



Communicating Kids – Birth to 1 Year

This is a huge year for development and your baby will be growing and changing in so many ways. Here are some of the communication skills you can expect to see over the first year.

Social Communication

Throughout their first year of life babies become more interested in others and recognise people they know. They start to turn to look when people speak, show more interest in looking at faces and they begin smiling and laughing. They might use gestures – like waving bye-bye, pointing for things they want or clapping their hands. Babies at this age start to learn 'anticipation' – showing they know what might happen next in games like peeka-boo.

Language

Understanding

Babies in their first year begin to recognise the names of familiar people (family) and objects (eg car) as well as routines and common phrases eg "bath time", "all gone". They might look for objects when you ask eg "where's teddy?" and recognise familiar songs and games, like peek-a-boo.

Expressing themselves

At this age children express themselves mainly through sounds- crying, happy sounds, babbling and squealing. As they approach their first birthday they might begin making representational sounds like brum brum or woof woof. Some first words should start emerging, these are likely to be family names eg mummy, or things they experience lots and they like, eg bottle or a favourite toy.

Speech

Babies at this age will be playing with different speech sounds and you can expect to hear lots of vowels as well as b, m and w. They will often use repeated sound patterns eg bababa, mamama, dadada. Any words they are using might only be recognisable to people who know the child the best.



What can adults do?

Make communicating fun

- Sing nursery rhymes and make up songs.
- Use noises (eg animals) and expressions "oh-no".
- Talk about what your child is interested in, get on their level- join their play- watch how they do things and join in with it.
- Limit questions- being asked lots of questions, like "what's this?" is not fun!

Make communication meaningful

- Talk to your baby about everyday things you are doing and comment on what they are doing.
- Use simplified language- this helps them hear and learn key (important) words.
- Use lots of repetition.
- Respond to their sounds and behaviours- being listened to and getting a response teaches children how to listen to and respond to others. You can also interpret their sounds and behaviours, giving them words.
- Use gestures and signs along-side your talking- babies at this age are starting to copy actions like waving and high-five, they can also learn useful actions to be able to indicate if they want a drink or food.

Try this

Make distraction-free time to sing songs and play games with actions (there are lots of nursery rhymes available on-line BUT accessing them this way doesn't give children all the extra input they get when singing with a person).

- *Sing 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes'- do the actions with the words.*
- *Sing 'Round and round the garden' – pause before tickling to build anticipation.*
- *Play hide and boo with your child and with toys- use a gesture and look around when saying 'where' eg "where's teddy?... there he is!"*

Disclaimer

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