

STAGES OF EARLY VOCAL DEVELOPMENT



The process of early vocal development includes 5 stages that an infant goes through as they develop the ability to produce and control the speech sounds in their language(s) on their way to saying first words.

STAGE	AGE	BEHAVIOUR
Reflexive Crying and Vegetative Sounds	Birth – 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cries, burps, sneezes, sucking and other vegetative sounds • Infant’s vocal chords vibrate and airflow through throat is stopped and started • These sounds are the first stimulation of the vocal apparatus that will later produce speech
Cooing and Laughter	2 – 5 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coos – sounds babies make when they appear to be happy (e.g., /oooo/ and /aaaa/) • Social interaction elicits cooing and laughter • The quality changes with age (different vowel like sounds, longer series of sounds) • Consonants begin, usually back sounds like /k/ and /g/ (e.g., gaas and goos) • This is the beginning of being social beings and the foundation for communication
Vocal Play	4 – 8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants experiment with their mouth, throat and tongue • Begin by producing noises to play with vocal apparatus (e.g., squeals, growls, raspberries, etc.) • Move on to using a variety of different consonant and vowel like sounds and an increase in how often babies make these sounds • Gain increasing control over their vocal apparatus and their speech sound repertoire continues to grow • Will start to make long series of sounds called marginal babbling (e.g., yaoikadab)
Babbling	6 – 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of consonant sounds usually front of the mouth (b, m, p, n and d) • Canonical babbling – same sounds repeated (e.g., babababa) • Difference between this and marginal babbling is that this has true syllables (CV) produced in strings • Not done to communicate but this is a major milestone since all babies babble and a lack of, or restricted babbling is a red flag for other delays or disorders.
Non-reduplicated Babbling	9 – 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different sound combinations are used (e.g., bagamata) • Wider range of consonant sounds emerge – h, w, j, p, b, m, t, d, n, k, g • Prosody included - intonation contours of speech • When infants combine prosody and consonant sounds their output starts to sound like adult speech without real words (a.k.a. Jargon) • Sounds start to be more specific to the target language(s) the baby is learning
First Words	9 – 14 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximation to the word used in adult language • Used with consistent meaning • Made up of true syllables (CV, CVC, CVCV) • Said to intentionally send a message to another person • Protowords (e.g., words invented by the child) may be used at this stage too