

Supporting Language & Literacy at 12 Months

Serve-and-Return Conversations with a Toddler

At 12 months, your child may have said their first word or two but continues to use lots of nonverbal communication, like gestures and head movements. They may even pair gestures with sounds and words to direct others and reinforce what they are wanting to communicate.

Serve-and-return conversations will sound and feel a little different as your baby starts to communicate with sounds and words. Continue to use the TALK strategy to have brain-building conversations with your 1-year-old.

- **Tune In:** Follow their lead and engage in conversations around their interests.
- **Ask Questions:** Use questions and pause to prompt them to respond.
- **Lift Language:** Help them learn new words and how to say them by repeating the full word they are attempting. When they point to a dog and say 'Dah. Dah', lift their language by saying, 'Yes. That is a dog. What is the dog doing?'
- **Keep it Going:** Learning to take turns is important in many parts of life, like conversations and playing. Slowly increase the number of back-and-forth exchanges with your baby to help them learn this important skill.

You can also encourage turn-taking with play, such as taking turns sorting blocks or making animal sounds.

Language skills to look for:

- responds to others by looking and listening
- communicates nonverbally for various reasons
- uses a range of gestures (waving, pointing and shaking head)
- points to pictures in books
- imitates sounds and simple words and actions
- can say 1-2 words
- pairs gestures with sounds and words to direct communication, but can't walk and talk at the same time
- plays games like pat-a-cake
- recognizes a caregiver's emotions

Practice taking turns as you share a story or book with your child. Here's a short list of some of our favorite titles to practice turn-taking:

- *Llama Llama Red Pajama* by Anna Dewdney
- *The Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed* by Eileen Christelow
- *Bear Wants More* by Karma Wilson
- *Things That Go* by DK
- *Touch and Feel Farm* by DK
- *Las Familias/Families (Babies Everywhere)* by Star Bright Books