

COMPANION PRINTABLES

From Babbling Baby to Talking Toddler

Six pages to print and keep where you'll actually see them. Each one comes straight out of a task in the guide, so you can put the ideas to work without having to remember them.

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My Baby's First Words

Count everything, including the words only your family would recognize. "Ba" for ball counts. "Guh" for dog counts. If your baby uses the same sounds to mean the same thing, that's a word.

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To count as a word it should be used on purpose, and more than once, to mean the same thing. One sound often carries several meanings, and that's completely normal. Write it down anyway.

Selected CDC Milestones

Selected from the CDC's milestone checklists for their relevance to this guide, rather than reproduced in full. The complete checklists are on the CDC website. They describe what about 75 percent of children do by that age, and the CDC states they are not a screening or diagnostic tool.

9 MONTHS

- ☐ Makes different sounds like "mamamama" and "bababababa"

12 MONTHS

- ☐ Waves "bye-bye"
- ☐ Calls a parent "mama" or "dada" or another special name
- ☐ Understands "no"

15 MONTHS

- ☐ Tries to say one or two words besides "mama" or "dada"
- ☐ Looks at a familiar object when you name it
- ☐ Follows directions given with both a gesture and words
- ☐ Points to ask for something

18 MONTHS

- ☐ Tries to say three or more words besides "mama" or "dada"
- ☐ Follows one-step directions without a gesture

24 MONTHS

- ☐ Says at least two words together, like "more milk"
- ☐ Points to things in a book when you ask

30 MONTHS

- ☐ Says about 50 words
- ☐ Uses two or more words together with one action word, like "doggie run"

Source: CDC, *Learn the Signs. Act Early. milestone checklists*, 2022 revision. If your child is bilingual, count words across all their languages.

Reasons to Talk With a Professional

A different kind of list from the milestones. These aren't developmental milestones. They're the things clinicians pay attention to when deciding whether a child would benefit from a closer look, and no single line here diagnoses anything.

- ☐ No babbling by around nine months
- ☐ A clear change in babbling, or babbling that faded away
- ☐ No words at all by around 15 to 16 months
- ☐ Fewer than 50 words at around two years
- ☐ No two-word combinations at around two years
- ☐ Not responding to their name, or not looking where you point
- ☐ Losing words or skills they clearly had before
- ☐ Anything that makes you wonder about their hearing, including frequent ear infections
- ☐ Anything that simply doesn't sit right with you, even if you can't name it

About those two lines

The widely used research criterion for late language emergence is fewer than 50 words **and** no two-word combinations by 24 months. In practice either one alone can still be a good reason to talk with a professional, especially alongside anything else that concerns you. It comes from clinical research, not from a milestone checklist.

In the United States

Early Intervention covers birth to age three in every state. The evaluation is free, you don't need a referral or a diagnosis, and you can refer your own child. From age three it goes through your local school district. Asking is not a declaration that something is wrong.

This Week's Words

Rather than naming everything, aim your flashlight at a few words and repeat them all week, in different moments. Pick a setting that already happens every day.

My setting this week

Where I'll use them

My two or three words this week

Example: setting, bath time. Words, "water," "pour," "all done." Where, filling the cup, tipping it out, and lifting them out at the end.

What I noticed by the end of the week

A baby needs to meet a word many times before it becomes theirs. Repetition in different moments is what makes it stick, so the same few words all week is exactly right.

Five Things, for the Fridge

The whole guide in five lines. Notice how many are about making room rather than adding effort.

1. Follow their lead.

Talk about whatever they're already looking at.

2. Answer every kind of communication.

A look, a reach, a point, a sound. All of it counts.

3. Comment more, quiz less.

"Ooh, a red ball" beats "What color is it?"

4. Say it back with one small step added.

"Bu" becomes "A big bus!"

5. Pause, and leave room for their turn.

Count to five in your head. That silence is where their answer gets built.

Pick one. That's genuinely enough.