

BABY BYTES

For families with infants and young children

Gestures and Social Communication

It is important for toddlers to use gestures! Gestures such as waving, reaching, or pointing are an important part of developing social communication. Social communication is sharing emotions and experiences with others in a social interaction. Sharing and attending to the same thing is known as joint attention. Gestures, social communication and speech go hand-in-hand.

Typically toddlers communicate with gestures before they start to use spoken words. Using simple gestures while you talk with your child throughout the day will help build their social communication skills.



DID YOU KNOW???

- Communication development starts in the first year of life.
- When your child cries, looks at, or reaches for you, they are communicating.
- Social communication helps your child connect with you, learn language and play concepts, and sets the stage for learning to read and future success in school.
- All children should have 16 gestures by 16 months of age - this lays the foundation for spoken words.
- The specific gestures a child learns may vary depending on their family or culture.
- Children combine gestures with words before they combine words together.
- The absence of gestures is a significant risk factor for language delay.



The richest moments for early language learning are when you and your child are sharing attention on the same thing. Encouraging gestures and social communication will assist your child to begin to understand the meaning of spoken words.

WAYS TO ENCOURAGE GESTURES AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

- Make eye contact with your baby and use facial expression to share emotion - both enjoyment/interest and frustration/distress.
- Communicate often with gestures, sounds, and simple words.
- Use a gesture and the word for it at the same time; this helps your child understand their meaning.
- When your child uses a gesture, acknowledge it by copying it and saying the word that matches the gesture.
- Make gestures a part of your everyday interactions with your child....have fun!



EXPECTED GESTURE USE

9 months: Give, Shake head
10 months: Reach, Raise arms
11 months: Show, Wave
12 months: Open hand point, Tap
13 months: Clap, Blow a kiss,
14 months: Index finger point, 'Shhh' gesture
15 months: Hand up, Head nod, Thumbs up,
16 months: Symbolic gestures like "high five"
or hands up for "I dunno"

Source: www.firstwordsproject.com, 16 Gestures by 16 Months; On the Same Page with Children's Development Services, RVH, Volume 1, Issue 8, May 2016, www.hanen.org