



# Learning to talk

Learning to talk from nine months...

Communication is a very important part of your baby's learning and development. How you respond to your baby now will help to develop the essential skills they need to learn about their world and interact with others.

### Talking to your baby matters because:

- it will help them learn to talk
  - children learn to talk by listening to others and being listened to;
- it will help your child learn about the world and understand what's going on around them;
- it will help them to learn reading and writing because good language skills form the base for literacy;
- it will help your child develop good social skills and friendships with others;
- it helps them feel loved and valued and helps to build self-esteem and confidence;
- it helps to ease frustration because they can communicate their needs and you can understand them.

### At nine months...

Babies begin to understand some words and respond to their name. They make lots of conversation babble and shout to get your attention. **Babies are now beginning to understand how to communicate with you and that their noises and actions mean something to you.**

Babies begin to use gesture such as waving, reaching and clapping. Babies understand non-verbal communication better than words at this stage and use it to learn to understand what you are saying.

Babies are better at controlling their movements and are learning how to make a wider range of sounds.

At around 12 months, babies begin to use their first words.

### Tips for helping your baby communicate

- **Respond to your baby as if they are talking to you.** If it sounds like a word, respond as if it is a word. For example if they say 'buh' when looking at a ball, respond as if the word was ball and praise your baby. 'Yes a ball, you want a ball!'

- Babies cannot make all the right sounds in words at first. It takes time and practice to learn to make the different sounds.
- Babies understand words before they use them. Help them to understand by using **short, simple sentences**. **Highlight** the key words using your voice and face. **Repeat** the important words.
- **Show** your baby the things you are talking about.
- **Talk about the things you do as they happen**. Talk to your baby during everyday activities such as bath time, feeding time, nappy changing, shopping, and doing the washing.
- **Watch what your baby is interested in** and talk about it. **Listen** to any sounds your baby makes and respond. Give your baby time to communicate with sounds or body language.
- Be **face to face** at the same level as your baby as much as possible.
- **Get your baby's attention** when you want to talk by calling their name and giving eye contact.
- **Make the most of every opportunity for your child to communicate** such as when they drop something off the high chair or they can't reach a toy they want. Don't just give them the item, talk about it first.
- **Sing songs and nursery rhymes** especially those with actions. These are great for developing language. Leave gaps for your baby to respond in songs they know well such as at the end for them to ask for the song again. This may be a noise or movement which shows they want the song again. Respond by giving them the word and repeating the song.
- **Babies love books** especially those with photos of everyday objects or people. Photos are easier to understand than drawings. Let your baby take the lead and turn the pages. Point to the pictures they might recognise such as food, toys or babies and **give them the word**. If they point at a picture, give them the word. Show them the real object if you have it such as a ball or shoe.

## You may want to talk to someone if:

- your baby doesn't make babbling noises;
- your baby does not seem interested in communicating with you;
- you think your baby has any hearing difficulties or has had lots of colds or ear infections;
- you have a family history of speech and language difficulties;
- you find it difficult to talk to your baby.

**If you have any concerns about your baby's communication or you want to know more about helping your baby to develop language, you can contact the Early Communication Team through your local children's centre.**

### Childrens centre details

County Hall, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1UD

**Tel:** (01983) 823142

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