



# Helping your child's communication development: 0 to 12 months

Your baby loves following your cues. Watch and tune into your baby's facial expressions, eye and body movements.

Ask yourself what your baby is thinking, feeling or showing interest in.

Respond to your baby by:

- talking to them about what they are interested in - for example, "You're looking at the light"
- going slowly at their pace - they need time to process new experiences and words
- getting face to face, making eye contact and smiling – find a comfortable distance (approximately arm's length) that allows your baby to focus on your face
- listening to your baby and leaving little pauses for them to take their turn - this shows them that you are interested in their thoughts and feelings
- copying their sounds and actions and waiting to see how your baby responds - if they say "bababa", repeat it back to them
- comforting them when they cry - this helps set a strong foundation for their communication development, make your baby to feel safe and secure and build healthy self-esteem

Your baby's mental health (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/parenting-advice/baby-and-child-mental-wellbeing/help-your-child-manage-feelings/>)

Your child's social, emotional and behavioural development (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/checks-milestones/social-emotional-behavioural/>)

## Speaking your native language

Talk to your baby in your native language. In two-parent families, this could mean your baby is exposed to two or more languages from birth. For example, if one parent speaks with baby in their native Polish and the other parent talk to them in their native English. This is best for their speech and language development.

## Activities to try

You can also do fun activities with your baby to help them develop speech and languages, such singing nursery rhymes.

## Songs and nursery rhymes

Sing songs and nursery rhymes with your baby. It's a fun way to repeat words and use actions with words.

Watch a video on using repetition to help your child's communication (Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgVPPngyWDY&list=PLsQK32cdMW\\_ygwiXLtlu11owvqX8HctB&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgVPPngyWDY&list=PLsQK32cdMW_ygwiXLtlu11owvqX8HctB&index=5))

## Picture books

Snuggle up and share a picture book together. Allow your baby to hold the book. Notice what your baby is interested in and talk about that for example, "You see the monkey!"

At this stage, this is more important than reading the words in the book.

## Play on the floor

Your baby can learn so much language through playing with you. At this stage, your baby might enjoy touching or holding little toys with different feels, like soft blocks or a rattle.

Pace your play to suit your baby. You can repeat lots of new words, for example "shake shake" or "the ball feels squishy!"

## Peek-a-boo

Social games like “Peek-a-boo” are a lot of fun and a great way to encourage your baby’s communication and concentration.

## Sensory books

Your baby will really enjoy ‘touch and feel’ sensory books. Allow your baby to hold the book and notice how they look at the pictures and touch the pages. Notice what your baby is interested in and talk about that, for example “the cat feels furry!”

## Blocks

Your baby might enjoy banging blocks together or putting blocks into a cup. They might like to play with a ball, a pop-up toy or bubbles with you.

These games allow you to repeat lots of new words such as “the block is in the cup” or “pop the bubble”.

## Offer choices

Offering choices between 2 items can make it easier for your child to communicate what they want. You can also use choices to model words and gestures.

To start with, offer something they like with something they don't like or something unexpected. For example, ask them if they want to play with bubbles or a sock.

Find videos on helping your child to communicate (Link: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsQK32cdMW\\_ygwiXLtlu11owvqX8HctB](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsQK32cdMW_ygwiXLtlu11owvqX8HctB))

## More in Communication development (Link: [/babies-children/checks-milestones/communication-development/](#))

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12 to 24 months (Link: [/babies-children/checks-milestones/communication-development/12-24-months/](#))

2 to 5 years (Link: [/babies-children/checks-milestones/communication-development/communication-development-2-5-years/](#))

Screen time and young children (Link: [/babies-children/play/screen-time/](#))

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