

# Say that again!

Sometime during their earliest months, infants begin to **coo** (vowel sounds such as *aaah* and *ooo*) and **babble** (sounds such as in *buh-buh*, *mee-mee-mee*, and *ga-ga*.) Besides being delightful, these vocal sounds are important steps in building a young child's abilities to communicate, interact with people, and learn. Parents and caregivers strengthen early learning by **repeating or imitating** the baby's sounds as part of everyday play and routines. Some play activities could include play with toys on the floor, stroller rides and sitting on an adult's lap. Some everyday routines could include: diaper changes, feedings, and dressing.

[Click to watch a video of this Learning Way](#)

## Learning Way: Vocal Play

- Hold or position the child so that he or she can see your face clearly.
- Any time the child makes a sound, imitate it. At first, the sound you make should match or be about the same as the sound the child makes. It is best to wait until the child is finished "talking" before imitating the sounds.
- Make a sound the child already makes to see if he or she will repeat it.
- While the baby is sitting on your lap, create a game out of making vocal sounds. Take turns to make it interesting for the child.
- Try changing the sounds by adding to what the child says when you repeat it. If he or she says "ah-ah," you might say "ah-ah-gooo." Changing the sounds is likely to capture the baby's interest. See if this encouraged the baby to make the new sounds.
- Try speaking a little more softly or loudly from time to time to keep the baby's attention.
- Have fun! The more the baby sees your enjoyment and pleasure, the more likely it is that he or she will feel excited and want to interact with you.



### A Quick Peek

Alice has found fun ways to help her 6-month-old daughter, Rania, babble and coo as part of games they play together. Rania has difficulties with muscle control, especially with her facial muscles. This can make it hard for her to produce sounds. Mom helps with this by creating a little game—*Mouth Patting*. She gently pats Rania's mouth while saying *la-la-la* or some other babbling sounds. This gets Rania to try to make the same or similar sounds each time her mouth is patted. When Mom stops, Rania shows excitement and starts moving her lips as her way of telling Mom, "Do it again!" Alice introduces some new babbling sounds each time they play their little game.

## You'll know it's working if ...

- The child repeats the sounds that you both make.
- The child tries to make new sounds.
- The child uses sounds to try to get your attention.

For more ideas, ask a home visitor, teacher, early interventionist, therapist, or an experienced parent, or [click here to see a CELLcast resource from the Center for Early Literacy Learning](#).