

*Especially for parents of infants!* 

# Oohs and Aahs

 *Vocalizing and Listening*

Language development moves along at full speed when babies have fun-filled babbling and cooing “talks” with their parents.

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## What is the practice?

This practice guide includes ways to get your infant to make more sounds. Infants who use cooing sounds to “talk” are able to start and continue interaction and play with people. Cooing includes vowel sounds such as **ah**, **ooh**, **eee**, **uh**, **ah-ee**, and the like.



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## What does the practice look like?

Face-to-face interactions between you and your baby are the best times to work on increasing infant vocalizations. Any play activity is likely to encourage cooing and babbling. Repeat or imitate the sounds your infant makes. It won't take long for him to learn that anytime he makes sounds, you will repeat the sounds he says.

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## How do you do the practice?

Follow these simple steps to get your infant to use his voice more and more.

- Start by placing your child in a comfortable position. Very young infants often like lying on their backs or being held in your lap while looking up at you.
- Talk to your infant while gently tickling his tummy or neck. Touching your infant's mouth with light pats sometimes will get him to make sounds.
- Any time your infant makes a sound, imitate what he says. At first the sound you say should match or be about the same as the sound he makes. It is best to wait until your child is finished “talking” before imitating his sounds.
- Try changing the sounds you use to imitate or repeat what your infant has said. If he says “ah,” you might say “ah goo.” Changing the sounds is likely to capture his interest.
- Be sure to show your infant that sound play is fun. Smile, laugh, and show him that you're excited by the sounds he makes. If you are enjoying the interaction, he will likely get excited.

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## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child repeat the sounds you imitate?
- Is your infant using different kinds of cooing sounds?
- Does your infant get more and more excited while playing sound games?

# Take a look at more fun with baby “talk”

## Imitation

Alexis is 7 months old. She knows that it is time to play whenever her father places her on her back on a favorite blanket. Dad talks to Alexis and tries to get her to talk to him. Her father starts by asking, “Is my little girl going to talk to her daddy?” At the sound of his voice, Alexis begins to coo. Every time she makes a cooing sound, her dad waits for her to finish. He repeats the sounds to Alexis’s delight. Dad has learned that copying his daughter’s sounds gets her to “talk” more and more to him.



## Repetition



Seven-month-old Tyler lies in his crib after waking up. He likes to just lie there and make different sounds. He also tries to make new sounds. His routine now includes **ah, ah-ha, eee, ooh,** and **ohh-goo**. Tyler is also trying to make sounds like blowing raspberries. Mom waits until he is “talking away” before going in to pick him up. Before Tyler can see her, she repeats whatever sounds he happens to be making. This is a game that Tyler and his mother have been playing for some time. He smiles and laughs whenever he hears her voice. Mom moves into Tyler’s line of vision and says, “You hear Mommy, don’t you?” This gets him to make even more sounds. Mom tries saying something just a little different to get him to try the new sound. He does not always get it just right, but he loves this tit-for-tat between himself and his mom.

## Amp It Up!

It is sometimes hard for 6-month-old Cindy to make sounds loud enough for her parents to hear. Her dad has found a simple way for Cindy to be heard. He uses a child’s microphone and audio player/amplifier to “turn up the volume.” The first time Cindy heard her own cooing sounds “loud and clear” she was startled. But now she starts cooing whenever Dad brings out the microphone. He imitates Cindy and sometimes makes other sounds as they go back and forth “talking” to each other. Cindy is now able to make louder sounds since she has started her own version of karaoke!

