



A Good Start

Engage in Frequent, Positive Communication with your Baby to Help Language Develop Faster

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Hope! Dream! Achieve!
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Suggestions for Visual Conversations With Deaf and Hard of Hearing Babies and Toddlers

- *T*ake time to respond to your baby's needs, to let your baby know by your smiles and your touch that he or she is loved. Play and loving contact are almost as important as food to babies!



All babies need to develop positive bonds with parents or caregivers. These bonds develop — regardless of the hearing level of the parents or the baby — when the parents respond to their babies' needs (Lederberg & Mobley, 1990). Because young babies can't really tell us what they need, we must observe them carefully, sometimes guess, and try different things to satisfy them. Even though we sometimes have trouble figuring out exactly what a baby wants, the fact that we keep trying teaches babies how important we are to them — and how important they are to us!

It is critical to satisfy a baby's need for food and warmth and safety. It is also important to give the baby more than just those basics. Playing with the baby by exchanging smiles, by gentle touches, and with little games like peek-a-boo constitute more than "play." It is the natural way to strengthen the bond between parent and baby. It is also a natural way to communicate with the baby and build the baby's understanding of communication. Babies who feel loved and secure have extra energy available for learning language and other skills

(Slade, 1987; Thompson, 1998; Vondra & Barnett, 1999).

Parent Links
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- **U**se as many senses as you can to send messages to a deaf or hard of hearing baby. Emphasize touching games. Move your body and face and hands around in front of the baby. Emphasize your facial expressions even more than usual. Talk to the baby, too.



Without having to think about it, parents use special ways to communicate with young babies (Papousek & Papousek, 1987). For example, hearing parents tend to raise the pitch of their voice when they talk to babies. They talk in a "sing-song" manner with a lot of rhythm. They often repeat phrases or sentences several times, giving the baby a chance to anticipate and know what will be said next. Hearing parents also gesture a lot to their babies, often making hand movements in rhythm with their words. They use facial expressions that are usually positive or happy — and they exaggerate those facial expressions compared with those they use when talking to others. Hearing parents also touch their babies frequently, stroking their faces, arms, and legs. Sometimes they hold a baby's feet and make "bicycling" movements with them. The important thing to note here is that hearing parents send messages to babies using more than one sense at once (Bremner, 1988). Even if a baby cannot hear the parents' speech, the baby can receive the messages sent through the other senses.

Deaf parents use many of the same behaviors to communicate with their babies. Although many don't use speech as often as hearing parents, they emphasize the other senses even more (Erting, et. al, 1994). They repeat signed messages again and again, and they make their signs "dance" with rhythm. Deaf parents also touch and stroke their babies' faces and bodies often, even more often than hearing parents usually do (Maestas Y Moores, 1980). Sometimes deaf mothers make signs directly on a baby's body. For example, I saw one deaf mother repeating "pretty baby" to her 3-month-old. When the mother made the sign for "pretty," which is usually made touching the signer's face, she made it on the baby's face instead. Then she leaned back a little and signed "baby" the regular way. All the while, the mother smiled and watched her baby. When the baby smiled back at her, the mother's smile became brighter.



In fact, deaf mothers so strongly emphasize their facial expressions with babies that they may look quite exaggerated to hearing adults. But the babies love those expressions, and watch and sometimes imitate them while smiling and laughing. In as many situations as possible, deaf mothers prefer using positive rather than negative-looking facial expressions (Reilly & Bellugi, 1996). Even when the grammar rules for sign language call for a lowered-eyebrow expression (that might look negative to a baby), deaf mothers substitute a raised-eyebrow, happy expression. These exaggerated and happy facial expressions, plus gestures or signs, make the mothers very interesting for the babies to look at — and the babies begin to learn that it is important and pleasant to watch their mothers. If hearing parents increase these kinds of communication behaviors, they will make their own communications more interesting to their deaf or hard of hearing baby, thus making it easier to keep the baby's attention.

resources



Toy suggestions for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing



Mini Rib-it-Ball

<http://www.playability.com>

Babies give the Mini Rib-it Ball™ two thumbs-up for its many fun features. They can grab onto the ribs and hear a satisfying crackly sound, shake it for a gentle chiming sound, chomp on the ring for teething relief and pull on the string for a soothing whirring vibration. The nylon fabric is cool and bright, and the ribs are soft and gentle, perfect for little hands to grasp.



Playskool Explore 'N Grow Busy Ball Popper

www.walmart.com

Make baby giggle with these with poppin', droppin' colored balls. Pump the plunger and drop the balls onto the spiral track. When they reach the bottom, look out! The balls will pop out the top. Lively songs help keep the fun rolling along. And later, when baby's a bit older, there's even more fun to be had by chasing after the bright, busy balls.



*A Baby is like the
beginning of all things-
wonder, hope, a dream of
possibilities.*

Eda J. Le Shan



Two little eyes
Discovering what's new
Two little hands
Touching everything in view
A mischievous smile
And a whimpering cry
Two little feet
Jumping on the floor
A toddler's mission
is to explore

Author Unknown





Refer To Parent Links

It is now possible to refer to Parent Links online or by fax. California Department of Education program consultant for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Nancy Grosz Sager will receive the referral and forward it to the Parent Links area representative.

Who can Refer: Anyone including parents and professionals. Forms available in English/ Español

How to Refer:

- Go to *Professionals and Parents Make a Referral* at www.myparentslinks.com
 - Fill out the interactive form
 - E-Mail back or print out form and fax
-

Did You Know...



A **hearing aid** is an electro acoustic device which typically fits in or behind the wearer's ear, and is designed to amplify and modulate sound for the wearer. Earlier devices, known as an "ear trumpet" or "ear horn", were passive funnel-like amplification cones designed to gather sound energy and direct it into the ear canal. Similar devices include the bone anchored hearing aid, and cochlear implant

Sign Language is different in every country. In the United States American Sign Language is the dominant language with some slight variations or "slang" signs that are used in local area settings.



British Spelling in sign Language for "Love You"



ASL sign for "I love You" in the USA.



Parent Mentors

Parent mentors are parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. From hearing aids, cochlear implants, sign language and speech, we have been there. Have questions? Give us a call.

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