

Your child's first words...

Children usually say their first words **between 12-18 months**.
It's a very important milestone for both you and your child!

How do they do it? Your child has heard a word lots of times in lots of different situations, and matched that sequence of speech sounds to its' meaning. Babbling has helped them practise different sounds, and they can now start to try out the words they've learnt to communicate something to you.

What are common first words?

Often first words are the names of familiar people or animals. Soon after this, they may learn words for food/drink, body parts, clothes, toys, household objects, actions, as well as social words like 'hello' and describing words like 'up' and 'more'.

mama
cat baby
no
daddy

Don't forget...

Action words (e.g. walk, brush, eat, sleep, sit). These are very important for making sentences. Make sure you label the everyday actions you and your child are doing.

How can I help?

- Follow your child's interests - label the things that your child points to, does or looks at. This helps them match the word to what they are seeing or doing.
- Get on the floor and play face to face so your child can see your lip patterns as you speak.
- When you think you've heard your child say a word, repeat it. This shows your child that you are listening.
- Remember that sound effects count as words and are often easier for children to say - use animal and vehicle noises when you're playing, singing and looking at books.
- Use gestures that match the words you say. This helps your child learn what the word means.

By 2 years, children can usually say about **50 different words**.
If you are concerned, contact your Health Visitor or Children's Centre for advice.

...and first sentences

Once your child can say about 50 words, they will start to put two words together to make little sentences. Usually this is around 2 years old.

What might my child's early word combinations be?

eat apple kiss mummy push car
come here more juice you paint
wash hands teddy sleep up there box there
no bed big dog daddy go
my shoe brush hair



How can I help?

- When your child says a word, repeat it back and add 1-2 words. This shows them how they could join words together.
E.g. If your child says 'drink', you could say "more drink?", "mummy's drinking", "your drink", "pouring some drink", "careful, hot drink", "drink's gone".
- Talk about what your child points to, does or looks at using 2-3 words at a time.
- Action words (verbs) are really important for making sentences, so make sure you use lots of these in your talking.
- Don't anticipate everything your child needs. Wait for them to tell you when they want you to 'come here', 'wash hands' or 'more juice'.

Remember...

Don't expect your child to pronounce words perfectly quite yet - this will develop over time. You may be the only one who understands your child's first words and little sentences.

Make sure you don't correct your child; just repeat back the word correctly, so they can hear how it should sound.