



How to support **LANGUAGE** in young children



Why is this important to know?

The first few years of life are so important for young children and set the foundation for a lifetime of learning. Learning to speak and communicate is very powerful! Children learn how to interact and share ideas and feelings. They also learn how to solve problems, be curious about the world around them, and learn who they are as people. This helps children make sense of all their experiences as they prepare for school and adulthood.

COVID-19 has changed life for families. With child care centers closed, changes in parents' employment and juggling other responsibilities, changes in family routines, and increases in passive screen time, important opportunities for children to talk and learn with peers and adults has been limited. While the long-term impact of COVID-19 on language development remains unclear, a recent study in Rhode Island found that "Children born during the pandemic have significantly reduced verbal, motor, and overall cognitive performance compared to children born pre-pandemic." However, this does not mean that it is too late! Taking the time each day to read together, talk together during everyday routines, and engage in play with your child, will go a long way in getting development back on track.

(Sparks, S.D. April, 07, 2022. Babies are saying less since the pandemic: Why it's concerning. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/babies-are-saying-less-since-the-pandemic-why-thats-concerning/2022/04>)

Download the
Learn the Signs. Act Early. app to track and celebrate your child's milestones



Here are some everyday ideas to help your child grow and learn:

Newborns and babies:

- Talk during your daily routines like diaper changing or bath time ("Let's change your diaper. First, we need to get a clean diaper. After we change your diaper, we'll take a nap.")
- Read books together (Check out [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#))
- Notice your baby babbling or smiling at you and respond ("I see you smiling at me. You must be happy.")
- Sing and play nursery rhyme games (Peek-a-Boo, Pattycake, This Little Pig)

Young children:

- Talk together during your routines such as during grocery shopping, bath time, driving in the car, or on walks. You can talk about something you see or something you are doing. ("Look at those red peppers. What is something else that is red that we can eat?")
- Put screens down during mealtimes. Use the time to talk about daily routines or family plans.
- Read and make books together. Ask your child what is happening in a picture.
- Cook together (check out this great, short video on [making banana pudding together](#))
- Make up stories together about your child's favorite toys or people
- Sing and play simple children's games such as Ring Around the Rosey or Head Shoulders Knees and Toes
- Play together, adding to the words your child uses. "You're right, that is a car. It's red just like Papaw's car".



If you have concerns about your child's language development, talk to your child's:

- *primary care physician*
- *child care teacher*
- *home visitor or the [West Virginia Home Visitation program](#)*
- *[West Virginia Birth to Three](#) or 1-800-642-8522*
- *[Help Me Grow](#) or 1-800-642-8522*
- *[West Virginia Early Head Start](#)*



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www.nurturingwvbabies.org