

## Language/Communication in Children Birth to Five

### Birth to 6 weeks

- makes eye contact, staring intently at human face
- will try to imitate exaggerated facial expressions (sticking out tongue, surprise face)
- by 6 weeks, most babies are showing a “social smile” (smiles in clear response to human face)
- uses crying to draw attention to needs; parents often able to “read” different cries

### By 4 to 6 months

- attentive to human interaction, attracted to human face
- responds to tone of voice & facial expressions
- coos and makes expressive sounds
- most babies will smile at any friendly face by about 4 months
- periods of long crying common, reaching a peak between 1 and 3 months (risk for frustration and exhaustion of parents, especially if they don’t know this crying is normal)

### By 6 to 9 months

- shows a clear preference for primary caregiver(s) and may fuss when others try to approach
- babbles expressively
- responds to emotional tone of voice & facial expressions

### By 9-12 months

- one or two primary attachments have formed and baby protests involuntary separation from primary caregiver(s) and shows fear of strangers
- first word by around 12 months, although normal range varies
- becomes an intentional two-way communicator
  - points or reaches to things he/she wants
  - responds to people who talk to him/her by making sounds and faces
  - responds to simple verbal request
  - seeks caregiver to share interest (joint attention)

### By 12 to 18 months

- looks to attachment figure to see how to respond to uncertain situations (social referencing)
- “uses” adults as tools
- imitates as part of playful interaction
- separation anxiety and fear of strangers reaches its peak
- understands much more than he or she can express
- follows simple one-step commands (“throw the ball”)

### By 24 to 30 months

- vocabulary increases dramatically
- simple combination of words to convey intentions or feelings
- meets basic needs with words (“juice” “open”)
- shares delight or interest (“see dog!”)

### By 3 to 4 years

- creates logical bridges between ideas
- can tell about very recent experiences
- can use words for basic feelings like happy, sad, mad, & scared
- may use “self-talk” for comfort and impulse control