

Fun activities for the baby/child that is not talking

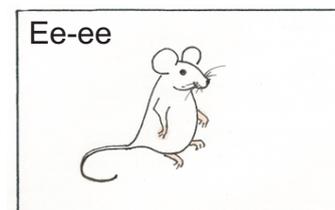
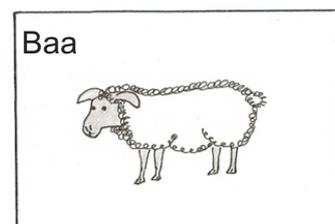
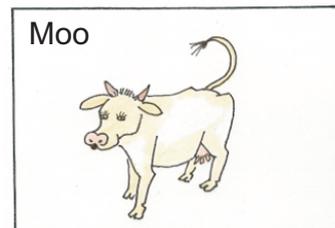
Some children are late to start talking, or use very little speech. If this describes your child the first priority is probably to have their hearing checked by an Audiologist, even if you think it is fine (see www.icommunicatetherapy.com for more information on childhood hearing difficulties). It would also be preferable to reduce the use of a dummy / pacifier and reduce the number of hours your child watches television. However, if you have major concerns make an appointment with a qualified speech and language therapist/pathologist.

There are also many fun activities that you can carry out to help encourage your child to make some sounds.

Symbolic sounds

Symbolic sounds are sounds that are short one syllable sounds or words that are easy to produce and are associated with the object/thing that they represent. For instance, a symbolic sound for a sheep might be “baah” and for a cow “moo”. Although we do not encourage baby talk, these words might be an easy and fun way for your child to be introduced to new sounds. These are fun sounds that you can incorporate when playing games or looking at books. They encourage vocalization, imitation, early vocabulary and understanding of routine language.

Make a list of common symbolic sounds and find some matching pictures. You can then create games such as picture lotto, picture matching, and guessing games. You can also model the correct vocabulary at the same time as you use the symbolic sound (e.g. “that’s right, the cow goes moo”) so that the child is learning the real word as well as the symbolic sounds. Symbolic sounds are usually just easier for the child to produce or attempt, but they can create lots of good communicative interaction when used in fun games. They can also be a good way of encouraging your child to use sounds if their speech is delayed.





Motivating Sound games

Have a chant or a phrase that you can use with the child. Ready, Steady, Go is a good example. Play a game where the child has to use sounds to initiate something, for instance, a game where you blowing up a balloons and then let them go. When you have blown up the balloon say “ready...steady....GO!” And let the balloon go. After several turns say “ready...steady....” pause and see if your child will initiate “Go”.

Have a hand puppet that pops up unexpectedly during a game, give it a name, for instance, if it's a pig call him “Stinky”. Let Stinky turn up sometimes on occasions when he's not expected. When Stinky arrives, shout “Stinky” and use him to make the activity fun. Eventually, introduce Stinky and say “its.....” and pause to see if your child shouts “Stinky”, if he doesn't just shout it yourself after the pause.

Communication temptations

Create situations where your child is motivated to communicate because it means they will get something they want. It doesn't matter if they do not pronounce words properly to start with, as long as they make an attempt at communicating. We want the child to learn that they can use their voice as a tool to initiate and request. For instance:

1. Put your child's favourite drink in sight but out of reach, and wait for them to attempt to communicate with a vocalisation or word.
2. Play with a toy that requires winding up and wait for the child to attempt to communicate to request that you to wind it up.
3. Put an object that makes a noise in a bag, and when the child shows an interest, only show them the object when they attempt communication.



Offer Choices

Offer choices all the time and wait for a response. Initially you can accept just pointing or reaching towards the choice, but as the child gets a little older, pause and wait for a verbal response or a vocalization. Offer motivating and non-motivating items to encourage the child to vocalize for the motivating item. If the child does not attempt to communicate, give them the non-motivating item and wait for their response.



Songs and Nursery Rhymes

Sing familiar nursery rhymes and songs to your children. Ones that involve actions are even better. When your child is familiar with the song start to sing it, but stop before you say the last word or line, and see if your child automatically fills in the gap.

Have games or songs around routines such as bath-time or bedtime, keep these the same, but after a while wait for the child to initiate parts of the routine or sing a song, or sing it and stop before the end to see if they will fill in the gaps.



Make deliberate mistakes

Deliberately make a silly mistake and wait for your child to comment on it. This can be done by naming something incorrectly, or asking your child to fetch something that doesn't exist or is silly.

There are many simple ways to encourage your child to initiate, vocalise or use speech. If they continue to show a delay in speech acquisition it is important to make an appointment to see a qualified speech and language therapist / pathologist.

For more information on child development, and activities to develop speech and language skills see our website www.icommunicatetherapy.com



To learn more about child development, communication, and developing your child's speech and language skills, you can read about and purchase books on our website www.icommunicatetherapy.com. Click this link to see our online Resource Centre

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Suggested Reading

The Wonder Years: Helping Your Baby and Young Child Successfully Negotiate The Major Developmental Milestones by American Academy Of Pediatrics (Author), Tanya Remer Altmann

Developing Child, The by Helen Bee and Denise Boyd

Milestones: Normal Speech And Language Development Across the Lifespan by Jr., Ph.D. Oller, et al John W.

Child Development by Laura E. Berk

Ages and Stages: A Parent's Guide to Normal Childhood Development by Charles E. Schaefer and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo

Child Development, Second Edition: A Practitioner's Guide (Social Work Practice with Children and Families) by Douglas D Davies

Child Development by Robert S. Feldman

What's Going on in There? : How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life by Lise Eliot

Child Development: Principles and Perspectives by J. Littlefield Cook & G. Cook

Let's Talk Together - Home Activities for Early Speech & Language Development by Amy Chouinard and Cory Poland

Born to Talk: An Introduction to Speech and Language Development by Lloyd M. Hult and Merle R. Howard

Speaking, Listening and Understanding: Games for Young Children by Catherine Delamain and Jill Spring

Childhood Speech, Language & Listening Problems: What Every Parent Should Know by Patricia McAleer Hamaguchi

The Parents Guide to Speech and Language Problems by Debbie Feit

The Handbook of Child Language Disorders by Richard G. Schwartz

Does My Child Have a Speech Problem? by Katherine L. Martin

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