

Parenting Future Readers

No. 1 (Month 3-4)

Did you know?

Babies come into the world ready to learn language. By 3-months your baby is already experimenting with making different sounds. Babies this age make cooing or long vowel sounds like "Ahhh" and "Oooh."



Did you know?

Parents are baby's main tool for learning language. Babies learn language through everyday experiences with parents, not through lessons.

Did you know?

Research shows that parents who talk more with their babies have babies who talk more and learn language better.

Did you know?

When parents are sensitive and respond to their baby's needs and attempts to communicate, this makes baby feel safe to explore his world and promotes language development.

Did you know?

When adults (or even older siblings) speak to babies they naturally raise the pitch of their voice, speak slowly, use simple phrases or sentences, and repeat words. This way of talking is called "parentese" or "child-directed speech." Research shows that babies prefer "parentese" to adult-directed speech. Speaking this way helps focus baby's attention and makes it easier for you and baby to communicate, so baby learns language better. This way of talking shows baby you are interested in her.

Did you know?

Research shows that parents who let their babies take turns in conversations have children who are more skilled in language development at age three.

What can you do?

Talk often with your baby, about whatever you and he are doing. For example, when you are changing diapers, feeding baby, giving baby a bath, or fixing dinner, explain what is happening. While changing diapers you might say, "Here's a nice new diaper to make Jason all clean and dry. How does that feel?" Sing lullabies to baby and tell him nursery rhymes.

What can you do?

Let baby know you hear her. Respond to her coos or gurgles as if she is starting a conversation. For example, when baby says "Ahhh" while you are giving her a bath you might smile and say, "you really enjoy the warm bath water. It feels so nice." Being responsive shows baby you are interested in what she has to say, even though she doesn't use real words. This makes baby feel she can have an impact on her world, and encourages her to practice language more.

Books for parents:

Literacy Begins at Birth, by Marjorie Fields (Tucson, Arizona: Fisher Books), 1989.

Beyond Baby Talk: From sounds to Sentences - A Parents' Complete Guide to Language Development, by Kenn Apel & Julie Masterson (Roseville, California: Prima Publishing), 2001.



What can you do?

Use "turn taking" when talking with baby. Put baby on your lap facing you. Lean toward baby, smile, and talk cheerfully. Pause and give baby a chance to respond. Baby may make a gurgling or cooing sound, smile, or just look back at you wide-eyed. If he makes a sound, repeat it back to him. Baby will be so excited! Play "turn taking" games with baby. Try leaning down and blowing air on baby's tummy, and then wait for baby's smile or giggle before repeating the game. Babies love any sort of repetitive game, and it teaches them about "turn taking." If baby turns away, this is a signal that he needs a break.

What can you do?

Use "parentese" when you talk to baby. Since this comes naturally to most parents you may already be doing this.