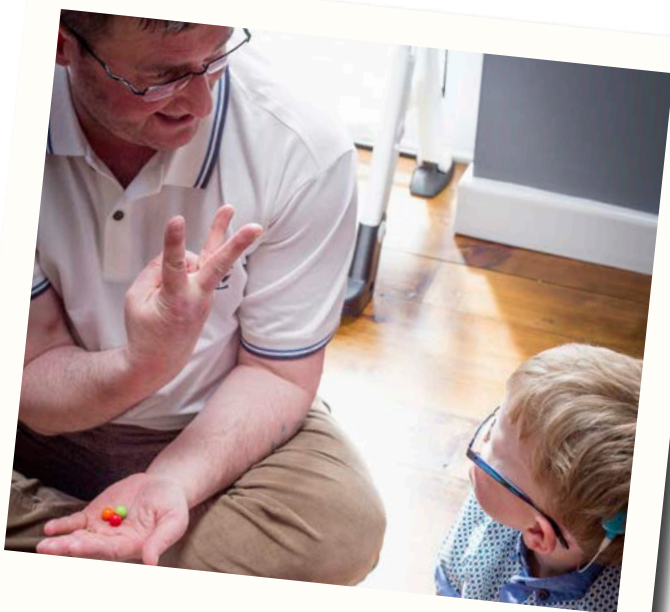


# Helping your deaf child to develop communication and language

For parents with a  
0-2 year old



**Our vision is of a  
world without barriers  
for every deaf child.**

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**The National Deaf Children's Society uses the word 'deaf' to refer to all levels of hearing loss, and the word 'parent' to refer to all parents and carers of children.**



# Introduction

Children use communication and language to form relationships with family and friends, to thrive in nursery and school, and when learning to read. Good communication and language matters whatever your child's age, but it's especially important in the early years.

Being deaf can make the development of good communication and language more challenging, but with the right support, commitment and encouragement from families and professionals, deaf children can learn to communicate as effectively as other children.



This resource provides practical ideas to help your deaf child to develop their communication and language skills. Many, if not all, of the suggestions can be used with deaf and hearing children. However, deaf children will benefit from spending more time on them and doing them more often.

Don't forget, you can talk to other parents of deaf children about their ideas and experiences on our Parent Place forum ([www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace)) or on our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/NDCS.UK](http://www.facebook.com/NDCS.UK)).



# Top tips

- Children learn to communicate when they feel safe, secure and confident that their communication will be understood and valued.
- Remember that communication and language is not the same thing. Whatever language you use with your child, good communication will always be important.
- An environment where there is lots of communication and interaction between everyone is extremely important. You don't need to limit or simplify your communication because your child is deaf.
- Keep it visual. Use gestures, facial expressions, body language etc. to support good communication.
- If your child uses hearing technology, make sure it is working properly and that your child is using it for as many of their waking hours as possible.
- Children learn to communicate when they are given chances to take part in the conversation. Remember to give your deaf child that little bit longer to respond.
- Babies and toddlers learn to communicate when you talk and/or sign about the things that they are focused on or interested in.
- Praise your child when they respond or attempt to respond through either verbal or non-verbal communication. This will help to positively reinforce communication for your child.
- Play with your child as much as possible. Children who enjoy play and particularly, imaginative play ('pretending') tend to be better language learners.
- Early experience of sharing and enjoying books helps children to learn language and lays the foundations for reading.
- Some parents feel that because their child is deaf, they have to become 'teachers' to make sure that their child develops language and communication skills. Remember that you should communicate as you would with any other child – including through play and everyday activities.
- It may seem obvious, but the more opportunities babies and toddlers have to communicate every day, the better communicators they turn out to be. Ensuring there is lots of meaningful interaction between adults and your child is vital.
- Some parents feel daunted by the prospect of how much time and patience is needed to help their child to develop communication and language, but try to make it part of everyday life and not just dedicated time at the start or end of the day so that it becomes 'the norm'.

# What do we mean by communication and language?

Communication and language **is not** the same.

## Communication

Communication is a two-way process and is a vital foundation for learning and forming relationships with others. It is how we get our meaning across and understand what other people mean. It involves not only what we say or sign, but other things like eye contact, gesture, tone of voice, facial expressions and body language. Good communication is essential if children are to go on to develop good language.

## Language

Language is about the words, phrases, grammar and expressions that we understand (receptive language) and use (expressive language). Expressive language is the ability to express thoughts, and this can be done through spoken or signed language. It's important to remember that babies' receptive language skills will usually be better than their expressive language skills. In other words, babies will understand more than might appear to be the case.

The language that people use will vary. But whatever language or 'method' you use with your child, good communication will always be important.

Babies make communication connections from the minute they are born, and they quickly start sending these messages to the important people in their lives. They show us:

- whether they are happy, hungry or uncomfortable by the way they coo, cry, smile or wriggle
- what they are interested in by looking or reaching out.

As babies develop, they start to send out messages using words and gestures, eventually combining these together into short phrases and sentences.

Though you may not realise it, parents naturally use sophisticated observation and communication skills when communicating with their child. This is something we all learn from our own families. It is these intuitive skills that make parents the best and most successful at helping their child to develop language and communication.

## Communicating with your Deaf Child

We have published a separate resource called *Communicating with your Deaf Child*, which includes information about the different ways in which deaf children and their families may choose to communicate. It provides more information for parents about how you can best support your child's language and communication development as they grow up.

*Communicating with your Deaf Child* is available to download on our website at [www.ndcs.org.uk/publications](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/publications) or you can order it from our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880** or email [helpline@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ndcs.org.uk).

# Challenges for deaf children and their families



It is important to remember that in most cases there is no reason why your child can't develop the same language and communication skills as other children – but early access to communication and language is extremely important.

In the early years, a child's brain is still developing and putting the right building blocks in place for future development. If the child's brain is not exposed to lots of communication and language, this can have a knock-on effect on other areas of development later in life, such as memory skills, ability to organise thoughts, solve problems and social development. A child's language and communication development is largely determined by how much their family communicates with them. Lots of high quality, two-way communication between a parent and a child in the home is extremely important.

Deafness, however, can make communication and language learning more challenging. As a parent, you will be very familiar with some of these challenges.

## **Parents' response to deafness**

Most parents of deaf children are new to deafness. It's therefore understandable that many parents feel nervous or unsure about how they should engage with their child. Some parents feel they need to do things differently or 'simplify' how they communicate with their child in case they don't understand. It's important to remember that in the early years, you can communicate and get to know your child in the same way as any other – through smiling, gestures and facial expressions for example.

It's also important to remember that your child needs a rich communication and language environment, where there is lots of communication and interaction. As this resource explains, there are lots of things you can do to make sure this happens.

## Early support

After your child is identified as deaf, it will be important to make sure that you have all the support you need from the relevant professionals.

- An audiologist can help make sure that your child is benefiting from the best possible hearing technology – whether this is hearing aids, cochlear implants or bone conduction hearing implants – and monitor this carefully.
- A Teacher of the Deaf should also give you support and information about deafness, and help you to learn techniques to develop your child's speech and language. They may also refer you to other professionals, including speech and language therapists.

Some families can experience difficulties in getting the support they need, depending on where they live. If you have any problems, contact our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880** or email [helpline@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ndcs.org.uk) for information about your rights and how we can support you.

If your goal is for your child to communicate through speaking and listening then the following challenges will also apply.



## Hearing and listening development

The ear is fully formed before birth and hearing babies will have had exposure to sound even before they are born. However, the ear is just the first part of the hearing (auditory) pathway. The hearing pathways are made up of nerves that carry sound from the ears to the brain.

We know that most rapid changes in brain development happen in the first three-and-a-half years of life. When hearing pathways are not stimulated in response to sound early in life they do not develop as well as they could. Babies and young children therefore require early and consistent auditory stimulation so that they have the best opportunity to develop their hearing pathways.

Hearing babies will have thousands of hours of listening experience in their first year and hear words many hundreds of times before they start to make speech-like 'babbling' sounds. By the age of four, children have often heard as many as 45 million words.

Hearing aids and cochlear implants should be offered as early as possible so that babies and young children have the opportunity to access sound and develop hearing pathways.

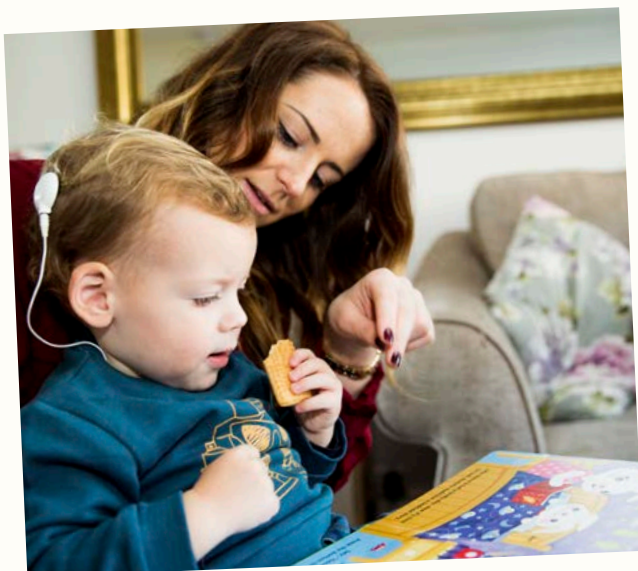
For more information, read our factsheet *Supporting your Deaf Baby or Toddler's Listening and Speech Development*.



## Incidental learning

Incidental learning happens through 'overhearing' – when children listen to speech that is not directed at them. Very young children learn about 90% of the information they acquire incidentally.

Deaf children who only hear what someone directly in front of them is saying are getting a small part of the information that they need in order to learn. Overhearing helps children build vocabulary and gives them grammar and general knowledge. This means that you may need to compensate for your child's difficulties with incidental learning by communicating more and directly with your child than you would with any other child.



# What helps communication and language development?

Regardless of the language choices you make for your child, there are lots of simple things you can do to help support their communication and language development. This includes making sure that your child can communicate as easily as possible and that there is lots of rich interaction between you and your child.

We understand that some parents feel daunted by the prospect of how much time developing your child's language and communication may take. Try to make it part of everyday life and not just dedicated time at the start or end of the day so that it becomes 'the norm'. Parents have told us that though it required time and patience, the rewards can be immense and invaluable for developing your child's communication and language.

## Create a rich visual environment

Gestures, facial expressions, body language and actions are a fundamental part of good communication, particularly when children are very small. All families of babies and toddlers, whether deaf or hearing will use actions or gestures to some extent. These will help give your child visual access to language.

For this reason, it's important to make sure that you face your child as much as possible and maintain eye contact to get their attention. This will allow your baby to see your face clearly as they begin to watch faces and lips during communication. You should also try to make sure that your face is in the light. For example, try and avoid having your back to a window. This will help your child to see your face and gestures.

Some families enroll on baby sign classes or learn Family Sign Language for instance, and many more will sing nursery rhymes and action songs which include lots of gestures. For deaf children early signs and gestures are even more helpful to support communication.



## Watch and wait

Watching your child closely will help you to really know and understand how they are trying to communicate with you. Watching your child intently means that you will know exactly how they communicate and what they are interested in. It also has another major benefit: it allows your child the time and the space to connect and communicate with you.

Deaf children may need more time to make the communication connection than hearing children. So although the waiting may seem almost painful, try and resist the temptation to 'fill the silence' or try and turn the child's head to face you. Deaf children may need that extra space to take their turn and to start to realise that they are expected to take their turn in the conversation.

Reacting to your child's communication shows them that you are interested in what they are trying to tell you and that you really value their communication attempts, no matter how simple they may be. Reacting means that you use:

- facial expressions
- body language
- gestures
- tone of voice

to let your child know you are communicating with them.

Responding to your child's communication is slightly different from reacting. Responding means you provide your child with words that relate to their communication or to the task they are engaged in. For instance, you can talk about what they are doing, or interpret how you think they are feeling. You can also respond to your child by copying them: by copying their actions, expressions, coos, babbles or anything your child has done to send you a message.

Babies and toddlers learn to communicate when you talk and/or sign about the things that they are focused on or interested in. To encourage your child's communication it is usually better to talk/sign about their focus of attention, rather than trying to guide them elsewhere.



# What helps communication and language development?

## Emotions and feelings

At about six months to a year, babies start to display their emotions quite obviously and become more sensitive to your emotions too. It's important that you support your child to 'label' their own emotional states by, for example, making comments such as "Oh dear, you are upset" or "Mummy/Daddy's excited!" Being able to describe feelings and using the language which describes feelings can make a difference to a child's emotional and social well-being later in life. For example, research has found that being able to describe feelings can help children to understand how other people might be feeling and to form positive relationships.

## Play

Imaginative or pretend play gives children opportunities to develop their language and communication in a fun and simple way. It can also help develop their social skills as children start to think about how things look from another perspective and about emotions and feelings – for example, "How does Teddy feel today?"

From a young age, many children love singing and signing songs. Research has shown that early music activities can help support a child's communication development, which many deaf children can benefit from too.

Children often love to look at and 'read' the same books again and again – they look forward to lifting the flaps, feeling the textured pictures and enjoying your chatter/signing of the book. Reading lots with your child will help them to understand what a book is and hopefully develop a lifelong love of reading.

Some parents worry that they need to get 'special' toys to use with their child. This isn't the case. Your child will have fun and enjoy the same toys as other children.

For more ideas about playtime activities, read our factsheet *Toys and Play for Young Deaf Children*.

## Communicating through everyday routines

It's important to remember that communication doesn't have to be something on your to-do list – it can form part of what you would normally do.

Spending time with your child and communicating through normal everyday activities can provide excellent opportunities for developing language and communication skills. For example, describing everyday care activities and daily routines, and commenting on them can be really valuable. For example, when you are doing the washing, you can say/sign "In go the smelly socks!" or if you are going out, you can ask "Where are the shoes?"

This can also help your child to start to establish 'cause and effect'. Simple examples include the following.

- When the doorbell rings/ flashes or the front door shuts, you can point to the door and say/sign "Daddy/Mummy's home!"
- You can talk/sign about the "noisy kettle" or use gestures to highlight the steam coming out of the kettle when you're making a hot drink.
- If the dog barks, you can point to it and say/sign out loud "What does Fido the dog want?"

Life experiences, such as taking your child out to events, holidays and trips also encourages communication and language development.



## Get the whole family involved

Seeing family members communicating effectively and using language in different ways will also help your child. Making sure there is lots of meaningful interaction between adults and your child is vital. Encourage brothers, sisters, grandparents and so on to communicate with your child as much as they would with any child.

You may need to remind family members of the importance of facing your child when communicating, and of turn-taking so that only one person is speaking/signing at any one time.

Our website has lots of tips for good communication that you can share with family members. [www.ndcs.org.uk/family\\_support/communication/deaf\\_awareness.html](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/communication/deaf_awareness.html)

If your goal is for your child to communicate through listening and speech, then the following will also help with your child's language and communication development.



## Using hearing technology

If your child is using hearing technology, try to make sure it's working properly and that your child has the best possible level of hearing for as much of their waking hours as possible. This will help them to experience as much spoken language and communication as possible.

If your child uses hearing aids, you need to check that:

- there is no damage to any part of the hearing aid
- there is no build-up of wax in the earmould
- the tubing is free of condensation
- the batteries are working
- the sound quality is correct.

Short video clips with tips on how to care for your child's hearing aid can be found in the **Hearing aids** section of our website.

If your child uses bone conduction hearing devices or cochlear implants, you need to check that:

- there is no visible damage
- the batteries are working
- they are switched on.

Cochlear implants may have visual displays to show you that all the parts are working well. The audiologist or your Teacher of the Deaf will show you the best way to check.

If you notice any issues or problems, you should report them to your child's audiologist as soon as possible.

# What helps communication and language development?

Babies often go through stages when they take out their hearing aids. Often this is just a developmental stage and soon other things will occupy their attention. You may need to take the hearing aids away for a short while before trying them again while they are distracted by something else. Sometimes children will take out their hearing aids when they feel there is nothing of interest to listen to, or because they are bored. Occasionally the hearing aids or cochlear implant may be causing genuine discomfort, either from the mould or perhaps the sound. If taking out hearing aids is an ongoing problem talk to your audiologist or Teacher of the Deaf or visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/wearhearingaids](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/wearhearingaids).

Some families have found that using radio aids in the early years and at home can be helpful in making communication easier, particularly in situations when you may not be able to face your child (such as when you are driving). However, these are not always provided routinely by education or health services so you may need to ask for one and explain how it will benefit your family.

More information about radio aids, including how you can borrow one from our Technology Test Drive can be found online at [www.ndcs.org.uk/family\\_support/technology\\_and\\_products/technology\\_at\\_school/index.html](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/technology_and_products/technology_at_school/index.html).

Remember, hearing technology does not 'cure' deafness and wearing hearing aids doesn't mean that deaf children hear in the same way as hearing children, so good communication is still vital.



## Creating a good listening environment

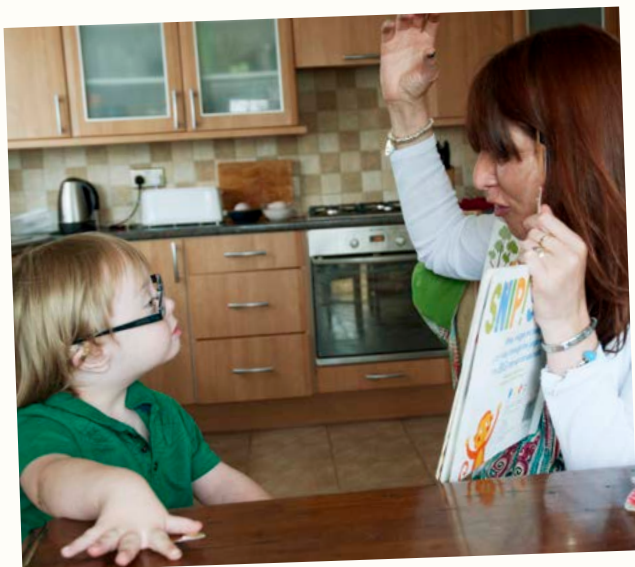
Many babies and toddlers will find learning language and communication much easier if they are in good listening environments so it's important to keep background noise down as much as possible.

- Turn off the television or washing machine during family discussions.
- Use soft furnishings, such as carpets, rugs and curtains, to absorb unwanted sound and reduce the effects of reverberation (echo).
- Make sure you are close to your child and their field of vision when you communicate. The range of hearing aids is about three metres in a good listening environment.

## British Sign Language (BSL) and spoken language development

A common concern about sign language is that it delays or prevents speech development.

There is no evidence that shows this is the case provided there is still lots of spoken language and communication being used. Using sign language early may in fact be beneficial in language and speech development. Hand-eye coordination develops earlier than speech skills and babies are able to use simple signs such as milk, eat, sleep, nappy and teddy, before they are able to say them. Children will communicate in the way that is easiest for them at the time and it is therefore natural for children to drop using signs as they begin to talk.



If you are considering using sign and spoken language with your child there are some things to consider.

- BSL is a complete language in its own right with its own grammar and linguistic rules. Because its grammar is very different from English, it's not used simultaneously with spoken language. This means that the child and family are learning and using two languages (bilingual). In just the same way as learning a spoken language, children need wide and varied access to sign language to develop fluent language skills.
- Some families prefer to use BSL signs as a visual support to spoken English language development. Sign Supported English (SSE) uses BSL signs, and fingerspelling, used in the word order of English to supplement what is being spoken.
- Other families use cued speech to support spoken language. Cued speech uses eight hand shapes near the mouth to give a visual representation of spoken language, and accompanies natural speech.

If you would like further help to develop your child's communication and language, or if you have any concerns, you can contact:

- your child's Teacher of the Deaf
- our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880** or email **helpline@ndcs.org.uk**
- other parents of deaf children, for example, through our Parent Place forum at **www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace** or on our Facebook page **www.facebook.com/NDCS.UK**.

# Practical ideas to promote communication and language development

This section will look in more detail at:

- what babies and toddlers like to do at different ages
- what parents can do to encourage babies and toddlers' communication at these different ages
- ideas of everyday routines, activities and toys that you might like to try, which are particularly good for communication and language development.

The following tables are a guide only. It's also important to remember that all children are different and develop at different rates and this is particularly the case when it comes to learning language and communication. Depending on the communication approach your child is using, some suggestions may be more applicable than others.

Remember, that in the very early months, children don't need a specific communication 'method' to be used. As you care for and play with your baby and respond to their communication attempts, you will naturally be supporting their communication and language development.

## Communication and language with babies aged 0 to 3 months

Babies like	Parents can	Try this
<p>Looking at faces and eyes, particularly familiar ones.</p> <p>Copying funny faces.</p> <p>Making cooing and gurgling sounds.</p> <p>Listening to noises – even very young babies can turn towards familiar sounds and startle at loud noises. They are also calmed by soothing voices.</p> <p>Smiling – babies start to smile socially in the first few weeks of life.</p>	<p>Gaze into your baby's eyes, while speaking and using facial expressions.</p> <p>Tell the difference between different sorts of cries.</p> <p>Respond and react to your baby's cues.</p> <p>Use a baby-friendly sing-song voice/signs to tune babies into language.</p> <p>Copy the faces your baby makes.</p>	<p>Keep on talking or signing during everyday routines – nappy changing, bathing, feeding, etc.</p> <p>Sing to your baby. Babies love to listen to people singing, and singing means you naturally emphasise the rhythm and tone of your voice which really helps for language learning.</p>



## Communication and language with babies aged six months

<b>Babies like</b>	<b>Parents can</b>	<b>Try this</b>
<p>Babbling – at six months babies start to string sounds together into babble patterns.</p> <p>Using their voices for a purpose. Babies start to shout to get attention.</p> <p>To listen to familiar sounds and to anticipate what’s going to happen.</p> <p>Playing with objects in lots of different ways – like banging, shaking, mouthing and throwing.</p> <p>Expressing their likes and dislikes using sounds and facial expressions.</p> <p>Taking turns in talking.</p> <p>Responding to their own name or the word “no”.</p> <p>Playing games with people which involve anticipation.</p>	<p>Copy baby’s babble patterns and mould them into real words – “dada – yes, Daddy’s coming!”</p> <p>Take turns in communication, so allowing baby the chance to take turns.</p> <p>Talk/sign about what baby is focused on or interested in.</p>	<p>Get some baby books for your baby to explore. Your baby may throw them or put them in their mouths, but even this early exposure to books can help to develop an interest in them.</p> <p>Play lap games such as ‘round and round the garden’, ‘this little piggy went to market’ or ‘I’m gonna get’cha!’, involving lots of giggles and tickling.</p> <p>Get a treasure box of toys and safe but exciting objects for your baby to explore and play with.</p> <p>‘Peek-a-boo’ games encourage babies to look and listen together.</p> <p>Baby swings are great for saying hello and goodbye.</p>



# Practical ideas to promote communication and language development

## Communication and language with babies aged nine months

<b>Babies like</b>	<b>Parents can</b>	<b>Try this</b>
<p>Pointing to things that they see around them – sometimes known as ‘intentional’ communication.</p> <p>Understanding some very familiar words and phrases.</p> <p>Babbling with different sounds or combinations of sounds – some babble patterns may be changing into first words so “Mama” may start to be used for “Mummy”.</p> <p>Using lots of gestures to communicate.</p> <p>Sharing attention to an object with another person.</p> <p>Toys that you can open and close, build, move and stack.</p> <p>Listening to action songs and nursery rhymes.</p> <p>Watching programmes for young children – but only if there is someone to watch it with them.</p> <p>Finding out where sounds are coming from.</p>	<p>Use simple and repetitive language to help in the development of understanding.</p> <p>Talk/sign about what your baby is interested in, or focused on. For example, “What a soft teddy!” or “Let’s roll the big red ball!”</p> <p>Use lots of gestures and perhaps baby signs to communicate.</p> <p>Use everyday routines to foster understanding.</p> <p>Start to talk about feelings. For example, “Oh dear, you’re upset” or “Mummy/Daddy’s very excited!”</p>	<p>Share books with your nine-month-old – big bright picture books with colourful photos work best at this age.</p> <p>Watch programmes for young children together and talk/sign about what’s happening.</p> <p>Hiding toys and objects under a cloth or a blanket for baby to find.</p> <p>Introduce ring stacks, boxes and toys to nine-month-olds. They don’t have to cost a lot – saucepans and wooden spoons work just as well.</p> <p>Carry on singing action songs and nursery rhymes, particularly if they have actions to go with them – leave gaps when you sing to allow your baby to take a turn.</p>

## Communication and language with babies aged 12 months

<b>Babies like</b>	<b>Parents can</b>	<b>Try this</b>
<p>Moving – some may be walking, others crawling or cruising round the furniture, but keeping one-year-olds still is virtually impossible!</p> <p>Communicating. One-year-olds may be using some words or baby signs – although only very familiar people understand them.</p> <p>Following simple instructions in familiar routines – like pointing to familiar objects or pictures, or pointing to their nose or eyes – often accompanied by gestures.</p> <p>Pretending – babies enjoy simple pretend play, perhaps with dolls or teddies, or acting out the routines they experience every day, like mealtimes or putting toys to bed.</p>	<p>Respond to your baby’s communication attempts by repeating the words your baby has said and expanding on it, for example, baby says: “tar”, you say: “yes, car! That’s Mummy’s/Daddy’s car!” Keep introducing new words into their lives.</p> <p>Be your baby’s play-partner and show them how to pretend.</p> <p>Keep talking about feelings and introducing new words to describe them. For example, “What a surprise!” or “Mummy/Daddy’s feeling a bit sad today”.</p>	<p>Keep talking/signing through everyday routines, even if you think they aren’t listening or paying attention.</p> <p>Start to encourage pretending by playing with soft toys, dolls, cars, tea sets, toy vacuum cleaners – anything your child enjoys.</p> <p>Play “What’s in the box?” – one-year-olds love boxes. Hide something inside for them to find.</p> <p>Looking at picture books together, but let Teddy look too – soon your child will be reading Teddy a story.</p> <p>Watch programmes for young children together and talk/sign about it.</p>

# Practical ideas to promote communication and language development

## Communication and language with toddlers at 18 months

Toddlers like	Parents can	Try this
<p>Pointing to pictures in books.</p> <p>Copying words, gestures and signs.</p> <p>Using more words or signs to communicate with others.</p> <p>Copying your activities, such as putting things in the washing machine.</p>	<p>Use lots of repetition so toddlers hear the same words many times.</p> <p>Talk/sign about what your toddler is doing or what they are interested in, so words are mapped onto the toddler's experiences.</p> <p>Repeat back the words your toddler says and then add some more to expand the conversation.</p> <p>Ask questions, and make comments. For example, "What happens if...?" or "Where does that go?"</p> <p>Give your child choices so that they can start to learn the names of the things they want. For example, "Would you like an apple or a yogurt?"</p>	<p>Make a special photo book, or use an iPad, smartphone or tablet to make a special photo album for your toddler – with their favourite people, toys and activities on it.</p> <p>Read with your toddler. And let them have a go at telling you the story – they may only say a few words, hold the book upside down, or skip a few pages, but they will start to understand what books are for and this will help them with literacy as they get older. Toddlers love to hear the same story over and over again, and this really helps them to learn the words – so choose stories that have lots of repetition in them.</p> <p>Practise talking on the phone or using Facetime/Skype.</p> <p>Play pretend, and talk about it.</p> <p>Watch programmes for young children together, and talk/sign about it.</p>



## Communication and language with toddlers at two years

Toddlers like	Parents can	Try this
<p>Communicating – whether through speech, sign or a combination of both. Two-year-olds love to name things, ask for things, ask for help, answer simple questions and lots more. They love to name everything they see and copy everything they hear or see.</p> <p>To make up little phrases or sentences – at two most children are starting to link words or signs together.</p> <p>Learning different words, not just names. Children’s vocabularies at two are growing rapidly and include different types of words such as verbs and some adjectives to describe things, and to explain how they feel.</p> <p>Pretending – pretend play is becoming more complex and sophisticated as children get to understand more about the world.</p>	<p>Focus on what your child is communicating to you through speech or sign, not how they are saying or signing it – as two-year-old ‘talk’ is still not clear and there will be many grammatical errors. Resist the temptation to ‘correct’ your child’s language or communication as this may discourage them. Instead, gently model how it should be said/signed when you reply. For example, if your child says “currr”, you can reply saying, “Yes, Daddy’s in the car!”</p> <p>Communicate a lot, and use more words now, including describing words, to keep pace with your child’s emerging vocabulary.</p> <p>Continue to model and expand on the toddler communication – repeat back what your child says and add a bit more to it.</p>	<p>Read to your two-year-old. And at this age you may want to make up photo books about specific events or people in their lives, so you can look at the book together and talk/sign about what happened – this is a great way to build language and make memories.</p> <p>Play searching games – ask your child to go and find not just one object, but two. You can do this when going shopping, or playing outside. Games like this help children to practise remembering language – a really important skill for school.</p> <p>Watch children’s TV together, and talk/sign about it.</p>

### Helping your Child to Develop Language, Read and Write: For parents with a 3 to 4 year old

As your child approaches their third birthday, you may find this resource helpful. It provides advice on how you can continue to help your child develop their language skills and start to learn to read and write. Again, it contains simple and practical suggestions to make learning fun.

# Our resources

## Information resources

These are available to download from our website [www.ndcs.org.uk/publications](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/publications) or order hard copies from our Freephone Helpline.

- *Communicating with Your Deaf Child*
- *Learning British Sign Language: A guide for families with young deaf children in England*
- *Speech and Language Therapy: A guide for parents*
- *Hearing Aids: Information for families*
- *Bone-Anchored Hearing Aids: Information for parents and families*
- *Cochlear Implants: A guide for families*
- *How Radio Aids Can Help*
- *Supporting your Deaf Baby or Toddler's Listening and Speech Development*
- *Toys and Play for Young Deaf Children*

## Web sections

[www.ndcs.org.uk/communication](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/communication)  
[www.ndcs.org.uk/childhooddeafness](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/childhooddeafness)  
[www.ndcs.org.uk/technology](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/technology)  
[www.ndcs.org.uk/familysignlanguage](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/familysignlanguage)

Early Support has developed a resource, with our support, for parents and carers on deafness and hearing loss.

[www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources/early-support-information-on-deafness-and-hearing-loss](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources/early-support-information-on-deafness-and-hearing-loss)

Early Support has also developed a tool to help parents track the developmental milestones of their deaf child.

[www.ndcs.org.uk/professional\\_support/other\\_academic\\_and\\_professional\\_resources/education\\_resources.html](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/other_academic_and_professional_resources/education_resources.html)



**We are the National Deaf Children's Society,  
the leading charity for deaf children.**

**Freephone Helpline: 0808 800 8880 (voice and text)**

**helpline@ndcs.org.uk**

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Published by the National Deaf Children's Society © February 2016

Next review due: February 2018

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NDCS is a registered charity in England and Wales no. 1016532  
and in Scotland no. SC040779.

This publication can be requested in large print, in Braille and on audio CD.

Full references for this resource are available by emailing  
**informationteam@ndcs.org.uk**.

