

Speech and language development 12 to 18 months

What can I expect as my child learns to talk?

While children learn at different rates, you can look for typical patterns at certain ages. The skills listed here are in the order you may see them in your child.

1. Child understands many new words and may begin to point to familiar objects, responding to “Show me your nose” or “Where’s the dog?”
2. Child follows simple directions such as “Give me five!”
3. Child recognizes people’s names and tries to say them.
4. Child can name body parts and familiar objects.
5. Child can make some sounds earlier than others: for example, P, B, M, and D are easier to say than K, and G. You may hear errors such as “do” for “go.”

What can I do to help my child?

Use gestures and expression in your voice to show what you mean. When your child tries to say a word, repeat it correctly without using “baby talk.” Use simple language to talk with your child.

Toys and activities provide stimulation and something to talk about. Ideas include:

Purchased toys

- balls
- blocks, stacking toys
- dolls
- hammer and pegs set
- musical toys

- play dishes
- play radio, records
- simple puzzles
- texture books such as Pat the Bunny
- trucks, wagons, push-pull toys

Homemade toys and household items

- boxes for stacking
- clothespins
- empty containers for sorting and nesting
- magazines, newspapers, junk mail
- measuring cups and spoons, spatulas
- paper towel tubes

Favorite activities

- blowing bubbles
- peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake
- playing ball
- reading books
- water play

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child, but provides general information. If you have any questions, please ask your child’s doctor or nurse practitioner.