

FAQ's About Early Communication Development

First Words - When should my child say her/his first words?

There is a wide range of typical development. Some children speak much earlier or later than others. Generally you can anticipate first real words to emerge sometime around 12 to 18 months of age. If your child is not using words to communicate wants and needs by 18-24 months of age, you should consult further with a speech-language pathologist.

Language Stimulation - How can I help my child to develop listening and speaking skills? Read, read, and read. Read to your child. Read with your child. Read alongside your child.

Make sure that your child sees you reading for fun (books, magazines, newspapers) and to find out things (using instruction manuals, the TV listings, schedules, etc.)

Listen to what your child has to say. Respond to your child's comments. This is how conversation develops.

Expand on what your child says. For example, child: "Want cup" adult: "You want the cup? I'll get the cup. Here's the cup!"

Give lots of positive reinforcement! Let your child know how much you enjoy talking together -"I love to talk with you; you have some interesting things to tell me!"

Avoid correction. Respond to your child's comment by providing the correct word. Don't ask your child to repeat the corrected form. For example, child: "I eated it!" adult: "You ate it? Yes, you ate all of it. Did you like it?"

Narrate your activities with your child. Talk about what you're doing as you're doing it. For example, "We're putting the dirty socks in the laundry basket." "You have muddy shoes. Let's take off your shoes."

Maintain your sense of humor. It will help get you through the tough times.