

Especially for parents of infants!

Sights and Sounds

Vocalizing and Listening

Infants become familiar with sounds and words by hearing the sounds of people, animals, and objects. They also become familiar with sounds by making lots of noise! This practice guide includes some ways to help your baby become familiar with different sounds.

What is the practice?

Give your child opportunities to hear lots of sounds as part of parent-child play. Imagine a mother showing her child a toy bumble bee. Making sounds like a bee buzzing can help her baby become familiar with sound. The more a child hears the sounds of different toys and objects, the more she will notice if the sounds are the same or different.

What does the practice look like?

An infant is sitting on the floor with her mother. The mother shows her child a stuffed kitten and mimics the animal sound. "Meow!" She slowly moves the toy kitten toward the baby. Mom repeats the meowing sound until the toy "tickles" the child's tummy or neck. Mom waits for her baby to vocalize, smile, or laugh. She knows these are signs that she wants to play the game again. Mom repeats the game anytime her baby vocalizes, smiles, or laughs at her.



How do you do the practice?

- Start by finding three or four objects or toys that are familiar to your baby. Soft toys like favorite stuffed animals often work best.
- Show your child a toy and make the sound that goes with the toy. Say "Oink, oink" while showing your child a toy pig.
- Make the toy seem to dance or move. Repeat the animal sound and move the toy toward your child to touch him with the toy. Pretend to have the toy kiss him. Make it fun!
- Repeat the game, but wait until your child gives you some sign that he wants to play again. Your child will probably look at you and make a sound to get you to do it again.
- Play with different sounds and different toys. Vary where you tickle or kiss your baby to vary the game.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child get excited and enjoy the game?
- Does your child vocalize more often to get you to continue the game?
- Does your child seem to know that you are about to have the toy tickle or kiss her?

Take a look at more sights and sounds

Animal Hand Puppets

Eight-week-old Joshua especially enjoys seeing animals while out on neighborhood strolls with his mother. Mom has noticed that Joshua listens intently to whatever sounds the animals make. She uses this interest to play sound and word games with animal hand puppets to get Joshua to “talk.” He especially likes dog, cat, and cow puppets. Joshua’s mother has the puppets “talk” to him, saying things like “You are such a big boy. Do you want to play a game with me?” She watches for a sign that her son wants to play with a puppet. She then says the animal sound as she makes the puppet dance on Joshua’s tummy. She moves the puppet toward his face as she makes the animal sound a little louder and more exaggerated. The game ends by having the puppet pretend to nibble the baby’s nose. When his mother picks up another puppet, Joshua starts making sounds as if he is talking to the puppet.



Play Sounds

Sarah is 9 months old. She and her dad play a game where he “makes up” sounds for things Sarah likes to do. Banging wooden spoons on pots. Clapping blocks together. Hitting a drum. These are just a few of Sarah’s favorite pastimes. Her father says “bang-bang” when she is hitting pots. “Click-clack” when she plays with blocks. “Boom-boom” when she pounds on a drum. Sarah watches her father intently as they both “do their thing.” She tries hard to repeat the sounds her father makes. Sarah even looks to see what Dad will say next when she is trying different activities. She even tries to “make up” sounds on her own.

Talking Froggy

Caleb is 8 months old. He has a favorite stuffed frog that chirps “Rib-bit!” The toy makes other frog sounds when squeezed. Caleb doesn’t have the strength to squeeze the frog by himself. His mother still uses the frog to play a game with Caleb. The game gets him to make all kinds of sounds to have Mom squeeze “Froggy” for him. Mom starts the game by asking, “Where is Froggy? Is he sleeping?” Caleb gets excited. He starts making cooing sounds to tell Mom he wants to see his toy frog. Mom brings the stuffed animal into view and says, “Say hello to Froggy.” Caleb waves his arms and makes a loud squealing sound. Mom squeezes the frog. It makes a *ribbit* sound. The game continues with Mom asking Caleb different questions. Each time Caleb “answers,” Mom squeezes the toy frog to make yet another sound.

