



**ZERO TO THREE**  
Early connections last a lifetime

# Magic of Everyday Moments: From Cries to Conversation

My, how quickly babies move from cries to having conversations! They are getting ready to say their first words even before birth. Babies engage in conversation through cries, facial expressions, and body movements. They find ways to communicate their wants and needs. The development of language takes place through the nurturing and loving interactions young children have with the adults in their lives. Take time to talk and listen to your child and provide plenty of time for your child to respond. It is through this responsive and repetitive process that young children learn how to communicate. Consider the following strategies to support your child's language and literacy skills.

## Build your child's language by:

- Talking to your child throughout the day while performing daily routines such as diapering, during mealtime, and bedtime.
- Sing to your child.
- Describe what you are doing as you are doing it. For example, you can say, "I am changing your diaper. This wipe might be a little cold."
- Describe the objects your child walks by when walking around the house.
- Remember to respect your child's need to disengage when she becomes tired. Observe her and end the conversation when she lets you know it's time to move on to something else.

## Promote reading at an early age:

- Build in reading time into your bedtime routine.
- Allow your child to practice holding and turning the pages of a book.
- Make-up stories and share them with your child. When old enough, come up with stories together.



## When reading with an older child:

- Allow him to choose the book.
- Encourage her to pretend to read a book to a sibling, grandparent, or friend.
- Ask questions about the story to build vocabulary and gauge his understanding. You can ask questions such as, "What do you think will happen next?"

Young children are capable of learning multiple languages. Do you or other members of your family speak a language other than English? If so, encourage those family members to use that language with your child. This will help your child become bilingual; young children can learn two or more languages during early childhood.

### Talk to your child in your native language to support language development:

- Talk to your child in any language spoken in the home. This can build your child's knowledge of cultural values and practices.
- Ask your child's grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins to talk to your child in their native language.
- When your child speaks your native language, she has the opportunity to communicate with close and distant family members and feel comfortable using her language skills when visiting family in other countries.
- Provide opportunities for your child to socialize with children who are culturally diverse and who speak other languages to build his social skills.



Your child communicates with you from day one. Through cries, facial expressions, body movements, and words, your child is communicating needs and wants and is engaging in conversations. Continue supporting language development through the daily use of language and through caring and nurturing interactions with your child. Share your ideas, questions, and feelings about language development and the Magic of Everyday Moments video, *From Cries to Conversations: The Development of Communication Skills From Birth to 3* with another parent or person you trust with these discussion starters:

- How does your child communicate her needs and wants with you?
- How do you make time to read books daily?
- How could you organize a play group or reading group with other parents and young children?
- Do you have any concerns about your child's language development? Do you feel comfortable seeking help from someone you know or from a health care provider?

### Additional Resources:

- Your Baby's Development: Birth to 3 Months, 3 to 6 Months, 6 to 9 Months, 9 to 12 Months, 12 to 15 Months, 15 to 18 Months, 18 to 24 Months, 24 to 30 Months, 30 to 36 Months  
[www.zerotothree.org/resources/196-from-cries-to-conversations-the-development-of-communication-skills-from-birth-to-3](http://www.zerotothree.org/resources/196-from-cries-to-conversations-the-development-of-communication-skills-from-birth-to-3)
- News You Can Use: Foundations of School Readiness: Language and Literacy  
[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/docs/nycu-school-readiness-language-literacy.pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/docs/nycu-school-readiness-language-literacy.pdf)