

Let's Discuss Baby Talk

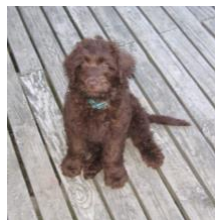
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Baby talk is typically repetitive bi-syllabic utterances, such as *baba* for bottle, *Nana* for Grandma, and *num num* for food. Sure, it's cute, seemingly created by the child, and often easier to articulate. But one of the basic problems with encouraging baby talk is that the utterances may not be understood 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 makes a child unintelligible across settings. Though this manner of speaking is easier, it can create functional communication challenges for the child.

From the beginning, it is better to model and encourage the appropriate words for young children to hear, then use. Though they may take a while longer to obtain the accuracy of the word, their attempts and requests will be met with rewards faster, including with unfamiliar others. So, when a child says *Baba*, an adult should respond by saying: *Ah yes, you want your bottle. Bottle.*

EXCEPTION: Nicknames for people or pets. 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 understands! However, for object names, please provide and only accept the actual label spoken by the child. Be patient as the child reaches full accuracy with articulating the word. You will create a happier child in the long run as they will get what they want from a wider variety of people, even those unfamiliar to her, in various settings.

Be consistent and stick to common labels for a child's communication success.



Puppy!

