

the early years toolkit

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Babble - up to nine month stage

Babies start to make soft sounds when they are awake from around four months. They will gurgle and coo when parents are talking to them. As parents you start to respond to the different sounds e.g. a certain cry means they are hungry or want to be picked up, another sound means they are happy and content etc.

By six months, babies are usually making a greater range of sounds which can be laughter-like sounds, and some more sing-song vowel sounds e.g. a-a, moo, goo, aroo, adah.

By nine months a baby would usually be babbling with reduplicated sounds e.g. babababa, dadadada. They will show pleasure in babbling loudly and tunefully and may copy other sounds like lip-smacking or coughing.

If your baby seems quite quiet, try a few of the following ideas to stimulate your baby's babbling:

- Spend time in close face-to-face interaction with your baby
- Use your voice to gain baby's attention, make your voice sound fun to listen to
- Use child-directed speech in response to your baby's behaviour e.g. 'you want that one' (if reaching to something), or 'hello mummy' (as if they are greeting you) and wait to see if your baby responds back to you with vocalisation or a change in facial expression
- Talk and/or sing to your baby during daily routines e.g. feeding, nappy changing, bathing your baby
- Repeat the words/songs you use each time to build familiarity for your baby
- Rock or move your baby rhythmically to songs and engage in social play routines e.g. peek-a-boo or blowing raspberries on a tummy to help them learn to anticipate within these routines
- Alert your baby to different sounds in the environment e.g. ping of the microwave, music on the TV, an aeroplane going over, a dog barking, sound-making toys e.g. shaker/drum

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- Have some time where you talk to your baby in a quieter space, turn off the TV/radio or use a carpeted area, so your baby has a chance to listen and respond to your voice without distractions from other noises
- Copy any sounds your baby makes when they are watching you
- Try taking turns with the sounds they make where you copy them, then wait, they take a turn, then you again and so on. Sounds to try include vowels e.g. ah, oo, ee, oh, a, i, e and early consonants e.g. b, m, n, d, g
- This time, when it's your turn try a different sound and see if they copy the new one or stay with their own sound

Child-directed speech is sing-song in nature, using short phrases that relate to what the baby is doing. Turn-taking with babble sounds is the start of conversation.