

Essential Links

Parent Links

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Increasing Literacy Skills for Your Deaf Infant

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Communicating with your child is the foundation of reading.

It is never too early to communicate with your child, especially if he is deaf or hard of hearing. Very young infants may not be able to use words, but they can communicate. Babies communicate when they cry, babble, kick, wiggle, and smile.

Wait for your child to pay attention to you before you try to communicate with him.

It can be very hard to wait. But, when you do wait, you can get good results. An effective communicator is patient. Your baby's attention cannot be forced but it can be won!

Keep eye contact.

Always respond when you get your child's eye contact. Smile. Talk. Sign.

Use facial expressions to communicate.

Use your face as an extra voice. Facial expressions show love, concern, surprise, and excitement. Try tasting foods. Make faces. Frown if a food tastes bitter. Smile if you like the food. Interesting facial expressions will help keep Baby's attention. Look in the mirror together and make faces.

Take turns with your child.

Let your child take the time he needs to babble. When Baby makes sounds, wait your turn. Then, imitate his sounds.

Be observant.

Look for Baby's response and build on it.

Follow your child's lead.

You don't have to *teach* language. Just talk/sign to your baby about his immediate interests.

Be sure your child can see what you say and sign.

If Baby is on the floor, get on the floor with him.

If Baby is in his carriage, bend over and look into the carriage.

Having fun together is a wonderful way to share effective communication.

Play games with expressive body and facial expressions like: Pat-a-Cake, Peek-a-Boo, and So-o Big. Baby may not understand all your words/signs, but he will understand your smiles, laughs, and playfulness.

Playing with toys provides an opportunity to expand vocabulary.

Give Baby words/signs for different concepts like big and small. If your infant is looking at a crib toy say and sign, "Look at the bird. The bird is yellow." Sign/say things again and again and again. Repetition is very important.


Make a scrap book of your baby's favorite people and things.

Talk/sign about the pictures that interest your infant. Be expressive. Keep eye contact. Then, pause long enough for your child to take a turn responding. Wait your turn to talk/sign.

Any place can be a place for effective communication.

Talk/sign in the bedroom, in the car, at the supermarket, at the doctor's office, and in the yard. Most of all, have fun with books! Your baby's first experiences with books, pictures, and printed words will influence his reading development later on.

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