

The First Year: Interact and Take Turns

Written by Rachel Betzen

The First Year: Interact and Take Turns- Soft talking, singing, tickling, kissing or nuzzling all build strong bonds with your baby. Then pause, giving her time to respond, and take any action, a head turn, arm and leg movements, as a request for more.

Infants enter our world with a tendency to look for and develop language. This is observed in children across cultures and from differing backgrounds. Language development, which includes reading and writing skills, builds from the bottom up. This begins with inner language, the child's transformation of experiences into words.

Even before a child begins to understand words, she is learning the sounds of her language and begins playing with these sounds. Talk to your baby often and provide plenty of opportunities for face-to-face interactions where she can see your mouth and facial expressions.

Board books can be introduced at this age; it is not too early for you to read with your child. The best books are those which have only one or a few pictures on each page. The pictures should be of objects or people in your child's environment. Point to each picture and say each word several times. At this stage, your baby is listening all the time and working hard building that first foundation of inner language.

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Notice when your baby does something new and imitate him. Take turns babbling or with body movements. Teach your child simple games which require imitation and build the foundation of turn taking, an important skill for language development. Introduce toys slowly, and show your young toddler how to use the toys and objects in his everyday environment.

At this age your child will make many attempts to communicate, and these can be reinforced through the responses of the adults around him. Respond to your child's vocalizing, body movements and gestures through imitating them, or expanding on his meaning. For example, when your toddler picks up a shoe and says "uh", you could respond by labeling the object "shoe" and showing him that the shoe goes on his foot.

Continue to read simple board books with your child, he may now appreciate books that included different textures. As he learns to crawl and later walk, your young toddler may not listen to books for very long. Reading to your child for short time periods throughout the day will help him learn new skills when he is attending. During this stage your child is constructing strong receptive language skills which he will use as he begins to talk.

Very young toddlers who are just starting to use words are at an important stage of development. They are beginning to experiment even more with combining the sounds of their language into words, and want to know the names of all kinds of things. Parents can use this natural interest they have in learning as they give their children words for new things and experiences.

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