



12–36 Months

Communication/Language: Awareness of Sound Differences, Print and Picture

WHEN INTRODUCED: Block 1 for Sound Differences, Block 3 for Print and Picture

BEHAVIORS TO OBSERVE

- Awareness of differences between sounds
 - Imitates¹ or identifies a sound made by a caregiver or object
- Awareness of print and picture (24–36 months)
 - Looks at details in a book picture² and notices text³ with caregiver guidance⁴

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

This *Guide* uses 12–24 months and 24–36 months age designations in relation to when specific types of emerging skills often can be observed. The age parameters are not firm. The timing of developmental pathways and milestones varies considerably across children.

Behaviors may be observed during a care routine, playtime, or guided activity, including a book sharing. Pertinent ELM activities (Communication/Language) are cited in parentheses. The activities pertain to the age group indicated in the example or behavior description.

Awareness of differences between sounds

Imitates or identifies a sound made by a caregiver or object during

- a book sharing that features sounds of pictured objects, animals, or persons
 - 12–24 months: zoo animals (Block 1, Option 1), farm animals (Block 2, Option 1; Block 14, Options 1 and 2), familiar animals and items (Block 3, Option 1)
 - 24–36 months: zoo animals (Block 1, Options 1–3; Block 2, Options 1 and 3) and other types of animals (Block 2, Option 2)
- a song or nursery rhyme that emphasizes a sound(s)
 - 12–24 months: in a song about zoo animals (Block 1, Option 2) or farm animals (Block 2, Option 2); listening to and saying rhyming words (Block 13, Options 1 and 2)
 - 24–36 months: words in a song (Block 14, Option 1) or rhyme (Block 14, Option 2)
- a guided activity
 - 12–24 months: manipulating and listening to sound-making items (Block 3, Options 2 and 3)
 - 24–36 months: making raindrops (“plip, plop”) with sponges in water (Block 10, Option 2)



Awareness of print and picture (24–36 months)

Looks at details in a book picture and notices book text with caregiver guidance during

- a book sharing when a caregiver points to a picture or to a detail in a picture and/or to some aspect of the book text (Block 3, Option 1; Block 4, Option 1; Block 5, Option 1)
- a guided activity related to a book
 - using book pictures to inform play (Block 3, Options 2 and 3)
 - connecting a toy barn and animal figures to their pictured counterparts in a book (Block 6, Option 2)

EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP LEARNING SUPPORTS

Reintroduce

Awareness of differences between sounds

Imitates or identifies a sound made by a caregiver or object

- Repeat book sharing activities that include opportunities to say the sound of an animal or object of interest to the toddler. Invite the toddler to say the sound after you say it once or twice, or to say the sound with you as you repeat the sound. Consider offering two contrasting sounds back to back so the toddler has an opportunity to hear and make two different types of sounds in close proximity. For a toddler who is learning to notice sound differences, focusing on two contrasting sounds may be more helpful than hearing and repeating many different sounds in one session.
 - 12–24 months: zoo animal sounds (Block 1, Option 1), farm animal sounds (Block 2, Option 1), sounds of objects and familiar animals (Block 3, Option 1)
 - 24–36 months: zoo animal sounds (Block 1, Option 1; Block 2, Option 1), other types of animals (Block 2, Option 1)
- Say a simple nursery rhyme offered in a book or by using a prop. Emphasize the rhyming words. Invite the toddler to say the rhyming words with you.
 - 12–24 months: Offer Block 13, Option 1 as a one-to-one experience. Use movements and gestures to accentuate some of the rhyming words, such as turning around your body (or turning around a soft bear toy) and touching the ground. Repeat the two rhyming words after you say “ground.”
 - 24–36 months: Offer “Hickory Dickory Dock” as a one-to-one experience (Block 14, Option 2). The toddler may wish to hold and move the mouse puppet or figure.



Awareness of print and picture (24–36 months)

Looks at details in a book picture and notices text with caregiver guidance

- Share a book of interest to the toddler. The book should include pictures with some details plus text. Name and point to a picture in the book and then talk with the toddler about a detail in the picture. Encourage the toddler to point to the detail you discuss. Approach the discussion of the picture with an emphasis on story or picture comprehension; help the toddler understand how the picture or some aspect of the picture connects to the story.
- As part of the book sharing described above, point to and describe some text. Example: “These are words. The words tell us what happens in our story.” Avoid teaching words or letters.

Reinforce

Awareness of differences between sounds

Imitates or identifies a sound made by a caregiver or object

- Share a book in a one-to-one session with a toddler that provides opportunities for the toddler to repeat a sound you say. If you have offered the book recently, support short-term memory by asking the toddler to recall the sound. Provide a hint by saying the first part of the sound.
 - 12–24 months: “wheee!” and “swoosh” in the book *Wind* (Block 9, Option 1), and “quack, quack, quack” in the *Five Little Ducks* book plus the sounds of other animals, such as the frog, pictured in this story (Block 16, Options 1 and 2)
 - 24–36 months: “splish, splosh, sploosh” in the book *Rain* (Block 10, Options 1 and 2), unusual words (“zip”, “zoom”, “screech”, “clunk”) in the *Llama Llama Zippity-Zoom* book (Block 7, Options 1 and 2), and saying “hello” in different languages (Block 18, Option 1)
- Repeat opportunities for a toddler to make quiet and loud sounds, including making the same sound with a quiet and then a loud voice.
 - 12–24 months: as part of a book sharing (Block 14, Options 1 and 2; Block 20, Option 1) and a tour of quiet and louder spaces in your room (Block 20, Option 2)
- Repeat opportunities for a toddler to add a missing word or sound in familiar text.
 - 12–24 months: as part of a nursery rhyme (Block 13, Option 2)
 - 24–36 months: as part of a song (Block 14, Option 1)



Awareness of print and picture (24–36 months)

Looks at details in a book picture and notices text with caregiver guidance

- At the beginning and end of a book sharing, invite the toddler to point to a picture (any picture) and then point to some words (any words) that are printed in the book without the expectation of the toddler being able to read the word.
- Share a book of interest to the toddler. Point to a familiar picture detail on the book cover and encourage the toddler to tell what it is. If the toddler is familiar with the book, encourage the toddler to tell how the detail is part of our story. The toddler may respond with one or several word utterances. Repeat and expand on the utterance while keeping a focus on how the picture detail connects to the story.

EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

Maria likes nursery rhymes. Twice this week I said a nursery rhyme with her and she said several of the rhyming words with me. Moving forward, I think she will enjoy saying a rhyming word that I intentionally leave out of a rhyme. I will offer a hint for the missing word if she needs one. Paying attention to word sounds is a foundation skill for later success in reading.

Three times this week I have observed Colton's emerging skill in noticing and saying word sounds. He clearly said the words "splish" and "splash" when we read a book on rain, for example. He likes to say sounds made by some farm animals, especially the "moo" of a cow. I will continue to provide opportunities for Colton to hear and say different types of word sounds. This skill is a foundation for later literacy success.

Endnotes

- 1 Sound imitation at this age is a toddler'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 toddler hears. Toddlers are not expected to perfectly imitate a sound they hear.
- 2 Examples: The cover of *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown includes many details a caregiver might point to and talk about, such as the big red barn, the cow, and the donkey next to the cow. A detail also may be a prominent feature of a picture, such as the dark eyes of the cow on the cover of *Moo Moo, Brown Cow* by Jakki Wood.
- 3 Noticing text involves a toddler looking at a printed word or set of words that a caregiver points to as part of a book sharing. Example of caregiver guidance: "Our book has pictures and words. [Points to words.] These words say..." Toddlers are not expected to read words or identify letters.
- 4 It is not necessary for one observation to determine whether a toddler looks at images in a picture and also notices text when emphasized by a caregiver. It is helpful for toddlers at this age to develop beginning awareness of what is a picture and what is text (a printed word or set of printed words). Several observations may be necessary to document a toddler's attention to picture images and to print highlighted by a caregiver.