

## Literacy

It's never too early to start reading books with a baby! In the first months of their life, children are interested in spending time close to you, hearing your voice, and seeing colours and shapes in a book.

At first, it's normal for a child to have a limited attention span. Expect your baby to begin their sensory exploration: touching, chewing, or mouthing books will be of great interest. It's important to create tender moments between a caregiver and a child when reading and writing, as to associate a positive experience with these activities. Be overly expressive and repeat the same words frequently.

### 0-6 months

Your baby looks at pictures and prefers pictures of faces.

**Types of books:** board books, fabric books, brightly coloured books, books with pictures of tangible objects (like babies, animals, food, toys, etc.)

### 6-12 months

Your baby looks at pictures, vocalizes, pats pictures, reaches for books, brings books to their mouth, and turns pages with a caregiver's help.

**Types of books:** board books with baby pictures or photos, small-sized books, and brightly coloured books.

*Books that make sounds: a word of caution*  
Please note that these are not developed in consultation that make an audiologist. Their decibel levels are tested without taking into account how children use these books - that is, by putting them to their ear.



## Contact Us

To learn more about children and family resources in your region and to connect to services available in English, contact us below.



# Communication and Language Development

Milestones, Strategies, Literacy



0-1  
year



Financial contribution from  
Public Health Agency of Canada  
Agence de la santé publique du Canada



The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

## Milestones: What to Expect

### 0-6 months

#### *What baby understands*

- A baby can hear sounds in the womb – this means they're already familiar with their mother's voice at birth.
- At this age, babies react to strong sounds as well as to their caregivers' voice(s). For example, they can stop crying when they hear a familiar voice and eventually turn their head towards the sound.
- They are sensitive to all speech sounds and gradually become more sensitive to the language(s) spoken to them.

#### *What baby says*

- In the first months of their life, babies already communicate through crying and body language. Newborn babies have slightly different types of cries depending on their needs.
- Around three months, babies start making sounds on purpose and enjoy using their voice. These first cooing sounds resemble vowels (such as, "oooh" and "aaahhh").
- Babies start to smile, laugh and make eye contact with other people: this is the beginning of social development.



### 6-12 months

#### *What baby understands*

- A baby starts to learn about turn-taking as they imitate and interact with adults. They can exchange sounds with familiar adults in a "conversational" way.
- At around nine months, babies begin understanding some frequent words such as "no", "milk", or "daddy", before even uttering their first word. Words that are heard often and in specific contexts are the first to be consistently understood.
- At this age, babies start wanting to explore their environment and interact with people or objects through sounds, gestures and touch.

#### *What baby says*

- A baby starts to play with strings of sounds (like "babababa"), also known as babbling.
- A few months later, they will start to mix up the sounds they produce (for example, "badababada"): they are learning to produce and combine their language's speech sounds.
- While they are playing with sounds, babies will start to integrate their language's intonations and melodic contours.
- They will start to express themselves through communicative gestures, such as pointing, showing items to adults, waving goodbye, or shaking their head to express "no".
- Around 12 months, babies utter their first words that refer to familiar objects or people (for example, "mommy" or "daddy").

## How to Support Language Development

- Be responsive to your child's needs. A solid attachment between an infant and their caregiver is beneficial to social and language development.
- Talk to your baby as much as possible. Tell them what you are doing, describe what's around them, outline the plan for the day... be creative! This is not only enjoyable for them, but it also helps them become familiar with their language's intonation and sounds.
- Exaggerate the melody of your voice and your facial expression to catch the baby's interest.
- Respond to the sounds your baby makes. Repeat after them in an exaggerate tone and use words to answer them. This teaches your baby communication and turn-taking basics.
- Talk, talk, and talk some more! Put words to your baby's interests, emotions, or what they're looking at.
- Respond to their babbling to create their first "conversations", which will teach them the basis of communication.
- Read simple children's books together: this is beneficial even before a baby understands words.
- Sing simple songs or nursery rhymes to your baby. Doing this can help young children become aware of different speech sounds and new words, while encouraging them to imitate the sounds, words, and gestures made by the adult singing with them.



### When Should I Seek Help From a Professional?

- 1 Your baby does not make sounds.
- 2 Your baby rarely makes eye contact.
- 3 Your baby does not react to their parent's voice, to their name or to strong sounds.