

Smile, hold your baby close so he can see your face and lips, and speak to him in a gentle voice.

Watching and listening to you speak helps your baby begin to connect the sound of a voice with mouth movement.



Why this is important

Back-and-forth vocal play helps your baby know that sounds and mouth movements usually go together. The pleasure of watching your face, combined with the sound of your voice, encourages him to practice making mouth noises. As your baby gets older, he will imitate the mouth movements he has seen and the sounds he has heard.

What you do

- Hold your baby close with his head cupped in your hands so that he can see your face and lips. Position him so that he is about 8 inches away from you. This is the distance that a young infant's eyes focus best on objects.
- Lean toward him and talk happily. Make sure he can see your lips move as he listens to the sounds: *I see your beautiful brown eyes. I feel your soft skin.*
- Pause to give your baby a chance to make sounds, though he may not try to make sounds right away. If he does not respond verbally, smile back at him and continue talking, pausing occasionally to give him time to respond.
- Smile and repeat back to him the sound he made when he makes any sound, accidentally or intentionally. This encourages him to continue making sounds.

Another idea

Try doing this back-and-forth vocal play during caregiving routines. Talk to your baby while you change his diaper, get him dressed, and give him a bath. Remember to pause to give him plenty of time to respond to your words: *Blue shirt ... Mommy is putting on your blue shirt.*