

MILESTONES OF SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT: 0 – 12 MONTHS

Growing from a baby to a child requires achieving many milestones in language, physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. Most children develop skills in roughly the same order but the actual age a child reaches that milestone can vary considerably. Our baby “Bill” has normal hearing.

The 0-12 month period of development is a fascinating period. In this 12 month, period Bill starts to make sounds and possibly utter his first word. He starts to link words with objects or people as his understanding of the world begins to develop. He is also learning key social skills such as eye contacting, smiling, and initiating communication to get a response.

SPEECH: 0 – 12 MONTHS

Birth - 6 months: The first communication

In the early months Bill has no recognisable speech but he is communicating. In the first 2 months after birth he will be making reflexive crying sounds when hungry or uncomfortable. By two months he will be starting to “coo” in response to his mother's voice. By six months, Bill will start to make some sounds, will laugh and squeal, but will still cry loudly when hungry, uncomfortable or annoyed.

6 - 8 months: Babbling

Bill starts to babble. Babbling is not only maturational but is also linguistic and relies on both visual and auditory input as the baby is learning. This is highlighted by blind children who use less labial sounds (sounds made with their lips) and deaf children who use more labial sounds (as these are can be seen more easily).

8 - 10 months: Babbling becomes more complex

Bill is starting to combine consonants and vowels in babbling, e.g. "baba", and attempt to imitate other speech sounds. Some babies may even use a kind of singing voice when babbling.

10 - 12 months: Jargon

Bill now starts to use long chains of babbled sounds which include different intonation. He may talk to toys and attempt to sing along to music, and his vocalisations vary in intensity and volume. Bill may now be using sounds **p b m** and **d** in his vocalisations.

12 months: The first recognisable words

Bill's parents are overjoyed when he starts uttering his first simple recognisable words e.g. “mama”, “bye bye”.

AUDITORY AWARENESS: 0 – 12 MONTHS

Birth - 3 months: Early awareness to sound

Even at a very early age Bill will be responding to sounds by head turning, stilling, startling, responding to loud sounds and recognising his caregiver's/mother's voice and responding with a smile.

4 - 6 months: Discrimination

Bill will now be discriminating his primary caregiver's voice from a stranger's and some sounds may be beginning to have meaning. He will also be listening more acutely to sounds.

7 - 12 months: Assigning meaning to sounds

Bill may now be able to associate meaning to sound and respond to his name. He may also be able to localise sounds with more accuracy and start to discriminate aspects of sounds such as pitch and intensity. Babies of this age will also start to enjoy music and singing and appear to listen to the conversations of others. One of the most important aspects of speech development also occurs around this time, the baby starts to distinguish speech from other sounds and is less distracted by other sounds, increasing attention to speech.

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE AND SEMANTICS (CONTENT): 0 – 12 MONTHS

Birth - 3 months: Intentional communication

Bill's first intentional communication will be to vocalise for needs and wants, this is generally to express hunger and anger through crying.

4 - 6 months: Responding

Bill begins to respond more after 3 months with vocalisations to express pleasure and he may vocalise in response to singing.

6 - 10 months: Babbling

Bill develops babble over this period and it becomes more complex over time combining a few different consonants and CV (consonant-vowel) syllables. Bill may respond with babble when spoken to.

10 - 12 months: Jargon

Bill uses jargon containing long chains of babbled sounds and it starts to sound more like speech, but usually without recognisable words. Along with this, the chains of babble will contain different levels of intensity intonation and pitch. He may occasionally vocalises to greet an adult and begin to use some gesture with language e.g. shaking head for “no”.

SOCIAL USE OF LANGUAGE (USE AND PRAGMATICS): 0 – 12 MONTHS

Birth - 3 months: Looking at the speaker

Several studies appear to show that an infant has an innate pre-disposition to focus on a human face, and this is often true with very young infants who appear to “listen” to a conversation and by 3 months are often looking directly at the speaker's face, focussing on the speaker's mouth rather than the whole face.

4 - 6 months: Responding

By this age Bill is learning to respond by smiling and cooing in response to a particular caregiver, and this response is likely to be followed by positive feedback from the caregiver, encouraging the infant to respond more. Crying begins to indicate different needs and emotions and Bill learns to reject by turning his head.

6 - 12 months: Communication is a two-way process

Bill is now responding to expression of emotion and sees communication as a two-way process. He has a desire to interact and may nod, wave and clap. Bill wants to get the attention of others and may do this vocally, becoming excited at familiar people. Shared attention and sharing experiences like looking at pictures becomes an enjoyable event for Bill. He is now learning that communication is fun and that by initiating communication he receives a positive response. This makes him want to initiate more and more.

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE (COMPREHENSION, PERCEIVING AND UNDERSTANDING) AND COGNITION: 0 - 12 MONTHS

Birth - 3 months: Responding

At this age Bill will not be understanding what is being communicated but will begin to respond to the face of a familiar person by quietening or smiling.

4 - 6 month: Making sense of sounds

At this age, Bill is starting to make some sense of the world around him and beginning to localise the sound source, respond to his own name, discriminate between a familiar carer and a stranger's voice, and between angry and friendly tones. Bill will also start to explore, reaching out for objects and bringing objects to his mouth.

7 - 9 months: Understanding

Bill will start to respond to others and communicate with arm gestures and vocalisations. We may also see the beginnings of cause and effect understanding and as this develops he will repeat the same actions as he realises he has control of events. Bill may be able to recognise a couple of words by localising objects when named and can take objects out of container. An activity may be stopped when he hears the words “no-no” or his name is called. He also begins to recognise the names of familiar people.

9 -12 months: Understanding and interacting

Bill is now becoming a more interactive communication partner, giving objects, pointing and showing. His understanding of common words is increasing, he has an awareness of familiar people and situations and he understands phrases in set contexts e.g. “ready, steady, go!” Bill is also exploring more and more and is able to move objects from one hand to another and sometimes able to hold one object and pick up another with a different hand. His ability to follow simple commands is also increasing (e.g. “put that down”, “stop that”) although he is likely to get visual and intonation cues which will help him understand these commands.

GROSS AND FINE MOTOR SKILLS: 0 – 12 MONTHS

Birth - 3 months: Early motor development

Bill does not have a great deal of control or mobility at this time, but does have a few motor skills to cope with the first few months of life. In these early weeks his head will be floppy and he will need to be supported. Bill will observe his mother's face, turn towards light and will be able to make jerky kicks when on his back. At this time his thumb will rest in his palm and he will have an automatic grasp but won't be able let go. Bill should be able to suck well to feed.

3 - 6 months: Getting stronger

Bill will begin to be able to hold his head up independently, and later lean on forearms and raise his head. As the months progress, he will attempt to roll from front to side and will sit up with support. Bill will become more visually alert and gaze around, reach out and touch objects that he looks at, and begin to take an interest in an object in hand.

6 - 9 months: Exploring

Bill can roll from back to stomach, can sit alone and is learning to get up on all fours. He is able to pass an object from one hand to the other and is mouthing objects more often.

9 - 12 months: Moving about

Bill can now roll to change positions, sit and is crawling. He will attempt to stand with support and may walk a little with support or holding on. He will also respond to music with body or hand movement.

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