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Babble

Reviewed on November 23, 2018 ✓

Stocksy



All aboard the baby talk express! Next stop: Babble Town...and with all those silly new noises, it's going to be a hilarious ride.

Your baby will learn to talk in stages, beginning with sighs and coos, followed by strung-together consonant-vowel sounds — what's often called babbling. Baby babbles like "a-ga" and "a-da" eventually combine to create basic words and

word-sounds. But be patient, Mom and Dad: It's going to take a while for baby's brain to associate word-like sounds like "ma-ma" and "da-da" with their real meanings. (Still, it's fun to imagine that your honey is really saying Mama and Dada by month 6 — and you wouldn't be the first proud parents to believe it.)

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When to expect it: Many babies start to babble between 4 and 6 months and continue to develop their repertoire of consonant-vowel combination sounds for many months to follow. Here's a look at roughly what to expect when — although your baby's vocalization timeline may vary:

- **6 weeks to 3 months:** [vowel sounds \(a-aa, i-ii\), cooing and gurgling](#)
- **4 to 5 months:** combinations of consonants and vowel sounds (a-ga, a-ba, a-da)
- **By 6 months:** singsong strings of consonants (da-da-da-da-da)
- **By 8 months:** double consonants without meaning (da-da, ma-ma, ha-ha)
- **8 to 18 months:** words or word-sounds with meaning (ba-ba for "ball," "da" for "dad" or "dog" or "doll")

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Games to Help Baby Develop

To help boost both receptive language (understanding what he hears) and expressive language (saying his own words), talk and talk and talk to your little one. Recent studies suggest that babies pick up communication skills faster when their parents react to their babbles with supportive language cues. In other words, your little guy will connect the sound "ba-ba-ba" to his green ball if you respond to him as if what he really said was, "I love my green ball so much, I'm going to put it in my mouth immediately!" (And, when you think about it, that might very well be what he meant anyway.) So when baby says "ba-ba-ba," you can encourage his language development by responding, "Ball! Yes, that's Henry's ball. Henry's green ball. And doesn't the ball just taste delicious?"

Read This Next

first sounds



First Sounds

first words



Baby's First Words

wave



Waving, Clapping
and Pointing

Other ways to encourage your baby's babbles:

- Give your baby a toy and talk about it. "Dog! This is a purple dog. Woof woof."

- Make eye contact with your baby while he's having a "conversation" with you. When he babbles, look him in the eyes, smile and respond.
- Imitate your baby's babbles.
- If you hear him imitating a sound that you make, say it again — and again. Repetition may seem simple and silly to you, but it's really exciting for your baby: It encourages his vocalization practice while also teaching him that sounds aren't just fun to make, they're also ways to communicate.
- Ask lots of questions ("Should we walk to the park or the library?" "Do you think Grandpa would like this cake with roses on it or this one with the balloons?"). Then follow up with an answer ("Yes, I think Grandma would like these pretty roses"). Yes Mom, you're talking to yourself, but you're also modeling the give-and-take of conversation.
- Stumped for a topic of conversation? Just tell your baby what you (and she) are doing. "Mommy is putting on Kelly's coat — clip, clip! — to keep Kelly nice and warm. Now let's put on a cozy scarf and — one, two — mittens!" She doesn't know what you're saying now, but she will soon!
- What's that noise? Point it out to your baby — "Listen, a kitty is purring!" or "I hear a car going zoom, zoom down the road." This is great practice for the toddler and preschool years, when you'll want her to have good "listening ears" — that is, ears that both hear, and heed, your rules.
- [Read, read and read some more](#). Books are a super source of new words for a baby. Try nursery rhymes, sturdy board books, even whatever's on your own nightstand (Hey, reading to your baby may be the only chance you get to dig into a novel, so go for it!).

What not to worry about: There's really no wrong way to talk to your baby — don't worry that you're reinforcing "nonsense talk" instead of "real words" by letting your baby babble on or babbling back to him. Babbles are building blocks for language and language comprehension, and even the silliest sounds and noises help your baby practice the mouth movements he'll need for his first real words.

What's next: With enough practice and encouragement from you, your baby's babbles will eventually combine to create your little one's [first basic words](#).

From the What to Expect editorial team and [Heidi Murkoff](#), author of *What to Expect the First Year*. Health information on this site is based on peer-reviewed medical journals and highly respected health organizations and institutions including [ACOG](#) (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists), [CDC](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and [AAP](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics), as well as the *What to Expect* books by Heidi Murkoff.

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