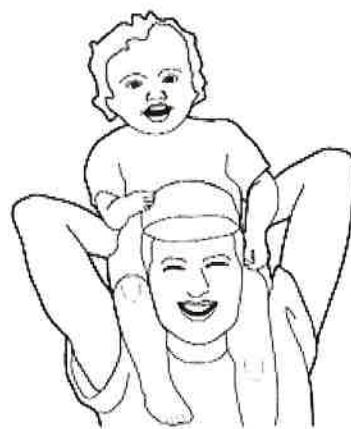
By 15 months of age, toddlers usually have a few words which they combine with gestures to negotiate their wants. They point and wave as they say words: e.g., *shoe*. One word may mean several things! *Out* may mean "Someone just left," or "Let's go!" Repeat what the child says, but use the correct word. Continue to name things that your toddler sees or points to.

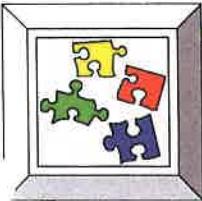
AT ABOUT TWENTY MONTHS

By 20 months of age, most toddlers are saying words. They are learning the power of "no!" They experiment with words, repeating them over and over: "Go, go, go, go." They may need help in learning to pronounce the endings on words. *Book* is *boo*. *Cat* is *ca*. Toddlers begin to link words together: "See doggy." "Mommy go."

AT ABOUT TWO YEARS

Two year olds use words and short phrases to express needs and wants. Two year olds can be very demanding. "Bobby go car." "Get Daddy." They begin to understand *me* and *mine*. Give them choices. Also encourage them to use words to express their needs and wants.





Learning Language: Approximate Ages and Stages, cont.

8 - 10 Months

Babbling sounds even more like “sentences” as the baby practices the intonation patterns heard from family members. The baby is learning the rhythm of how we speak. Babies now turn or point to familiar sounds, such as the phone or an airplane. Some sounds, like the vacuum, may be frightening. A baby may respond to his or her own name and begin to understand a few words such as *no* or *bye-bye*. Parents who respond to their baby’s interest in things with one clear word, such as *doggy* or *light*, encourage vocabulary development. Parents should wait for the baby to respond and continue to imitate the baby’s sounds. By talking to their baby about what they are doing and planning, parents will expand the baby’s sense of how language is used.

12 Months

Babies may say first words, like *up*, *doggy*, or *ma-ma* (for *mommy*), and the names of persons or things that are important to them. They practice words and sounds, especially when alone in bed, or when playing. Understanding of words increases. Parents who respond by naming the object that their baby uses when pointing to something help the baby understand that words stand for objects. Parents should ignore words they don’t like and show pleasure or imitate words or “near words” they do like.

15 Months

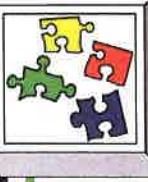
By this time most toddlers are using words. One word may mean several things: *Out* may mean “Here’s my coat,” “Someone just left,” or “Let’s go.” If parents respond to words, such as *more* or *up*, toddlers learn to try talking rather than crying to get what they want. When toddlers discover the power of words, vocabulary multiplies. Some 15-month-olds can say 30 words, but others might only be using two or three words. Most toddlers understand many more words than they can say. They can follow simple, one-phrase directions. Parents should continue to respond to what toddlers say by using the correct words, not “baby talk.”

20 Months

Vocabulary is increasing rapidly. Toddlers experiment with words, repeating them over and over. Toddlers can now make two-word statements like “See Mommy,” or “Go doggy.” They will repeat words after adults and respond to simple questions like “Where is your teddy bear?” They learn that they can refuse requests, that *no* is powerful, and they practice it with every situation. Toddlers may say *no* even when they mean *yes*. Many toddlers use *no* in play. They may also use it to see how parents respond. Honor your toddler’s *NO* when you can; ignore the rest.

24 Months

By the second birthday, most children link words together to make short sentences: “We go, car.” They will join in an adult conversation with short phrases. Toddlers like to be listened to and will expand their conversation into stories which are half babble and half words to keep a parent’s attention. Sometimes they talk so fast they can’t get their breath. They begin to understand *me* and *mine*. They will begin to use words or short phrases, in addition to body language, to describe feelings. Two-year-olds are very definite and determined, often using language to demand, as well as to negotiate. Give them choices. “Do you want milk, or juice?” Respond to those demands that you can. “Me juice.” Even though toddlers are using words, cues are still the most important way they communicate.



Timely Tips for Talking

0 - 6 Months

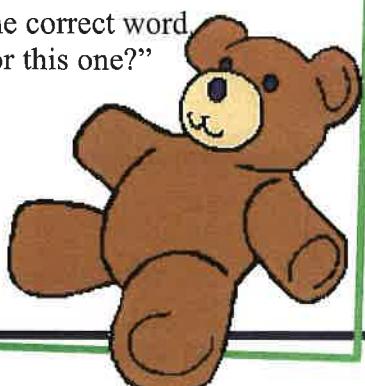
1. Respond quickly to a newborn's cries.
2. Play mouthing games; wait for the baby to imitate you.
3. Talk to the baby about what you are doing, what you see, what is going to happen.
4. Combine sounds/words with touch.
5. Use a soft-pitched voice. Change your voice tone from high to low.
6. Use vowel sounds and coos to play with the baby: "o-o-o," "aah, aah," "i-e, i-e."
7. Sing songs to your baby, for example, soft lullabies; hold your baby; sway as you sing.
8. Talk face to face. Let your baby see your mouth movements as you speak.
9. Imitate sounds you like; ignore sounds you don't like.

6 - 12 Months

1. Call your baby by his or her name.
2. Repeat words that have meaning for the baby: "Mama," "cup."
3. Name things your baby is looking at or doing: "doggy," "drink"
4. Put actions and words together: "bye-bye" - wave your hand.
5. Play imitation and turn-taking games.
6. Start reading simple books together. Look at pictures and identify them with words: "dog," "cat," "pig."
7. Respond to your baby's sounds with one clear word: "blanket," "ball."

12 - 24 Months

1. Use simple words. Use positive emotions and fun when talking to your toddler.
2. Repeat words your toddler uses.
3. Name the things that you give your toddler and the objects your toddler points to.
4. Talk about what you are doing or what just happened. Tell your toddler what you are going to do.
5. Take turns talking. Listen. Let your toddler respond before you speak again. Have conversations with toddlers.
6. Put your toddler's actions into words: "José smells flowers."
7. Do not correct your toddler's mispronunciations. Just say the correct word.
8. Give your toddler clear choices: "Shall we read this book, or this one?"
9. Show your toddler how to talk during imagination games:
"Hi, Bear. Sit down. Here's a drink."
10. Enjoy toddlers' funny, fun language.



How You Can Bridge the Word Gap

Talking with your children is important! Trends in amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction are established at a young age. Try these fun activities from the ASQ-3 Learning Activities™ with the children in your program or share them with parents.

Visit www.agesandstages.com for more free tips and handouts.

0-2 months

Simple Stories

At quiet times and before sleep, talk to your baby in a soft, gentle voice. Tell her simple stories or talk about the day.

2-4 months

Picture Books

With your baby cuddled on your lap, hold a book with simple, clear colorful pictures so that both of you can see. Talk softly about what you see as you point to the pictures.

4-8 months

Little Explorer

Now that baby is learning to crawl, she'll want to explore the whole house: "What's under the table? What's behind the chair?" What good exercise for both of you!

8-12 months

Reading Fun

Read to your baby every day. Cuddle up, get close, and make this a special time together. Point to pictures in books and ask her to find something. "Where's the kitty? Where are baby's socks?"

12-16 months

Big Talk

While you do housework or get a meal together, talk to your baby about what you're doing. Encourage your little one to use two words together to make baby sentences, such as "help me."

16-20 months

Chatter Stretchers

Your toddler may use single words for requests, such as "juice" when he wants a drink. Help him stretch his sentence by saying it for him: "Would you like some juice? Say, 'I want juice, please.'"

20-24 months

Sing Together

Your child will love learning songs such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Teach your child simple songs you remember from childhood. Later, ask your child to sing for someone else in the family.

24-30 months

When You Were Little

Tell your children stories about when he was little: "When you were first born.." or "When you were a little baby.." Your child will love to hear these stories again and again.

30-36 months

What's Going On?

Ask your child to tell you what is happening in a picture in a book or magazine. "What is the baby doing? What is the dog doing?" Then, listen carefully to your child's interesting story.

36-42 months

Who's the Person?

Pretend you suddenly forgot who your child is. Say, "What's your name, little girl? Is it Samantha? Is it Rosita? Do you have another name?" When she tells you her name, you can be very happily surprised!

42-48 months

My Own Stories

Encourage your child to begin to make up stories of her own. Write them on a piece of paper as she tells them to you. She might like to draw or paint a picture to go along with the story.

#TalkReadSing



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Say "hi" and wave when entering a room with your baby. Encourage your baby to imitate. Help your baby wave to greet others. Waving "hi" and "bye" are early gestures.

8-12 months



Play the "show me" game when looking at books. Ask your toddler to find an object in a picture. Take turns. Let your toddler ask you to find an object in a picture. Let him turn the pages.

20-24 months



Encourage your child to try the "elephant walk," bending forward at the waist and letting your arms (hands clasped together) swing freely while taking slow and heavy steps. This is great to do with music.

30-36 months



Play "bucket hoops." Have your child stand about 6 feet away and throw a medium-size ball at a large bucket or trash can. For fun outdoors on a summer day, fill the bucket with water.



48-60 months



Hold your baby in your lap and softly shake a rattle on one side of his head, then the other side. Shake slowly at first, then faster. Your baby will search for the noise with his eyes.

1-4 months



Gently rub your baby with a soft cloth, a paper towel, or nylon. Talk about how things feel (soft, rough, slippery). Lotion feels good, too.

4-8 months



Tape a large piece of drawing paper to a table. Show your baby how to scribble with large nontoxic crayons. Take turns making marks on the paper. It's also fun to paint with water.

12-16 months



Make your toddler an outdoor "paint" set by using a large wide paint brush and a bowl or bucket of water. Your toddler will have fun "painting" the side of the house, a fence, or the front porch.

20-24 months



A favorite pull toy often is a small wagon or an old purse for collecting things. Your toddler can practice putting objects in and out of it. It can also be used to store favorite items.

16-20 months



Wrap tape around one end of a piece of yarn to make it stiff like a needle and put a large knot at the other end. Have your child string large elbow macaroni, buttons, or beads. Make an edible necklace out of Cheerios.

24-30 months



While cooking or eating dinner, play the "more or less" game with your child. Ask who has more potatoes and who has less. Try this using same-size glasses or cups, filled with juice or milk.



36-48 months



Make a book "about me" for your child. Save pictures, leaves, magazine images of a favorite food, and drawings your child makes. Put them in a photo album, or glue onto sheets of paper and staple together.

36-48 months



Encourage your child to learn her full name, address, and telephone number. Make it into a singing or rhyming game. Ask your child to repeat it back to you when you are riding in the car or on the bus.

48-60 months



After washing hands, practice writing letters and numbers in pudding or thinned mashed potatoes spread on a cookie sheet or cutting board. Licking fingers is allowed!

60-66 months

