

Supporting Language & Literacy at 9 Months

Building Vocabulary With Play & Repetition

At 9 months, your baby is following the gaze of others and is babbling more and more. They are also copying what they see and hear (or at least trying to) and love playing games like peek-a-boo. Your baby shows interest with sounds, gaze, and gestures, like pointing or lifting their arms to be lifted up.

Babies learn so much through play and imitation. Encourage learning through imitation by imitating their gestures and actions. Before you know it, they'll be the one imitating you. And be sure to pair your imitation with words.

Learning how to talk is not a passive process. Babies learn language by playing with it. Their mouths have to practice forming sounds and put those sounds together to form words and sentences. They need to imitate you lots of times and they need lots of feedback. To learn language, they need you. When it comes to your baby learning language, no electronic device or app can replace you.

Knowing lots of words will help your child express themselves and prepare them to learn to read. Playtime is a great time let them practice using the sounds of their language and build their vocabulary. Don't be afraid to use big words with your baby. You can 'Lift Language' by using real words and complete sentence and by pairing more advanced words with words they already know. When they drop the ball, you can say something like 'Oh! You dropped the ball. The ball fell to the ground when you released it.'

As with learning anything new, your baby needs lots of repetition. Remember to use new words many times and in different contexts. 'Can you let go of your sock, please? Can you release it?'

Language skills to look for:

- beginning to understand simple requests
- follows gaze of others
- babbles using lots of different sounds (e.g., 'mamamama', 'babababa')
- copies sounds and gestures of others
- communicates with intention
- participates in social routines such as peek-a-boo
- shows interests with gestures (e.g., pointing, lifting arms to be picked up), sounds and eye contact

Here's a short list of some of our favorite books to explore with your 9-month-old:

- *Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb* by Al Perkins
- *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons* by James Dean
- *Please, Baby, Please* by Spike Lee and Lewis Lee
- *Little Blue Truck* by Alice Schertle
- *Peek-a Who?* by Nina Laden
- *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown