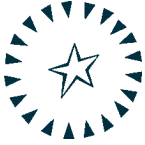


# Early Words



training initiative

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## Session Objectives

By the end of this session you will:

- Be able to understand the different milestones of how babies learn language and literacy during infancy (birth to 18 months).
- Learn several new ways to talk to babies—and learn how to encourage babies to talk back.
- Learn when to be concerned about a baby's language development.
- Learn several ways to help babies have their first experiences with literacy.
- Learn how to choose books for a baby
- Learn four activities you can use right away in your program.

## Reflective Activity

What do you think babies need or want?

How do they tell you?

How do people in your family/culture find out what a baby wants?

How do people in your family or culture begin to talk to babies?

Why do we think they do or don't?

## Babies Language Development

When babies are first born they are able to hear all possible language sounds. After all, a baby has no idea whether it will be born in Oregon, Mexico, Russia, or Cambodia. Babies very quickly focus on the sounds specific to the language they hear. By 8 to 10 months, they will respond to the sounds that are part of their native tongue. Their ability to recognize the sounds of other languages disappears.

Here are some typical language milestones.

2 – 4 months	Infants coo, laugh, make vowel sounds.
4 – 6 months	Vocal Play. Loud and soft sounds. High and low sounds. Raspberries.
4 months on	Joint Attention Begins (caregiver and infant focus on the same thing).
6-14 months	Babbling begins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consonant and vowel sounds (“agoo”).</li> <li>• Repeating syllables (“bababa”).</li> <li>• By 7 months the babbling of hearing infants includes sounds of mature spoken languages. Adults may swear they hear words “bicycle”).</li> </ul>
6-14 months	Babies participate in simple games – pat-a-cake, peekaboo, so big, this little piggy went to market.
10 months and up	Jargon Stage. Sometimes called conversational babbling. Babies say long “sentences” that sound as though they are speaking their own language.  Babies will also use body language and tone that is similar to that of adults. They may use their hands while talking or appear to be asking a question.
12 months	Babies say their first word.
up to 18 months	Babies’ vocabulary increases to around 50 words.

## Hey! Did You Know?

Babies rarely say or do things exactly when they are supposed to. Each infant has its own speed of development. Some babies say their first word earlier than 12 months and some say it later. Even though some babies talk later than others, most of these babies understand quite a few words.

## When Should You Be Concerned?

Some children don't begin to say their first words until they are 18 months old or older. If you work with an infant who does not speak by the time he/she is around 20 months but understands a number of words, there is no need to worry. However, by 18 months, children should understand some words. If you are working with an older infant who does not seem to understand anything, you should talk to the child's parents about what you've noticed.

Has the child had lots of ear infections? Ear infections fill the ears with fluid and make it difficult for the baby to hear. If a baby has a hearing problem, it can make it much harder for them to learn language and can even affect brain development. If you have concerns, ask the parents if they have noticed similar things. If you catch problems early, they often can be treated. The child's parents should discuss this with their doctor. Doctors can perform very accurate hearing tests.

To arrange a free hearing test for a child, contact Denise Woods from Multnomah Education Service District at 503-262-4100 or The Portland State Audiology Clinic at 503-725-3070.













## Take and Use Activity: Baby Signs

Once the babies in your care seem ready to say their first words, you can introduce some simple signs for common objects or activities (diapers, more, drink, etc.).

When babies are first starting to talk, they often want to say more than they can actually say with words. Simple signs or gestures can help you know what the baby is thinking of and can reduce the baby's frustration!

It might seem like if you teach babies signs, they won't learn to talk. But, research has shown that babies who learn some simple signs actually talk sooner and have larger vocabularies than other babies.

Remember to talk while you are signing with a child. For instance, if you sign "hat", you might also say, "It's time to put on your hat." Similarly, if a child signs to you, repeat the sign and say what the child has signed in a phrase ("Hat. Where's your hat?").

Here are suggestions for some simple signs. Make up your own signs with the babies in your care!

Drink – Bring your thumb up to your mouth and tilt it up, like making a drinking motion.

Food – Bring your finger tips to your lips as though you were putting something in your mouth.

More – Tap the palm of one hand with index finger of the other hand – like pointing to where you want someone to put something in your hand.

Up - Put both arms out in front of you. Bend them diagonally at the elbow so it looks as if you are holding a baby out in front of you.

Stop – Hold one hand out, palm up. With your other hand open, make a chopping motion against your palm – as though you were chopping something as it sat on your palm.

Hat – Pat the top of your head.

Coat – Touch your index finger to your thumb and run your hand from your waist to your neck as though you were zipping up a coat.

Rain – Wriggle your fingers while moving them downward.

Flower – Make a sniffing noise as though smelling a flower.

Caterpillar – Wriggle your index finger as though it was an inch worm crawling along.

Pig – Touch your nose with your index finger.

Giraffe – With an open hand, rub in front of your neck as though pointing to the giraffe's long neck.

What else can you think of?

**Additional Baby Signs**

## Books and Babies

As the quote at the beginning of this unit states, reading to babies (even the tiny ones!) is very important. And, just as talking with babies looks different than talking with older children, reading with babies doesn't always look like reading.

### Sometimes Reading Looks Like Chewing.

- As soon as babies start putting everything in their mouths, books will go there too.
- Make certain you have some cloth books, board books, and nontoxic plastic books for the babies in your care. Plan to replace these books occasionally.

### Sometimes Reading Looks Like Exploring.

- Even when babies are shaking books, turning them upside down, or turning the pages at the speed of light, they are getting to know how books work.
- Understanding how books work is a first step in learning to read. Babies who play with books will find it easier to learn to read later on.

### Be Flexible As You Read To Babies.

- There is no rule that says you must read every word (or even any words) printed on the pages of a children's book.
- As you read to tiny babies watch how they seem to explore the pages with their eyes. Stop and wait until they look away before you turn the page.
- As the baby gets older, you may need to just talk through the book or only try to read a short phrase on every page.
- Talk about the pictures. Point out pictures of familiar objects or animals – “Look, there's a cow. What does the cow say? The cow says, MOO.”

- Read books over and over. When you read books again and again, you will find that babies have favorite parts or favorite pictures. Spend time with the favorites.
- Remember it is not instant magic. Keep at it!! One day you will realize that the baby really is looking at the pictures or maybe pointing to the picture of the dog and saying the word for his/her dog at home.

### Model Your Joy Of Reading To Children!

- When you show young children how you read, they are more likely to be curious about what reading involves. They will want to imitate what you do.

## What Types Of Books Should You Look For?

- Books with photographs are interesting for babies. They love photos of faces.
- Look for books with realistic pictures. Until around 11 months of age, babies have difficulty seeing edges of pictures (where does one picture end and another picture begin). Save books with watercolor or abstract pictures until the child is older.
- Look for books with few words. Short phrases help babies experience the rhythm of reading and are easier to understand as babies get older. Also, if a baby is turning the pages very quickly, you can still get some words in.
- Find books with pictures that might be familiar to the babies (pictures of houses, people, dogs, cats, etc.). Babies will spend more time looking at a book with you if they are looking at things they recognize. Take pictures and make your own books.
- Books with repetition (*Brown Bear, Brown Bear*) or rhyming (What do you see? I see a red bird looking at me!) are appealing to babies. The rhyme and repetition is fun to listen to.
- Cloth, board, non-toxic. Select books babies can interact with.



## Take and Use Activity: Make a Face Book

Babies love to look at faces, particularly familiar faces. Also, people names are typically among babies' first words.

Use the camera to take pictures of people's faces. Be certain to include your face as well as the faces of parents and the children you work with. You may even be able to get a variety of facial expressions.

You can also ask parents to bring in pictures of the baby's family and friends.

Develop the pictures and put them in the photo album. Read the face book with the babies in your care.

## Closing

*You will do foolish things, but do them with enthusiasm.* Colette

“Look at me, Sadie. Watch the bubbles.”

Little drool bubbles dripped down Trace’s mouth.

Six-month-old Sadie did the same thing.

“Oh, you’re a genius,” Trace said, giving her a snuggly hug.

“You are a baby-loving nut, aren’t you?” asked Sadie’s father.

Trace had no idea that he had been watching.

Her red face of embarrassment blossomed into a rosy smile as she answered,

“Yes, I am, and proud of it too!”

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