

Language Development Guide

PRE-LINGUISTIC STAGE | pregnancy - 12 months

AGE & STAGE	LANGUAGE ABILITIES & EXPRESSION	ENVIRONMENTAL AIDS
AUDITORY 4-9 months <i>in utero</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From the 4th month of pregnancy, Baby has the ability to hear and begins absorbing sounds and vibrations. The nervous system is stimulated by this input. - Research has shown that hearing babies in utero react to the mother's language more than other languages. {1,2} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the parent's voice • music played for Baby • books or poems read to Baby • singing to Baby
EMOTIONAL <i>Birth</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baby is attracted to the voice of the mother, the voice of the other parent if their voice was heard often during pregnancy, and to songs/poems heard during pregnancy. - Crying is a communication tool. - Baby can distinguish the phonemes of different languages, spoken by the same person and different people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the parent's voice, singing • no background noise • speaking in "Parentese" (exaggerated, higher pitched, grammatically correct way of speaking) • being exposed to a rich language environment (applies to ALL future pre-linguistic/linguistic stages)
PLAYFUL & EMOTIONAL <i>2 months</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baby begins cooing (babbling vowels). - Baby gains the desire to communicate during the emotional period from birth to 4 months old, if positive emotional connections are made. - Baby stares at the mouth of the speaker. - Baby can smile socially. - Around 2-3 months old, Baby's larynx drops, making vocalisation possible. - Baby can turn her head towards sound and you can check Baby's hearing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • signing words within a focusable distance (sign language) • songs have accompanying movements • adults and siblings mimicking sounds made by Baby • Never give the pacifier while baby is cooing as it interrupts linguistic development
PLAYFUL & EMOTIONAL <i>4 months</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baby coos all universal vowel sounds. The sounds which are reinforced by the adults who speak to baby are repeated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • singing songs, talking directly to baby, reading books, explaining pictures
LISTENING <i>6 months</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Marginal" babbling (vowel-consonant combinations, like "dadada") - Baby starts producing only the sounds they hear in their environment - Deaf babies stop babbling (between 6-8 months) and usually do not start canonical babbling - There seems to be a specific, sensitive period for the absorption of the sounds of words during the 6-12 month ages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adults speaking with clear articulation • Adults reinforce Baby's sounds by repeating them back to her. This encourages their efforts and may give the feeling of being understood.
LISTENING <i>8 months</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baby begins purposeful, "canonical" babbling. This is consonant-vowel combinations heard in their language environment, such as "Lalala". In Italian, this stage is called "lallazione". - Baby reacts to their name around 7-9 months. - Baby begins to understand "yes", "no", and the meaning of intonation in adult speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALL ABOVE AIDS • Use repetition when speaking to Baby • Isolate nouns when on walks, reading books, etc. • When baby is able to sit independently, it becomes more comfortable to read to them. • regularly reading to Baby
LISTENING <i>10 months</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Babies can show us understanding of language like asking them to wave bye and they do (9-10 months) or pointing. - Conversational babbling begins. This babbling has rhythm, intonation, pauses. This stage continues until speech is achieved. - If sign language is a primary language in the home, babies will begin babbling with their hands and fingers. - The child's inability to express herself can cause the child great frustration which may lead to negative behaviour like hitting or biting in the 2-3 months before speaking starts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALL ABOVE AIDS • Baby Sign Language is especially helpful at this time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When possible, use the correct, local sign language for the most important signs (hungry, diaper, pain...) - Say the spoken word while using the sign. Use repetition.

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LINGUISTIC STAGE | 1 - 6 years

AGE	LANGUAGE ABILITIES & EXPRESSION	ENVIRONMENTAL AIDS
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The child's first intentional word spoken (may be earlier or later).- Babbling becomes "variegated": it includes some words and some babbles, gradually increasing the number of spoken words used.- Your child may be able to say 1-15 words, but already understands 70-100.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is no longer necessary to mimic babbles.• singing songs, talking directly to baby, reading books, and explaining pictures
18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Generalization of nouns or "over-extension" Examples: all animals are called <i>dog</i> & all colors are <i>blue</i>- Telegraphic speech or "holo phrases" - 1 word conveys a whole sentence Example: "out" means <i>I want to go outside</i>- One-word sentences advances to two-word phrases, then to three-word phrases. The chosen words are usually only nouns or verbs.- This stage can last up to the age of 3 years old. By the age of 3 if a child is still not speaking in 3-word sentences, this could be a sign of speech delay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Montessori language activities and games• modelling having conversations with the child• actively listening when the child is speaking to you• child-led walks and outings paired with conversations about experiences and observations
24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Explosion into language!- The child has enough language to express their needs vocally and you can understand them.- The child starts to use the word "I".- The child learns approximately 7-10 new words per day, or 1 new word every 2 waking hours!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ALL ABOVE AIDS• If your child is not yet speaking in 3-word sentences by the age of 3, this could a sign of a speech delay.• If your child is over 3 and you are concerned about a speech delay, you can seek advice from your child's paediatrician or a speech pathologist.
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The child understands approximately 13,000 words!- The child can use the phrase "I think" to express an idea.- He can use the word "know" to show understanding.- He uses the word "yesterday" to describe everything that has happened in the past.- He uses the word "tomorrow" for everything that will happen in the future.- This stage can last up to the age of 6 years old.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Laughing at mistakes can discourage the child's attempts to learn.• To correct a child's grammatical mistakes, simply repeat the sentence back to him correctly, avoiding negativity.• The adult should be prepared for any situation to become a language lesson.• Keep in mind that the child processes language slower and is still learning. Be patient.• Speak slower to a child than in adult-directed speech. Repeat yourself when necessary.• Get the attention of the child; look her in the eyes; say one thing; observe understanding; say the next thing.