

About Baby Talk . . .

Baby talk is typically repetitive bi-syllabic utterances such as *baba* for bottle, *Nana* for Grandma, and *num num* for food. One of the basic problems with encouraging baby talk is that the utterances may easily be misunderstood by others outside the family. For example, *baba* might mean blanket to others. *Nana* might mean banana and *num num* might mean a pacifier. Therefore in many instances, baby talk may create an utterance that is unintelligible. Though this manner of speaking is easier, it does not get to functional communications quickly.

It is better to model and encourage the appropriate words for young children to use. Though they may take a while longer to obtain the accuracy of the word, their attempts will be met with rewards faster as others will more easily be able to figure out the requests. So when a child says "Baba", an adult should respond by saying: "Ah yes, you want your bottle. Bottle."

As for favorite nicknames for people, these are more difficult to justify changing, if all in the family use the name. So continue to call grandma "Nana" if that is the chosen nickname. Call the family pet dog "Ruff Ruff" if that is the chosen name and the dog even understands! However, for object names, please provide and only accept the actual word spoken by your child. You will create a happier child in the long run as she will get what she wants from a wider variety of people, even those unfamiliar to her.

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