

Language and communication

These activities involve children using sounds, words, and gestures to communicate. The activities also engage children in learning to listen, follow and give directions, imitate, pretend, make choices, ask questions and participate in conversation.



Language and communication

0-12 months

Cuddle and sing

This activity is designed for babies 1-4 months of age

What you need:

- Your baby awake

What you do:

- Hold your baby in your arms and cuddle with them.
- Hold your baby so that they can see your face.
- When your baby looks at you, make different sounds that include cooing, squealing, and singing with lots of facial expressions.
- Encourage your baby to make sounds. When you make a sound, wait for about 8-10 seconds for your baby to make a sound back to you.
- Keep practicing every day, even if your baby isn't able to respond to you yet.



How it helps:

- Helps your baby get familiar with your voice.
- Helps your baby learn how to make noises back to you to practice early conversations.

Language and communication

0-12 months

Read, read, read

This activity is designed for babies 4-8 months of age

What you need:

- A book

What you do:

- Place your baby on your lap.
- Read a story to your baby and hold the book so that they can see the pictures.
- Talk to your baby about the pictures in the book.



How it helps:

- This activity encourages your baby to learn words from stories.
- This activity promotes early literacy skills and will help your baby develop language skills.

Language and communication

0-12 months

Repeating sounds

This activity is designed for babies 8-12 months of age

What you need:

- A quiet place
- A blanket or baby's exersaucer seat

What you do:

- Create a quiet space so that your baby can only hear your voice.
- Place toys out in front of your baby on a blanket, (such as a soft ball, or a rattle). You can also do this in your child's exersaucer that has toys on it.
- When your baby makes a sound, repeat the sound back but exaggerate it. For example, if your baby says, "ba", say "ba ba ba ba" back to your baby.
- Repeat this with all sounds your baby makes.
- You can also add a song to sing to your child that has the same sound he makes, for example, "Baa Baa Black Sheep" for the "ba" sound.

How it helps:

- This activity will encourage your baby to make conversations with you.
- This activity helps your baby learn how to repeat sounds.
- This will also help with your baby learning how sounds can be put together with other sounds, such as in a song, that will help him form words.



Language and communication

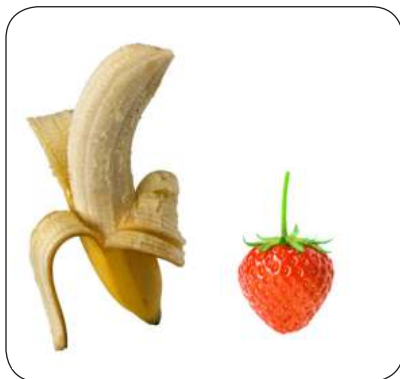
12-24 months

Choices, choices

This activity is designed for children 12-16 months of age

What you need:

- Two balls that are different colors or two different kinds of fruit
- Any other objects that will allow your child to make a choice for themselves



What you do:

- Give lots of choices to your child throughout the day.
- Ask your child, “Do you want bananas or strawberries?” while holding up each one to show them.
- You can also ask your child, “Do you want water or milk?” while showing both.
- You can do this with lots of things throughout the day with toys, food or pajamas for bed.

How it helps:

- Helps support your child’s emerging language skills.
- Helps your child make connections between objects and words.
- Helps your child move from using mostly pointing and non-verbal gestures to using more verbal words.

Language and communication

12-24 months

Big helper

This activity is designed for children 16-20 months of age

What you need:

- Any objects around the house that you can ask your child to help you with (Example: Shoes, coat, towel, diaper, etc.)

What you do:

- Ask your child to help you throughout the day.
- When it is time to go to the store, ask your child to bring you their coat while you are pointing to their coat.
- You can do this with their shoes or your shoes.
- When going to change their diaper, ask them to bring you a diaper, as you point to it.
- You may need to point in the beginning to the objects that you are requesting. Once your child is doing well with following the directions, you may not have to point anymore and can just give the direction to your child.



How it helps:

- Helps your baby learn how to follow directions.
- Helps your baby learn the purpose of different objects.

Language and communication

12-24 months

Turn taking

This activity is designed for children 20-24 months of age

What you need:

- A cardboard box
- Scissors
- A set of wooden or plastic blocks



What you do:

- Cut a large slit (large enough for a block to fit through) in the box.
- Take turns putting blocks in the box and use the words “my turn,” “your turn” when taking turns.
- If your child doesn’t take a turn, ask them “Whose turn is it”? If they don’t respond, take your child’s hand and help them put the blocks in the box for their turn and say “Joey’s turn or Daddy’s turn.”
- When all of the blocks are in the box, pour them out and repeat the activity as long as your child is interested.
- You can also modify this activity by taking turns making a stack of blocks or lining them up to make a train.

How it helps:

- Helps your baby learn how to take turns, a basic step with learning how to communicate.
- Helps to motivate your child to learn how to talk.

Language and communication

24-36 months

Picture book game

This activity is designed for children 24-30 months of age

What you need:

- Your child's favorite picture books

What you do:

- Show your child the pictures in a book.
- To see if your child understands and can identify the pictures. Ask questions such as, "Where is the dog?" or "Can you find the horse?"
- Continue this with your child with other items in the pictures for as long as your child remains interested.
- Model how to label items you see by pointing and saying the names ("ball", "car", etc.) or using a phrase such as "I see the dog!"
- Point to an item, but don't say the name and look expectantly at your child to encourage them to take a turn labeling.
- If your child points to an item, say "What do you see?" or "Oh! What's this?"

How it helps:

- This activity will help expand the amount of words your child says and their overall language skills.
- Your child will enjoy telling you where items are in the pictures and will make them feel good about themselves when they are able to name and identify the pictures on their own.

Extension to activity:

- As your child develops more language, ask them questions that don't have one right answer, "Where have you seen a dog?"



Language and communication

24-36 months

Silly game

This activity is designed for children 24-30 months of age

What you need:

- Different items around the house (Example: toothpaste, a chair, hairbrush, soap, etc.)

What you do:

- Point to an object, such as a chair, and ask your child, “Is that the door?”
- Let your child tell you what it really is.
- Act surprised when they tell you and say “Oh silly me!”



How it helps:

- This activity will help your child identify and say the correct names of objects.
- This activity will also make your child feel important when they “teach” you the right name of the objects.

Extension to activity:

- Have fun playing this game with your child. Give your child an object that doesn't make sense and act like you don't think there is anything wrong. For example, give your child a pot to wear on their head and say, “Ok here is your hat.” When your child looks at you funny or says that they don't wear a pot for a hat, reply to them by saying, “Oh, you don't need that pot for a hat?” Do this with other objects.

Language and communication

24-36 months

Important conversations

This activity is designed for children 30-36 months of age

What you need:

- You and your child

What you do:

- Take the time to talk with your child during mealtimes, bath time and when riding in the car.
- If your child says a short sentence, listen carefully to what they are telling you.
- Try to go back and forth in a short conversation with your child.
- Be sure to let your child talk, even if it's taking a while to get the sentence out. Try not to interrupt them.



How it helps:

- This activity helps your child learn to have back and forth conversations.
- This activity helps your child learn how to take turns with others when talking.
- This activity will also teach your child how to listen carefully to others when you model this for them.

Extension to activity:

- Make up a prediction with your child that is in their near future. Say something like, “I wonder what you’ll do at grandma’s today?” This will start your child to think and tell you what they will do that day.

Language and communication

36-48 months

I spy

This activity is designed for children 36-42 months of age

What you need:

- You and your child.

What you do:

- Pick out an object and remember it in your mind.
- Give your child clues to guess what it is. Say phrases like, “I spy something blue. It’s square and birds like to go in it.”
- Encourage your child to ask you questions to guess the object
- You can also ask your child “Wh” questions when doing this activity (Example: “Where do you think birds like to sit and eat their birdseed?” or “What are those animals called that like to fly around and say tweet?”)



How it helps:

- Helps your child learn how to ask questions correctly.
- Helps to stimulate your child’s thinking and learning skills when guessing the object.
- Helps encourage your child to use their language skills to ask questions and name objects they see in their environment.

Extension to activity:

- Help your child make a telescope out of a paper towel roll to play “I spy” with. Then put out three different objects. Your child can play “I spy” as they look through their new telescope.

Language and communication

36-48 months

Playing kitchen or house

This activity is designed for children 42-48 months of age

What you need:

- Dolls or teddy bears
- Plastic dishes or cooking spoons
- Empty food containers
- Old pots and pans

What you do:

- Participate with your child in this pretend play activity.
- Ask your child questions that will help your child think of what they want to cook for you and the teddy bears. You can ask questions like, “What should we make for lunch today?” or “What do you think we should have to drink?”
- Name items in your area that you are playing with. (Example: “I think this wooden spoon will help us stir the sauce in the pot.”)
- Help your child talk out what she is doing. (Example: “Wow, I think the bears will like the grilled cheese sandwiches you are making. They look really good!”)



How it helps:

- This activity helps your child to talk about what they are doing.
- This activity helps your child name new objects in their environment that can be added to their growing vocabulary.

Extension to activity:

- Have your child sort objects by how you use them. For example, have them put all of the objects together that you stir with or all of the things that you drink with.

Language and communication

36-48 months

Reciting rhymes

This activity is designed for children 42-48 months of age

What you need:

- A nursery rhyme book

What you do:

- Read nursery rhymes to your child from a book.
- Repeat the nursery rhyme and encourage your child to repeat it with you.
- Pretty soon your child will be able to repeat them on their own.



How it helps:

- Helps your child learn patterns in their language development.
- Helps your child learn the rhythm to different rhymes.
- Encourages your child to find other words that rhyme and may want to make up their own silly, rhyming stories.

Extension to activity:

- Practice tapping out the rhymes in the books with your child. Clap your hands or stomp your feet to the words that have more than one syllable in them. For example, the word “Spi-der” would have two claps or two stomps.

Language and communication

48-60 months

My own story book

This activity is designed for children 48-54 months of age

What you need:

- A notebook
- Crayons

What you do:

- Encourage your child to tell you a story.
- Help your child by writing down what they tell you.
- Encourage your child to draw pictures after telling you their story. The pictures can be on the same piece of paper as the story.
- Your child can add more stories and pictures to their notebook.
- When your child is done, show your child their story and read it back to them.



How it helps:

- This activity helps your child use their language skills to describe their pictures to you.
- This activity helps your child see their story in print and will encourage them to start to identify letters and words.

Extension to activity:

- Give your child stickers to peel off of the page to add to their notebook.
- Talk about the pictures that they are drawing and ask them questions about their pictures. (Example: “What is happening in your picture?” or “Do you think the mommy is happy or sad?” or “I like the colors you are using. What colors are they?”)

Language and communication

48-60 months

Bedtime stories

This activity is designed for children 54-60 months of age

What you need:

- Picture books your child enjoys

What you do:

- Read a few books to your child each night before bedtime.
- When reading the book to your child, read slowly and move your finger along the words in the book.
- Use different variations (such as high and low or loud and soft) in your voice to make it interesting to your child.
- Talk about the pictures in the book and ask your child questions about them.
- When you are done reading each story, ask your child what their favorite part of the book was and why.



How it helps:

- This activity helps your child identify different words when you use your finger to show them each word while you are reading.
- This activity helps your child use more language when talking about the pictures and their favorite part of the story.

Extension to activity:

- Ask your child, “What do you think will happen next?” before turning a page.

Language and communication

48-60 months

Grocery shopping

This activity is designed for children 54-60 months of age

What you need:

- Use this activity when grocery shopping in the store.

What you do:

- While shopping for groceries, talk about what you need to buy.
- Discuss how many of each item you will buy.
- Talk about the shape, color, and size of each item (Example: “This tomato is red and round. It’s not as big as this watermelon, it’s smaller.”)



How it helps:

- This activity helps children understand the differences between various objects.
- This activity helps your child learn the meaning of adjectives.
- This activity helps your child learn how to use describing words properly when talking about items in their environment.

Extension to activity:

- Have your child bring a little notebook with a pencil so that they can “write” what you need from the store.