

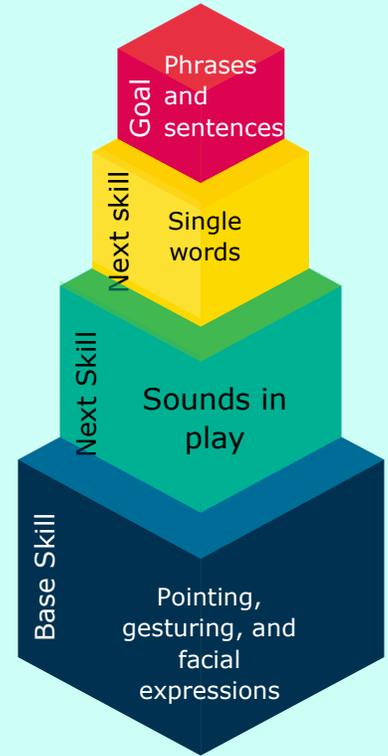


A STEP AHEAD

Encouraging Communication

“Talking to infants and toddlers about the real things they’re doing is the most powerful, natural way for them to learn language.”

~ Janet Lansbury



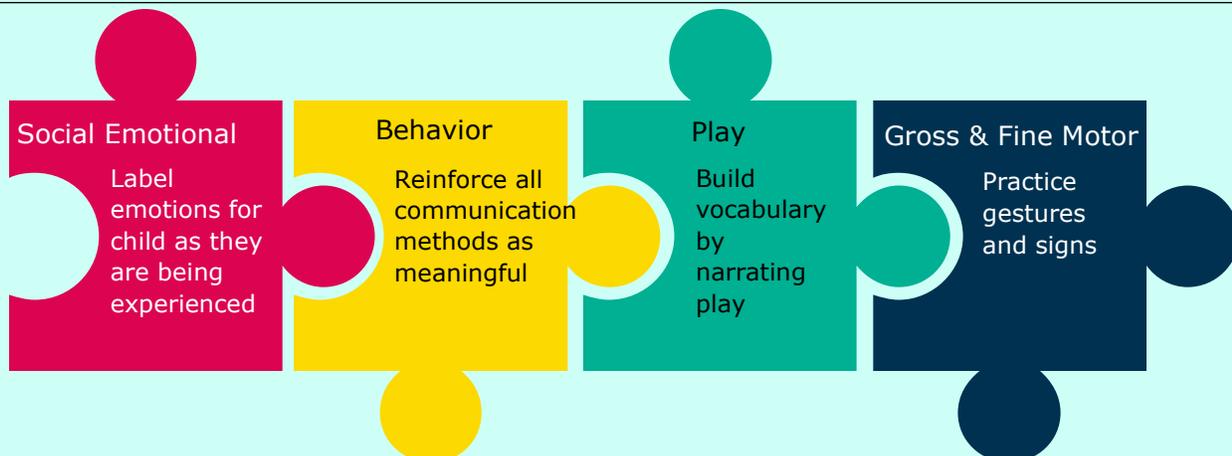
Understanding words and phrases before saying them

Infants and toddlers understand words that are being said to and around them before they say the words themselves. First words understood can include: “no”, “bye-bye”, and their own name. Next, they will begin to follow simple directions such as “Give me cup” and “sit down please”.

As infants and toddlers learn more words they will point to familiar people, toys, foods, and animals when named. They will also point to common body parts and clothing items.

Toddlers around 2 years old will begin to follow a variety of directions involving familiar actions and objects such as “Put your cup on the table”. They will gradually be able to follow two-step directions involving two related steps (e.g. “Pick up your shoes and give them to Daddy) and closer to age 3, directions with two unrelated steps (e.g. “Take off your shoes and grab your cup.”)

As children begin to understand more words, they will be able to say them to label and request items, as well as give directions themselves.



Building Vocabulary through Play

Narrate the names and actions of toys and people playing: "Daddy's car jumped", "Sissy is running".

Work on words and phrases (e.g. "my turn", "my ball", "I go") in turn-taking activities such as rolling a ball or car back-and-forth.

Fill clean up time with vocabulary by incorporating directions (e.g. "Put the ball in", "Put the box on the table"), labeling toys (e.g. "Bye ball"), or singing a song.

Troubleshooting Tips:

Having trouble getting your child to imitate sounds and words?

Model environmental sounds (e.g. animals, cars, etc.) during play activities. You can also add sound effects to activities (e.g. marching while saying "boom" with each step). These are effective ways to practice sounds without needing to communicate a want or need.

Use songs (e.g. 'Old MacDonald', 'The Wheels on the Bus') and repetitive books (e.g. "Brown Bear") to model sounds and syllables.

References:

Baby Sign Language: When, how and why to try it: [https://www.whattoexpect.com/first-year/baby-sign-language/#:~:text=Baby%20sign%20language%20is%20an,\(for%20both%20of%20you\).](https://www.whattoexpect.com/first-year/baby-sign-language/#:~:text=Baby%20sign%20language%20is%20an,(for%20both%20of%20you).)

Language Development Milestones: <https://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/language/language-development-milestones-age-1-to-4/>

Using "Baby Signs"

When children have a hard time saying and using words to communicate it can lead to frustration for both parent and child.

Teaching a few "baby signs" can decrease that frustration and help a child to communicate more effectively and consistently. Model signs for child during daily activities along with verbal words so that they learn the meaning of the sign.

To Start

Introduce one or two signs that can be used in activities such as eating and playing.

Signs

"More": Bring thumb to meet middle and ring fingers. Turn palms toward body then touch hands together using fingertips 2-3 times.

"All done": Both hands raised with fingers pointed up. Wave hands from palm in to out 2-3 times.

There are many online resources that have pictures and videos of early signs so that parents and caregivers can continue to build vocabulary **OR** ask your provider!!!!

Resources:

Tips on Learning to Talk

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/301-tips-on-learning-to-talk>

Baby Sign Language Dictionary

<https://www.babysignlanguage.com/dictionary/>