

Voice Play with Children under Two

Adult voices can give clear signals to babies about how they feel and about their social world. Long before language develops, babies are pre-wired to communicate and to learn about things going on around them. From 2-3 months old they may be exploring their own vocal play, first by cooing, then by babbling, and then towards the end of the first year, by playing with early word sounds.

Adults and children living with babies and toddlers can use voice play to support these pre-verbal expressions. Playing with voice sounds with children under two helps them to be creative and to learn about listening and talking.

Here are some ideas to try at home:

- Listen to your child's voice sounds and copy them. Stop and watch what happens. Does she wait and then do the same again or is it different? See what happens when you change your sound: try making it longer, or shorter or louder or quieter.
- When you do a playsong, or bouncing rhyme with your child, use different noises to go with the movements, eg 'Boing, boing' or 'Splosh, splosh'. Use your home language and sounds that fit best with the actions. Your child will very quickly get to know the songs especially when you do them over and over again. Little changes in the song keep it fresh and exciting.
- When you are busy at home, let your child know that you are nearby singing his song – or his signature tune. Some people have family whistles or familiar calls that last long after childhood. They may be any sound pattern that has come to be used as a link between people. These can reassure your child and can be heard above a crowd or the TV.



- Think of all the different sounds you can share with your child that come from the world around. They might be linked with animals, machines, weather or vehicles. Share books with pictures about these things and make the most of all the different noises.
- Hum or la a familiar song softly if you are trying to soothe your child or to get her to sleep. The rocking movement and different tones of your voice will be more important to her than the words.



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