



Learning to Point

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Pointing is an early gesture communication that babies and toddlers learn. Babies tend to point to objects they see around them, before pointing to pictures in books. So, be patient. But, in the meantime, enjoy sharing books and talking about what's in the pictures. Label and model pointing to targets in the pictures. E.g., *Look at the bunny. Bunny's hopping.*

One-year olds are becoming good at looking at something of interest, pointing at it, then looking to a communication partner. This is called gaining joint attention, where two or more people share a moment of looking at the same object. A little after one-year, children will follow a pointing finger to a target. It is thought that early pointers may be early word users, so it is an essential early communication. The following are ideas to encourage pointing.

- Model pointing and looking. Modeling is how we typically learn. Point at objects and people of interest to a child. Seeing you use this technique to gain attention and communicate reinforces their attempts to do the same.
- Sometimes we may need to directly teach a child to point by using a hand-over-hand guidance. E.g., once you recognize a child's interest because their looking at something for an extended time, take their hand and physically manipulate so the pointer finger is extended toward the desired object. Label what is seen.
- Computer apps rely on pointing, tapping, and swiping with the pointer finger. Please don't overuse apps at young ages, but they can facilitate this gesture.
- While a child sits on your lap, point directly to your face parts, labeling as you point. "Here's my nose!" Point to their body parts, starting with face and head (ex. eyes, nose, mouth). If the child doesn't like to be held, sit facing each other on the floor. Remember that the nursery rhyme, *This little piggy went to market*, encourages pointing to toes.
- At first, point to nearby objects, then proceed to objects further away. Be sure to gain joint attention with the child each time you point. Also, you may wish to exaggerate the movement of your head toward the object of interest.
- Share a book and take turns pointing at pictures together.

Always make it fun playing and pointing

