

Wee Beginners (0-18 months): Supporting Language & Literacy Skills From 0-12 months



The idea of babies and toddlers talking, and reading can seem incredible, but language and literacy skills start early from birth. Watching your baby and learning how they communicate through sounds, facial expressions, and gestures are all important ways to help them learn about language and the written word.

Early language and literacy skills are learned best through everyday moments with your child such as reading books, talking, laughing, and playing together. Children learn language when you talk to them and they communicate back to you, and by hearing stories read and songs sung aloud. Language and literacy, while two different skills, build on one another in important ways.

What you can do to support your baby's growing language and literacy skills from 0-12 Months:

- Describe their feelings and experiences (i.e. when you see that she is hungry, you can say: You are nuzzling at my shirt, you are telling me you're hungry) Although your baby won't understand your words right away, your caring, loving tone of voice and actions will make them feel understood.
- Copy your baby's sounds and encourage him to imitate you.
- Put words to her sounds
- Sing songs you know, or make up songs about your baby
- Play peek-a-boo. This simple turn-taking game is good practice for how to have a conversation later.
- Hand your baby a rattle or soft ball. Then see if she will hand it back to you. See if you can exchange the toy a few times. This "back-and-forth" is practice for having a conversation later.
- Read lots of books. Reading together helps your baby develop a love of reading and a familiarity with books. Reading aloud also helps your baby's vocabulary grow
- Read with gusto. Use different voices for different characters in the stories you read to your baby.
- Let your baby "read" her own way. Follow your baby's lead to make reading time a positive experience. This will nurture her love of literacy from the start.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat. Babies learn through repetition because it gives them many chances to "figure things out."

Parent-Child Activities to Promote Language and Literacy:

- Make a photo album. Glue or collect photos of your baby and the important people in her life and make it into an album. Share the book with your baby.
- Touch some new textures. Gather small squares of different fabrics (lace, cotton, etc.). Snip a small hole through each square and tie them together with a piece of ribbon. Let your baby touch the fabric "book" and talk about how the different textures feel.
- Sing some "finger play" songs. These are songs that have hand movements to go with them. "Finger plays" help children develop muscle strength and coordination in their fingers, which helps them learn to write and draw later on.

What is most important about the activities you do with your baby is that they are fun for both of you. And while you are having fun, your child is also learning.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2KQVqFE>

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