

Enjoying your new baby!

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- Create a visually stimulating environment. Not too much, but enough to pique interest and curiosity.
- Spend time looking at your baby's face. Wait patiently for eye gaze to your face. It takes a while for infant eyes to adjust to a new environment outside the womb. When it happens, reward with a smile and cooing.
- Eventually, your baby will focus on your mouth as you talk. Amazingly, they start imitating your mouth postures, too.
- Encourage mouth posture imitation by looking in mirrors together or facing each other in proximity. Imitate what they do, then model a posture for them to imitate.
- Encourage mouth exploration by providing a variety of safe materials to put in the mouth. E.g., teething beads, wet wash clothes, different textured foods as age appropriate, etc. Safety should always be prioritized. Remember while eating, your baby is developing mouth muscles that will eventually be used for speech.
- Create an environment rich with sound, such as music. As well, allow quiet-time and natural sound, too.
- Present various sound producing toys to familiarize with different sounds.
- Encourage imitation of sounds. At first, imitate sounds your baby makes. Then encourage them to imitate sounds you make. Slightly tweak the sound in successive tries. Vocalize sounds back-and-forth to initiate conversational turn-taking.
- Consistently call your child by their name so that they learn it. If the child hears *Baby* each time an adult approaches them, that will become the cue for their identity. That's not what we want.
- Connect sounds with their sources. E.g., Show a toy cow and say, *Mooo!* Don't expect your baby to make these sounds for several months, but typically before twelve months, they will try imitating animal sounds.
- React to your baby's sound productions as though they're meaningful. Listen carefully, then when they're done, say, *You have so much to say.*
- When speaking with your baby, use a high-pitched voice with short simple sentences. Talk slowly and repeat what you say. This is known as 'child-directed speech' and it is natural when talking to babies and pets.

Enjoy getting to know your precious new family member and sharing precious moments of early interactions.

