

Let's Talk!

How to support your baby's and
toddler's language development



What are we doing today?

- Why is language development so important?
- How does children's language develop?
- What can I do if I think my child might be delayed in language?
- Play matters! Using play and daily routines to support your baby's language
- Let's practice!



Say: Today, we will discuss four main topics: Why language development is important? How children's language develops? What you can do if you think your child might be delayed in language? And the importance of play to support baby's language.

At the end of the workshop, you'll get to practiced using some of the strategies with your child. We will also provide handouts for you to take home. Restrooms are located....

Why is language so important?

- Language is the primary way that people communicate their needs and ideas.
- Children with better language skills do better in school (reading AND Math)
- Language also supports behavioral self-control, and friendship skills.
- Infants and toddlers are just learning to communicate – they are easily frustrated when they are not understood.



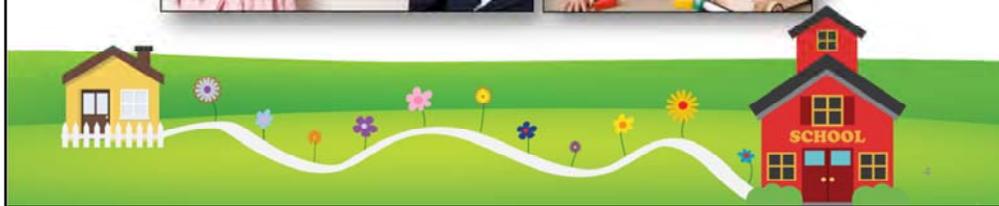
Say: Language is a building block for many other developmental skills. Children with better language skills do better in school. They do better academically in reading and math and also socially and emotionally in regulating their behavior and emotions and developing friendships. Children without communication skills are frustrated, confused, and isolated from other people because language is the primary way that people communicate their needs and ideas.

In the infant and toddler period, language is emerging – infants and toddlers have limited skills to let others know what they need and want, and they can become easily frustrated when they can't make themselves understood.

Imagine that you are sitting at home and you need something from another room in your house, but you have to communicate with your relatives about this without leaving your seat and without talking, or maybe you can say a few words but you don't know the name of the item that you want them to get for you. How would that feel? **Encourage brief discussion.**

Listening and Understanding

- Pointing at pictures or objects on request.
- Following verbal directions.
- Showing response to a statement.



Say: Listening and understanding is one major area of language development. Children show what they understand by pointing at pictures or objects on request when you ask questions, such as "Where's the dog?" or "Which one is a puppy?"

Children also show they are listening and understanding by following verbal directions, such as putting their napkin in the trash, when you say, "Please go put your napkin in the trash."

They may also show a response to a statement you make. For example, you may say, "Jesse, your mommy's coming" and the child looks around for mommy.

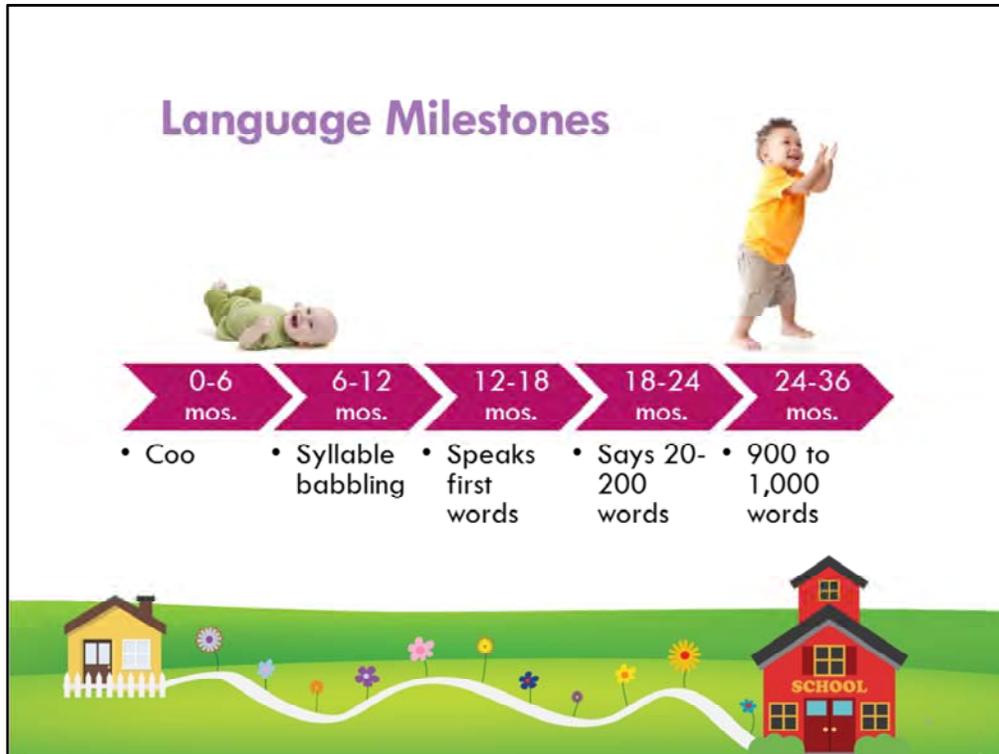
Pointing, following verbal directions and showing a response are all ways children let us know that they are listening and understanding what we are saying.

Communication and Speaking

- Babbling; word approximations; single words, phrases and sentences.
- Imitating sounds, gestures, signs or words.
- Naming pictures or objects.
- Initiating communication; saying "look"; telling stories, making requests.
- Asking/answering questions.
- Using increasingly complex & correct grammar.
- Having back-and-forth conversations.



Say: Communication and speaking is the other major area of language development. Children show these skills by...(review each bullet point).



Say: Before birth, babies can hear and become familiar with the cadence of familiar voices. They are born communicators. When they're young babies, they cry and coo to communicate and as they get older they begin babbling and saying their first words. As toddlers, they can say anywhere from 20 – 200 words and understand about 1,000 words when they are two-years old.

Note: Detailed Milestone information follows.

0-6 months: preverbal communication skills.

- Attending to facial expressions and caregivers.
- Learning to smile and coo back, and turn taking.
- Orienting to where sound is coming from.

6-12 months: beginning verbal and gestural communication.

- Syllabic babbling – first words
- May begin to understand words of special importance
- Gestures: reaching, pointing, bye-bye, shaking head “no”

1-2 years

- Expanding single-word vocabulary
- Combining two words
- Following simple directions

2-3 years

- Using many words and phrases
- Communicating with other children, though articulation may not be well developed

Milestone Activity

- Have parents match milestone activities to an age range



Say: Although there can be variation in young children’s language skills, it helps to have a general idea in your mind about when children should reach certain milestones. Let’s play a game! Form learning pairs at your table. Find the Milestones Matching game on your table. Work together to align the milestones with the age.

Activity: Match the milestone (“Milestone Matching Game Activity Sheet”).

Say: How did you do on your milestones matching game?

Briefly review highlights.

Bilingual Learners

- Learning two languages is good for children!
- Bilingual learners may have more words in one language than the other
- They may mix words from both languages
- They may have a “silent period” and then catch up
- Understanding, and other skills, should continue to progress.



Say: Many children, especially in Texas, are growing up in homes where they hear a language other than English. When they come to school they may hear English or be in a bilingual classroom. **Read bullet points and expand on them with examples, when appropriate.**

Handout: Bilingual Learners

YOU Matter!

The BEST way to support your baby's and toddler's language development is by engaging directly with your child.

- Face-to-face time during play and daily routines
- Watch for communicative signals
- Respond with warmth, language, and “just enough” help



Say: The BEST way to support your baby's and toddler's language development is by engaging directly with your child. You can have face-to-face time during play and daily routines to talk with your baby. You can also watch for communicative signals, such as vocalizations, gestures, and words. When your child signals to you, respond warmly with words to let your child know that you see and understand him or her. Also, provide “just enough” help. DO not make activities too easy to not challenge your baby, and not too hard to overly frustrate your child.

What should I say?

Labeling = naming objects, actions, and feelings

Example **Objects**: “dog” “cup” “book” “chair” “ball”

Example **Actions**: “run” “eat” “jump” “cry” “throw”

Example **Feelings**: “happy” “sad” “mad” “scared”
“excited”

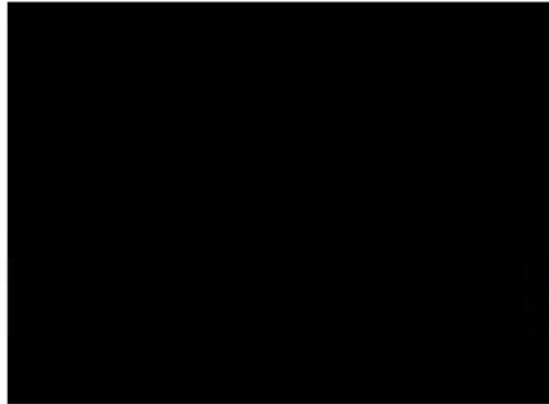


Say: Sometimes parents are not sure what to say when talking to babies and toddlers, especially if their babies aren't talking back yet. But there are very simple and POWERFUL things that you can do with your baby and toddler to help build those language-related connections in their brains and help them learn to talk.

The first one is to start naming things for your child, using specific words instead of vague words like “this” or “that” or “it”. Naming specific objects, actions, and feelings is called labeling and it works best when you are labeling the object that your child is looking at, or the action your child is doing, or the feeling they are expressing right at that moment.

You don't need computer games or flash cards to quiz your child, because words are much more meaningful when they are connected with what your child is actually doing in the moment. So if your child picks up a cup, you say “That's a cup! You picked up the cup.” If your child is jumping, you can say “I see you jumping! Jump, jump, jump!” This is labeling, and even though it's really simple, it's one of the best ways to help your child learn new words and understand what they mean.

Video examples: Labeling*



*From "Learning Happens", used by permission of Zero to Three



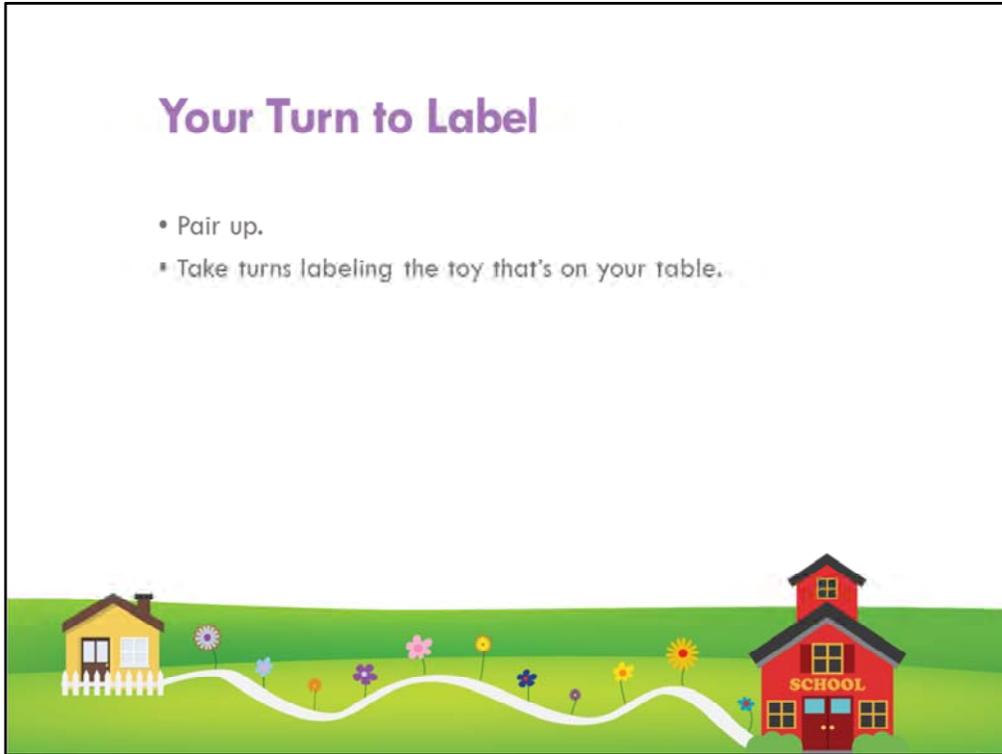
Say: Let's watch this brief video clip of a parent talking with her child. Pay attention to what she labels.

Play video. Learning Happens Sequence 6 (Spanish mom labeling during book reading with infant, subtitles) 57 seconds.

Say: What did the mom label? **Encourage brief discussion.**

Your Turn to Label

- Pair up.
- Take turns labeling the toy that's on your table.



Say: You have a few toys on your table. Find a partner and choose a toy. Each partner take turns labeling the toy that you choose.

Activity: Give pairs a few minutes to label toys. Have a few pairs share the toy and the labels they used. Encourage a brief discussion about using labels versus empty language (this/that).

What should I say?

Describing = using words to describe objects and actions

Examples:

“hot” **“yellow”** “big” **“fast”** “sticky” **“round”** “soft”

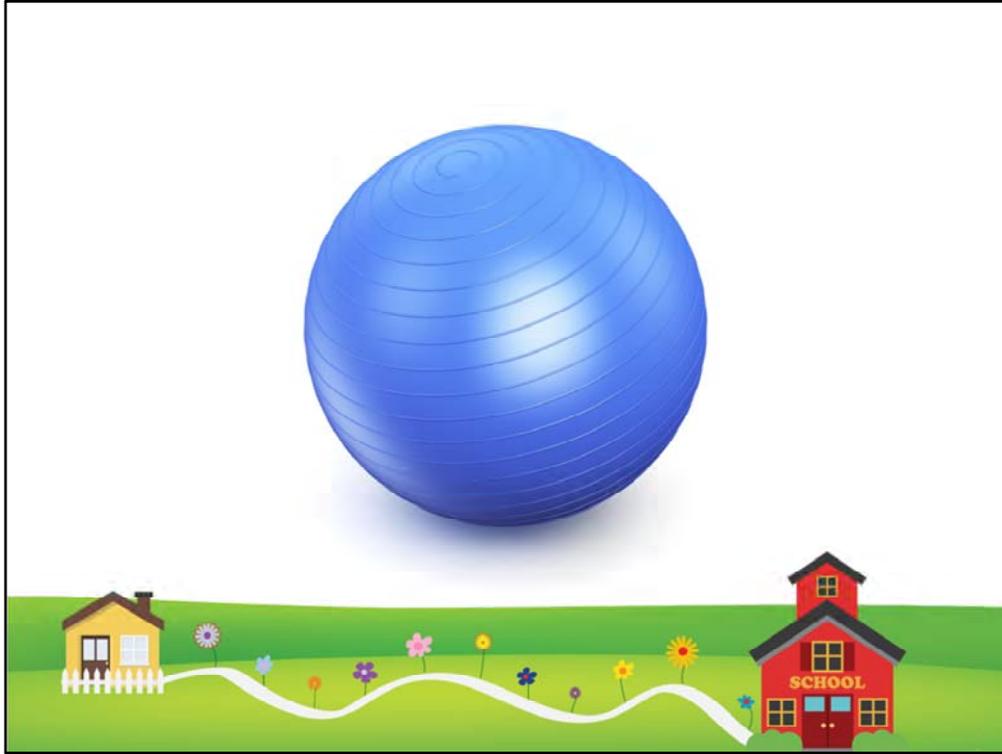
“little” **“gentle”** “funny” “gigantic” **“loud”** “quiet” **“tiny”**

“shiny” **“muddy”** “dry” “clean” **“bumpy”** “slow(ly)”

“sharp” “delicate”



Say: Another important kind of words that children need to learn are called “describing words”, and you might have learned when you were in school that these are called adjectives. They are words that describe how things look or feel or sound or move or taste or smell, etc.



Say: We want children to know that this is a *ball*, but also that it's a *blue* ball, a *big* ball, a *round* ball, a *bouncy* ball. When you use and teach those words to your baby and toddler, their vocabulary size gets bigger and bigger, and this helps them later with becoming a good reader and writer and story-teller.

Video examples: Describing*



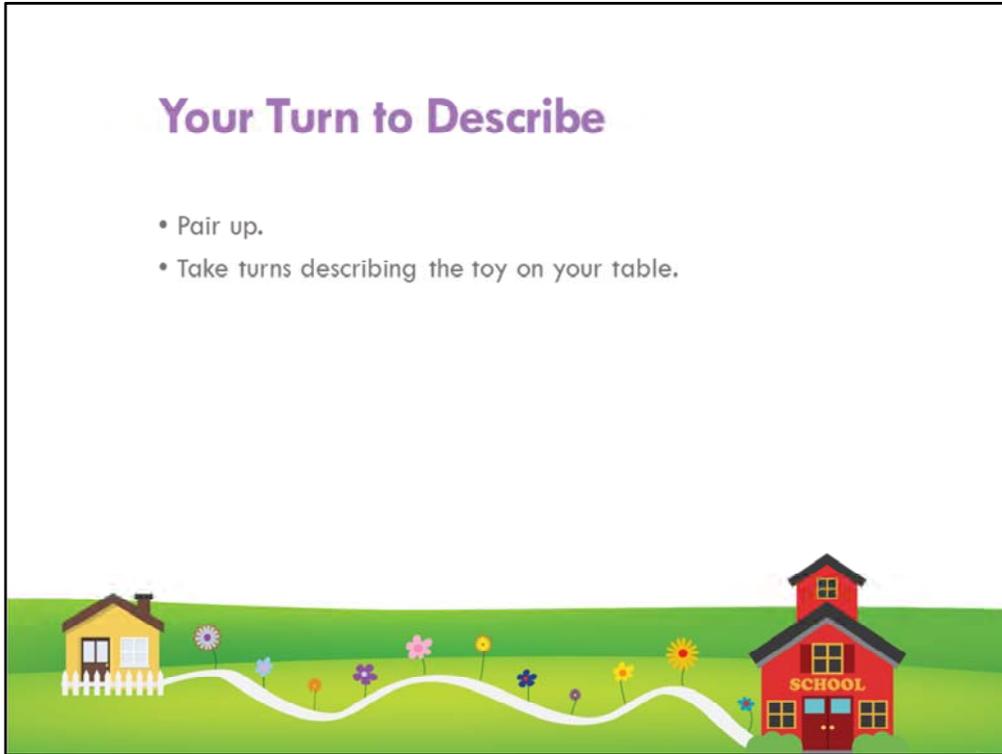
Say: Let's watch this brief video clip of a parent talking with her child. Pay attention to what she describes.

Play video. PALS Toddler session Labeling Objects & Actions clip 6:39-7:02 (describing juicy strawberry). Learning Happens sequence 11 (bathtub pouring slow and fast) 37 seconds.

Say: What did the mom describe? How did the child respond? What did s/he learn?
Encourage brief discussion.

Your Turn to Describe

- Pair up.
- Take turns describing the toy on your table.



Say: Find a partner and choose a toy. It can be the same or different toy. Each partner take turns describing the toy that you choose. You may want to write down all of your descriptive words.

Activity: Give pairs a few minutes to describe toys. Have a few pairs share the toy and the descriptive words they used. Encourage a brief discussion about using labels versus describing.

What should I say?

Narrating & Extending = Saying what your child is doing, and then adding more information or ideas.

Examples:

“You’re driving that car up the ramp. My car is going to drive down.”

“You put the horse into the barn. Is it going to sleep in there?”

“I see you drawing lots of yellow, round circles. Those look like the pancakes we ate for breakfast!”



Say: One place that some parents get stuck when trying to encourage their toddlers to talk is to ask a lot of “quiz questions” to their children, like “What is that?” and “What color is that?”

These kinds of questions are okay to ask sometimes, but sometimes parents get stuck here because they don’t know what else they can ask or say. Also, some children start to shut down or ignore you if they don’t know the answer or if they don’t like being quizzed over and over. So we’re going to teach you another strategy you can use, actually two strategies, and they are called “Narrating” and “Extending”.

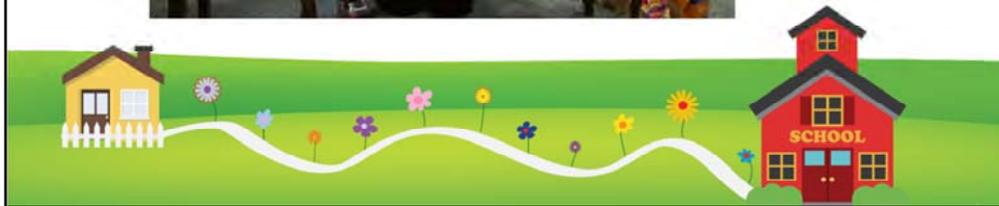
When you *narrate*, you say in words what your child is doing, almost like you’re a sports announcer, or maybe as if you’re describing the scene for a person who’s blind and can’t see what your child is doing. So the first sentence in each of these examples is a narrating statement. (read each one). Children are often happy for you to narrate their actions. It shows that you’re paying attention, that you care about what they’re doing, that you’re interested. And if your child is able to talk, sometimes they will spontaneously respond to what you say without you’re needing to ask those “quiz questions” – they’ll start telling you more about their play.

Extending is when you take your comments a step further by adding a new idea on the same topic, or asking a question related to what they’re doing, or making a connection between what they’re doing now and something they’ve done before. Let’s look at the extending sentences on this slide. (review and explain)

When you *extend*, you are inviting your child to respond but in a gentle way. You're adding more vocabulary, you might be adding a play idea, you might be encouraging them to think about their play in a new way.

So it's not that you shouldn't ask your child questions, of course you can ask your child questions like "What do you have?" "What are you doing?" "What is that?", but you want to balance questions with other kinds of comments and strategies so that it feels like you're having a friendly conversation with your child rather than giving him a test.

Video examples: Narrating & Extending



Say: Let's watch this brief video clip of a parent talking with her child. Pay attention to what she describes.

Play video. PALS Toddler Labeling Objects & Actions 14:15-14:42 (Mom narrates where cow and ball are going, and extends to encourage son to go get the ball).

Say: What did the mom narrate? How did she extend his language? **Encourage brief discussion.**

Your Turn to Narrate & Extend

- Pair up.
- One person pretend to be a baby or toddler.
- The other person pretends to be the parent.
- The "child" plays with the toy on the table.
- The "parent" narrates the child's actions and extends the child's language.



Say: Find a partner again. This time one person should pretend to be a baby or toddler and play with a toy on the table. The other person pretends to be a parent and narrates the child's actions and extends the child's sounds or words.

Activity: Give pairs a few minutes to role play. Have one pair role play in front of the large group, if time allows. Encourage brief discussion about how narrating and extending supports children's language development.

Conversations should happen everywhere!

- Spend some time every day playing & reading
- Talk while feeding, diapering, bathing
- Talk in the car
- Talk on the bus
- Talk in the grocery store
- Talk at the doctor's office



Say: You can have conversations with your child anywhere! You can... (read bullet points).

Practice Time

Let's do it!

- Labeling
- Describing
- Narrating & Extending



Say: Now, it's your turn to practice with your children. I will demonstrate how you can use the strategies with one of your babies and then if we have enough time, you can practice with your child. Pay attention to when I label, describe, narrate and extend.

Activity: The workshop leader will demonstrate the strategies "live" with an older baby or toddler using toys brought for the workshop or the classroom's toys. Baby's parent should sit with them as well so child will feel comfortable. If time, another parent may volunteer to try the strategies with their child in front of the group.

Questions ?

Debrief from live demonstration and practice. If time allows, answer parents' questions.

Handouts: Brain and Language, Language Red Flags, Certificate of Completion

Tips for Parents:

Choosing books for infants and toddlers

Adapted from Head Start and the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL)

Reading is an important skill for future learning. Here are some tips for choosing good books for infants and toddlers. Parents, caregivers, and guardians may find these tips helpful.

0-6
months

CONTENT. Choose books with large pictures or bright and bold illustrations set against a contrasting background. Look for books that have simple pictures, one per page.

LANGUAGE. Infants will enjoy looking through wordless picture books, or books that have just a single word along with a big picture. But also try books that contain phrases or short sentences. It's important for infants to hear language. Nursery rhymes and verse books are good for this age, too.

DESIGN. Books for infants should be interesting and appealing to look at. Try stiff cardboard books, books with fold-out pages that create colorful panels, cloth or soft vinyl books, and books with handles.

READING ALOUD. Infants want your full attention, so try reciting rhymes and songs that you remember by heart. Also, try reading to your infant while she has a toy to hold. Reading at bedtime is always a nice way to end the day!

7-12
months

CONTENT. Children this age will enjoy books with medium to large photos and bright, bold illustrations. Look for books that have simple drawings of familiar things, actions and events.

LANGUAGE. Children begin to key into content and can relate pictures to their world. While they still enjoy picture books, try some books with simple stories that have one line of text per page.

DESIGN. Infants this age like to handle cloth and vinyl books and cardboard books with stiff, thick pages.

READING ALOUD. As your baby gets older, try this four-part interaction sequence:

1. Get your baby's attention by pointing out something in a book. ("Look!")
2. Ask a labeling question. ("What's that?")
3. Wait for your baby to respond, verbally or non-verbally. If necessary, provide the answer yourself. ("That's a monkey!")
4. Acknowledge your baby's response. ("Yes" or repeat your baby's word.) If your baby mislabels the picture, correct him in a positive manner. ("Yes, it's brown like a dog, but it's a monkey.")

Keep in mind that you may not get through a whole book in one reading. As your child starts to explore books, support her progress by watching, listening and acknowledging.

12-18 months

CONTENT. For children this age, try books with pictures of familiar characters, like animals, children, TV characters, or adults in familiar roles. Look for books that have action pictures - your baby is starting to be able to enjoy pictures with more details.

LANGUAGE. This is a great age to try books with songs and repetitive verses. Books that have a simple story line that relates to your child's own experiences will also have appeal. You might also look for theme books that show a series of related pictures and a few words. These books follow a progression of simple activities, but don't try to introduce a plot or complex storyline.

DESIGN. Even though your baby is growing fast, she'll still enjoy playing with books with handles and books with stiff, thick pages. And she'll still like having these books read to her. Books with thinner pages that are plastic-coated are also a good choice for this age.

READING ALOUD. Your infant will probably still enjoy reading with you as he sits on your lap or close to you in a comfortable chair. This helps your baby associate reading with feeling secure. Connecting sounds with the pictures he sees in the books will make reading together even more fun. Make your own sounds, and don't be surprised if your baby joins in! You may also notice your child looking through the book alone and making noises (sometimes called "book babble").

19-30 months

CONTENT. Toddlers will continue to enjoy books with familiar characters, but they also will begin to take interest in pictures filled with information, action and detail. Try some short stories, cause and effect stories, and fictional books that describe a problem or circumstance to overcome.

LANGUAGE. Try predictable books with repeated text, words that rhyme, and pictures that correspond to the text. Books with songs and repetitive verses are still a good choice for this age.

DESIGN. Toddlers can enjoy books with paper pages-but will still like books with a picture on every page and just a little bit of text.

Reading Aloud. Let your toddler decide if she wants to sit on your lap while you read, or next to you on the couch or floor. Follow her cues. Talk about the characters and events in the story, relating them to your child's own experiences. Pause when you read aloud to let your child fill in a word or phrase. This works great with rhyming and repetitive books.

Great Books to Read for Infants & Toddlers

Adapted from the National Association for the Education of Young Children

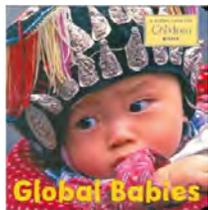
Many families are familiar with classic books like *Goodnight Moon* and read them over and over with their very youngest children. Here are some more recent titles and reissues you and your baby will both love.

Note: Many of these books are available in Spanish, and can be purchased as a hardcover, paperback, or board book.

Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes, by Mem Fox. Illus. by Helen Oxenbury. 2008.



A phenomenal book to read with your baby! Mem Fox uses rhyme and repetition to create a multicultural book about something all different babies have in common: ten little fingers and ten little toes. After each baby is introduced, the same reassuring refrain follows, like this first pair that opens the book: “There was one little baby / who was born far away. / And another who was born / on the very next day. / And both of these babies, / as everyone knows, / had ten little fingers / and ten little toes.” Mem includes interesting phrases like sneezes and chills, and truly divine. Together, she and illustrator Helen Oxenbury capture the feeling that there is something particularly captivating about those fingers and toes and something particularly lovable about all babies everywhere. “Do you have ten little fingers and ten little toes? Let’s count them.”



Global Babies, from Global Fund for Children. 2007.

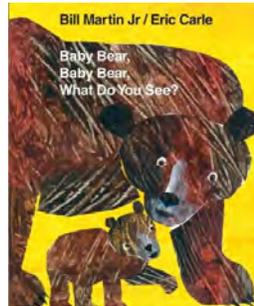
You have probably noticed how babies and toddlers are drawn to photographs of other babies. In this beautiful multicultural board book, babies from all over the world are captured in exquisite local clothing—decorative but not fancy. And even more intriguing than their outfits are their faces. These babies—from Mali to Malawi, from Peru to Afghanistan—seem to be “communicating” with the camera, and therefore with the reader. An excellent browsing book for your very young child.



Mother Goose Picture Puzzles, by Will Hillenbrand. 2011.

With 20 familiar rhymes on 40 pages, this Mother Goose collection covers the basics and accomplishes a lot more. Each rhyme is illustrated on a generously sized double-page spread, giving young children large closeups of all the beloved Mother Goose characters. Humorous and folksy illustrations capture characters in happy-go-lucky (Peter, pumpkin eater), disheveled (Jack and Jill rolling down the hill), shocked (Little Miss Muffet), and oblivious (Little Boy Blue) states. Although wonderful to read to babies and toddlers, older children will also enjoy the rebus puzzle component: about one word per line in each rhyme is replaced with a picture that must be “read” as part of the text. In the first line of “Little Boy Blue” (“Little Boy Blue, come, blow your horn!”), a picture of a horn replaces the word horn. Because of the nature of the illustrations and the rebus puzzles, this book can be enjoyed by the whole family.

Baby Bear, Baby Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr. Illus. by Eric Carle. 2007.



Baby Bear is the fourth book in a series that began 40 years ago, when Martin and Carle introduced the now-ubiquitous *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* The second in the series, *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* focuses on the sounds that animals make. The third book, *Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?* presents a collection of endangered animals. Baby Bear portrays North American animals and a baby bear’s bond with its mother. Your children will love Carle’s large double-page animals and Martin’s text, replete with interesting vocabulary (striped skunk, screech owl, gliding, hooting). Very young readers enjoy books with repetition, and Baby Bear contains the familiar word patterns found in other books in the series. Try using the word pattern to say something to your own child. “My baby, my baby, what do you see? Do you see your mommy reading to you? I think you do.”



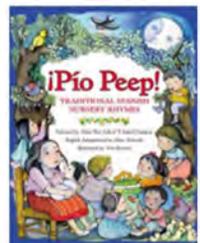
I Am a Bunny, by Ole Risom. Illus. by Richard Scarry. [1963] 2004. **The Rooster Struts**, by Richard Scarry. [1963] 2004

Richard Scarry’s vivid illustrations come to life in these tall, slender, reissued board books. Scarry’s art is warm, expressive, and precise. *I Am a Bunny* depicts the small animal’s changing habits as one season turns into the next and the yearly cycle starts again. In *The Rooster Struts* simple sentences describe how each animal moves: “The duck waddles. The goose waggles.” Word repetition, rhyme, and consistent pacing lend both books an element of poetry. The illustrations convey detail and suggest a sense of balance and order in the natural world. This is nonfiction-for-the-very-young at its best. Add your own action line to describe how your baby moves: “The baby stretches.”



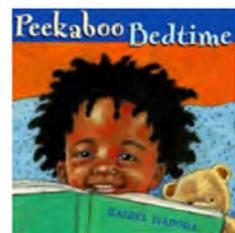
Mommies Say Shhh! by Patricia Polacco. 2005

Life on a farm can be noisy! Polacco uses lilting, repetitive language and rich watercolor illustrations to show various animal families and the sounds they make. “Dogs say buff, buff, buff. Sheep say baa, baa, baa. Geese say honk, honk, honk. Bunnies say nothing at all.” And what happens when all the animals speak up all at once, causing quite a ruckus when a baby is sleeping nearby? “Mommies say shhh, shhh, shhh.” A great read-aloud where you can invite your little one to chime in.



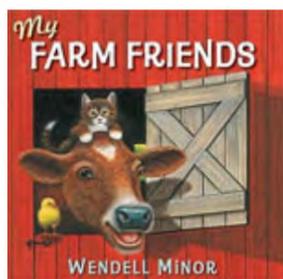
¡Pío Peep! Traditional Spanish Nursery Rhymes [Rimas Tradicionales en Espanol], selected by Alma Flor Ada & F. Isabel Campoy. 2003.

“The words of nursery rhymes and songs gave both wings and roots to my soul,” says Alma Flor Ada, one of the book’s editors. ¡Pío Peep! compiles 29 rhymes and nursery songs from Spain and Latin America, lovingly selected favorites of these regions’ cultures. Accompanying English versions capture the essence and the beauty of the rhyme, so both English and Spanish versions are poetic and rhythmic, just as nursery rhymes should be. Having only one rhyme per page, with beautiful illustrations by Viví Escrivá, is age appropriate, without too many visual distractions or clutter. The watercolor illustrations have just the right amount of detail for young children. You will have fun introducing these nursery rhymes to your youngster.



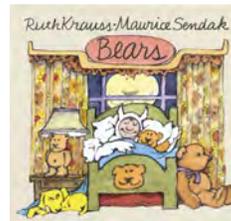
Peekaboo Bedtime, by Rachel Isadora. 2008.

Peekaboo Bedtime, a sequel to *Peekaboo Morning*, is a turn-the-page guessing game about all those whom a boy sees on his way to bed. “Peekaboo! I see . . . my mommy[.] Peekaboo! I see . . . my blanket[.]” Each page contains a visual clue about what he’ll discover on the following page. Bright illustrations depict a three-generation family, with several pets too. The book incorporates elements of a successful bedtime routine—waving to the moon, taking a bath, and replacing shoes with slippers. Both the family and the routine make for a comforting book about getting ready for bed. Use the the book’s refrain to describe something you see: “Peekaboo! I see . . . the blanket grandma made for you!”



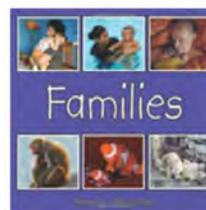
My Farm Friends, by Wendell Minor. 2011.

“Welcome to the farm,” Wendell Minor writes in the opening to *My Farm Friends*, warmly beckoning readers. Each turn of the page introduces one or two farm animals and teaches interesting facts and habits about each one with humor and rhyme. “Pigs can’t sweat / Or jump in a pool / So they roll in the mud / That’s how they stay cool.” Wendell’s love of animals will be clear when you read the book’s dedication, in which he reminisces about loving his family farm as a child. Children will see the care he has put into illustrating each animal. He captures a pig’s knowing glance, a sheep’s tender nuzzle of her lamb, and the gentleness of a goat’s droopy eyes and soft lips as it chews a stolen bandana. You can share with your children the additional fascinating facts about the animals found at the back.



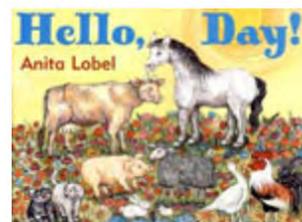
Bears, by Ruth Krauss. Illus. Maurice Sendak. 2005.

Bears, written by Ruth Krauss and illustrated by Phyllis Rowand, was first published in 1948. Maurice Sendak was still an undiscovered artist at that time, but he and Krauss soon became close friends and collaborators. In this reissue, *Bears* has new illustrations by Sendak. Krauss’s charming story about bears and their fantastic habits now has a new twist. In addition to illustrating the bears, Sendak added a subplot: Max, the white-suited character from *Where the Wild Things Are*, can be seen searching for his dog, who has snatched one of Max’s teddy bears. This is a piece of literary history and a seductive read for children.



Families, by Rena D. Grossman. 2009.

This nonfiction board book highlights the common ways humans and animals take care of their babies. “All families give kisses . . . share snacks . . . take baths, take naps, and say ‘I love you.’” Each doublepage spread juxtaposes a human family and an animal family taking part in the same activity. The photos are clear and expressive, and who doesn’t like to see families taking care of their adorable babies, whether human, giraffe, or hippo? *Families* is an excellent introduction to the connections between all members of the animal kingdom.



Hello, Day! by Anita Lobel. 2008.

Nobody does color like Lobel, and she devotes an entire page to the illustration of each of the farm animals featured in this day in the country. Painterly renditions of a cow, a sheep, a horse, and more are accompanied on the opposing pages by simple language describing what each animal “says” (moo, baa, neigh). Your young children can practice animal sounds as you read together. Lobel’s twist—telling readers what the animals are really saying—lends an element of discovery and delivers a satisfying wrap-up to the colorful day.