



## Language Development

Understanding what makes your toddler tick - the key to a happy, well-balanced child



Articles

### Language Development in the second year of life (12 – 24 months)



At her first birthday, your little toddler has been communicating for some time now by babbling with voice intonation and emphasis. At this stage her *receptive speech* (what she understands) is more advanced than her *expressive speech* (which is what she can actually say).

By using a single word, she is able to convey the meaning of a whole sentence. So she may say the word 'dog', which may mean that she is saying, "There is the dog", "The dog is eating" or "Where is the dog"? Her vocabulary is most likely to consist of a few words (about three or four), usually the names of objects that are part of her daily life such as 'mama' or 'dada'. She will respond to her own name, and will come when you call her and understand a few simple commands such as, "Where is the light?" (how clever!).

By the age of around 15 months, she should know where to localise a sound source and to discriminate between different voices, and to understand different tones (happy, cross). Bear in mind that this *receptive speech* (what she understands) is far more advanced than her *expressive speech* (what she can actually say), so you may not always understand her! However, it is at this stage that she will start to learn her first real words. These are different words to her first gobbledegook baby words. You will be amazed at how quickly her language development takes place, and by the time she is 18 months old she may have a vocabulary of about 20 or more words, and may even use two or three words together. This is the time when she starts classifying and grouping objects, and anything round may be called 'ball'. She will love to imitate the sound of things and animals. Encourage her, and make her aware of the sounds around her, from the bird song early in the morning to the sound of the cars passing in the street. Talk to her when you do everyday routine things so that she will *hear* words used in simple sentence constructions while *seeing* or *touching* the objects referred to. Involve as many senses as possible in your interaction with her to enhance her development.

She should be able to identify simple pictures when you name them. For example, if you asked her, "Show me the teddy in the picture" she would proudly oblige. She will love to do simple movements to songs that she recognises.

It is important to note that the first two years of life are a critical period for learning *language*, and your child should have developed some auditory processing skills by now. By the age of two years, she should be able to localise a sound source as well as discriminate between different voices and sounds (for example mom's voice as opposed to the dog barking). Her vocabulary may reach 50 – 100 words at this stage. This is the time of many questions. Follow her cue and ask her questions to encourage her to use her new-found language skills.

Bear in mind that all toddlers develop at their own pace, so if your child still gestures more than speaks at this stage, but has a clear understanding of what you are saying, don't worry.

#### Checklist for Hearing:

- is able to imitate sounds
- responds to her name
- reacts to loud noises

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