**Developing Communication and Language**

Good communication and language matters whatever your child’s age, but it’s especially important for deaf children in the early years.

Nearly all (more than 90%) deaf children are from families with no first-hand experience of hearing loss, so it’s understandable that you might feel unsure about what to do to develop your baby’s language and communication skills. However, there are plenty of easy things you can try at home to create an environment where there is lots of communication and interaction to stimulate your child and support their development.

It’s important to remember that with the right support and encouragement your baby can develop the same fluent language and communication skills as other (hearing) children.

To help with this, we’ve put together a list of everyday activities you can do to build up these skills, whatever communication approach you have chosen with your child.

Try these practical ideas

Make sure you’re positioned so that your child can see you (they’ll be looking at your facial expressions, lips and gestures), and that any background noise is reduced as it can distract them and making listening harder.

At 0–3 months old

* Talk and/or sign during everyday routines – nappy changing, bathtime, dressing.
* Sing to your baby! They love to listen to people singing and it helps naturally emphasise the rhythm and tone of your voice which really helps language learning.

At 6 months old

* Get some baby books for your baby to explore. They may throw them or put them in their mouth, but familiarising your baby with books can help them develop an interest in them.
* Pushing your baby on a swing is a great way to practise saying “hello” and “goodbye”.
* Copy your baby’s babble patterns and mould them into real words – “dada – yes, Daddy’s coming!”

At 9 months old

* Carry on singing songs and nursery rhymes, using signs or actions to go with them – leave gaps when you sing to allow your baby to take a turn.
* Hide toys and objects under a cloth or blanket for your baby to find. Talk/sign with them to ask them where the toy is and praise them when they find it.
* Watch tv programmes for young children together and talk/sign about what’s happening.

At 12 months

* Start to encourage pretending by playing with soft toys, dolls, cars, tea sets, toy vacuum cleaners – anything your baby enjoys.
* Look at picture books together, but let your baby’s favourite cuddly toy join in too – soon your baby will be reading them a story!

At 18 months

* Practise talking on the phone or using Facetime/Skype.
* Make a special photo book, (or use a smartphone or tablet) with pictures of their favourite people, toys and activities.

At two years

* Play searching games – ask your child to point at/find objects – at the supermarket or playing outside.
* Watch children’s tv together, and then talk/sign about it afterwards.

Taken from NDCS: [Practical tips for communicating | Tips for parents (ndcs.org.uk)](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/education-and-learning/early-years/developing-your-babys-communication-and-language/)