

# Expressive Language

## Learning to Speak, and to Use Language

### *Birth*

Newborn babies make sounds that let others know that they are experiencing pleasure or pain.

### *0-3 Months*

Your baby smiles at you when you come into view. He or she repeats the same sound a lot and "coos and goos" when content. Cries "differentiate". That means, the baby uses a different cry for different situations. For example, one cry says "I'm hungry" and another says "I have a pain".

### *4-6 months*

Gurgling sounds or "vocal play" occur while you are playing with your baby or when they are occupying themselves happily. Babbling really gets going in this age range, and your baby will sometimes sound as though he or she is "talking". This "speech-like" babbling includes many sounds including the bilabial (two lip) sounds "p", "b" and "m". The baby can tell you, using sounds or gestures that they want something, or want you to do something. They can make very "urgent" noises to prompt you into action.

### *7-12 months*

The sound of your baby's babbling changes. This is because it now includes more consonants, as well as long and short vowels. He or she uses speech or other sounds (i.e., other than crying) in order to get your attention and hold on to it. And your baby's first words (probably not spoken very clearly) have appeared! ("MaMa", "Doggie", "Night Night", "Bye Bye")

### *1-2 years*

Now your baby is accumulating more words as each month passes. he or she will even ask 2-word questions like "Where ball?" "What's that?" "More chippies?" "What that?", and combine two words in other ways to make the Stage 1 Sentence Types ("Birdie go", "No doggie", "More push"). Words are becoming clearer as more initial consonants are used in words.

### *2-3 years*

Your two or three year old's vocabulary is exploding! He or she seems to have a word for almost everything. Utterances are usually one, two or three words long and family members can usually understand them. Your toddler may ask for, or draw your attention to something by naming it ("Elephant") or one of its attributes ("Big!") or by commenting ("Wow!").

### *3-4 years*

Sentences are becoming longer as your child can combine four or more words. They talk about things that have happened away from home, and are interested in talking about pre-school, friends, outings and interesting experiences. Speech is usually fluent and clear and "other people" can understand what your child is saying most of the time. If stuttering occurs, see a speech-language pathologist. Stuttering is not a normal part of learning to talk, and neither is persistent hoarseness.

### *4-5 years*

Your child speaks clearly and fluently in an easy-to-listen-to voice. He or she can construct long and detailed sentences ("We went to the zoo but we had to come home early because Josie wasn't feeling well"). He or she can tell a long and involved story sticking to the topic, and using "adult-like" grammar. Most sounds are pronounced correctly, though he or she may lisp as a four year old, or, at five, still have difficulty with "r", "v" and "th". Your child can communicate easily with familiar adults and with other children. They may tell fantastic "tall stories" and engage strangers in conversation when you are out together.

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