

Early communication helps your child learn to talk

During the first few months of life, babies learn that they are able to communicate their wants and needs to us. As you get to know your baby, you start to recognize and respond to her various cues.

When she cries, you pick her up and comfort her. When she smiles and kicks her legs, you know that she enjoys playing with you. When she fusses and turns her head away during a feeding, you know that she is full.

At the same time as you are learning to understand your baby, he is learning to understand you. He hears you sing the same songs over and over to comfort or amuse him. He watches and listens as you talk throughout the day, describing what you are doing and the things you see.

By the time she is a year old, your toddler knows how to use sounds to get your attention. She might coo, grunt, laugh and babble, making repeating sounds like "ba ba ba." You can encourage her budding

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PARENTING POINTS

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two words together in a sentence.

There are many ways you can encourage your child as she is learning to speak.

- Use short, simple sentences: "Bring me the ball" or "Where is your nose?"
- Talk to him throughout the day. Use words to describe

actions, objects, colours, shapes, sizes and textures.

- Acknowledge and elaborate on what she says. If she points and says "cup," you can respond by saying, "Here is your cup. Would you like some water in your cup?"
- Sing to him. When he hears his favourite songs over and over, the rhythm and

rhyme help him learn and remember words. Action songs help him listen for the cues to clap or gesture.

- Read books together every day. Choose books with interesting illustrations and focus on talking about the pictures just as much as the printed words.

It is important to remember that every child develops at his or her own pace. Some children will learn to speak very early and others take a little longer. Encourage your child's early attempts at communicating and soon she will be able to express her thoughts, wants, needs and feelings in words.

vocabulary by copying the sounds she makes.

Your toddler understands language long before he can speak. He learns to associate words with familiar objects, like "puppy" or "hat," and starts to point to objects in front of him or on the pages of a book. Eventually he will say the word as he points. By the time he is two, your child may know about 50 words, and may even be able to out