



Birth–12 Months

Communication/Language: Awareness of Differences in Sounds

WHEN INTRODUCED: Block 3

BEHAVIORS TO OBSERVE

- Shows interest in different kinds of sounds¹
- Imitates² a sound made by caregiver or peer

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Behaviors may be observed during a care routine, such as a mealtime or a diaper change; playtime; or during a guided activity, including a book sharing. Pertinent ELM activities (Communication/ Language) are cited in parentheses.

Shows interest in different kinds of sounds during

- a book sharing that features sounds of pictured images (Block 3, Options 1–3), such as farm animals (Block 23, Options 1–3)
- a song or nursery rhyme that emphasizes a sound(s)
- guided play that gives attention to a sound(s), such as an activity that involves hand puppets (Block 25, Options 1–2)

Imitates a sound made by caregiver or peer during

- a book sharing
- a song or nursery rhyme that offers an opportunity for the infant to repeat a sound, word, or phrase (Block 16, Option 2)
- guided play with a sound-making toy
- a care routine



EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP LEARNING SUPPORTS

Reintroduce

Shows interest in different kinds of sounds

- Repeat or adapt a Block 3 activity option. Consider using a different book on sounds, such as *Baby Sounds* by Joy Allen.
- Identify sound-making objects of interest to the infant, such as musical toys or textured toys/books. Encourage the infant to manipulate the object(s) and listen to the sound it makes. Describe an object as the infant explores it and draw attention to the sound when it occurs.
- Repeat or adapt Block 23, Option 2. Consider using a book that features other types of animals, such as the Usborne Buggy series that includes *Baby's First Buggy Book Jungle* and *Baby's First Buggy Book Animals*.

Imitates a sound made by caregiver or peer

- Encourage an infant to make a sound he/she hears in one or more of the experiences suggested in the prior section entitled, Shows interest in different kinds of sounds.
- Gently manipulate a toy animal or puppet and make a simple sound, such as "roar" or "baa baa" that is associated with the toy. Encourage the infant to make the sound with you. Also, consider repeating or adapting Block 7, Option 3 activity that invites an infant to repeat "uh-oh!"
- During a book sharing session, point to a familiar animal/object shown in the book and make its sound. Then encourage the infant to make the sound with you.
- Promptly and enthusiastically acknowledge a sound an infant makes in response to a sound made by a peer.

Reinforce³

Shows interest in different kinds of sounds

- Share an age-appropriate sound-focused book of interest to the infant, such as *Baby's Very First Noisy Book: Jungle* by Fiona Watt. Emphasize each sound featured in the book.
- Offer a familiar song or nursery rhyme. Emphasize the rhyming words, such as "itsy bitsy" and "teeny tiny." Describe any infant reactions to the words you emphasize, including facial expressions, gestures, or vocalizations.
- Offer a recording of different sounds. Repeat or draw attention to each interesting sound and describe any infant reactions to a sound.



Imitates a sound made by caregiver or peer

- Engage an infant in guided play with a toy that makes a sound, such as a rattle, or a toy that can be associated with a sound, such as a car or train. Draw attention to (or make) the sound. Encourage the infant to repeat or make the sound with you, such as “shh, shh,” “vroom, vroom,” or “choo, choo.”
- During a care routine, say in an exaggerated way a sound related to the activity, such as “eew” when something is stinky or yucky, “yum, yum” when something tastes good, or a yawn sound when an infant seems sleepy. Accentuate the sound and invite the infant to make the sound with you.
- Engage several older infants in an exchange of sounds during an informal gathering. Say a sound, or repeat a sound made by an infant, and then invite infants to make the sound. Include infants’ names as you promote a sound-making “conversation” of cooing and babbling.

EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

Brianna likes to make a “prrr” sound when I say “prrr” while sharing a favorite book on kittens. Hearing and mimicking sounds is an important step in language development. I will show pictures and say the sounds of different kinds of animals so Brianna has more experiences in hearing and saying a sound.

Jordan smiles and kicks his legs when I make a “vroom vroom” sound when we play together with a toy car. I plan to encourage him to mimic my “vroom vroom” sound when we play with a toy car in the future. Repeating a sound contributes to language development. I may offer different toys because there may be other kinds of sounds that Jordan would like to mimic.

Endnotes

- 1 An infant may show interest in a sound by looking, turning his/her head, gazing, and/or reaching.
- 2 Infants cannot be expected to perfectly imitate a sound they hear. What is important at this early age is the infant’s effort to make a sound after a caregiver or peer makes a sound. The “imitated” utterance may be similar or somewhat similar to the sound the infant hears. Nonverbal responses to a sound, such as a smile or gesture, are pertinent to social interaction skills (see *Guide for Observing and Individualizing* related to Social-Emotional development).
- 3 Some activity plans in other areas also support awareness of different sounds. See Social-Emotional Block 1, Option 1 (exchanging sounds with a caregiver) and Block 2, Option 1 (opportunity to respond to a caregiver’s babbling sounds). Also see Self-Regulation Block 10, Options 1 and 2 (listening to novel silly sounds with opportunities to make sounds).