

Language & Learning

Building Conversations

Affirm to Support Turns and Stretch

Part of communication is showing that your partner's ideas are important to you. You may want to continue a conversation by encouraging your baby to take another turn. You may not get the message the first time. You may not immediately think of a way to respond. You may want to add something to your response to let your baby know you are interested and approving.

Tiny babies make lots of funny sounds. It is not always clear how to answer. As a parent, you have many ways of showing your baby approval and support.

- You can keep your eyes on your baby while the two of you communicate.
- You can smile and nod.
- You can let your face show the same feeling that your baby is showing.
- You can add small words, such as "yes," or "okay" to your response.
- You can wait expectantly for more communication.

Babies and toddlers are not always easy to understand. When they begin to say words (often around 12 months of age), their early attempts can change a lot. Toddlers use jargon - a mix of jibberish and a word attempt or two. It is a good idea for parents to make a "best guess" at what the infant or toddler is expressing. For example, a tot may pick up the phone and say something that sounds like speech but there are no clear words. You can make comments that relate to what the child does and means. "You are talking on the phone. Is that grandma? daddy? Bye-bye daddy." Maybe the child points to a baby and makes a string of sounds. Best guesses might be, "Yes, let's play baby. Is baby hungry?"