

Communication Develops Gradually

Every child's ability to communicate develops gradually, and it's important to remember that each child develops at her own speed and in her own way. Children progress through five levels as they master the communication game.

Being aware of where our children are in their development will help us recognize and accept the way they are now communicating and what we can do to help them progress.

In the beginning, at **Level I**, our children, like **Laya**, make their interests and their needs known through their body language and the cooing and burbling sounds they make. As parents, we interpret their sounds and actions as communication.

At Level I, we can expect:

- cries • looks • smiles • screams
- vowel-like sounds
- changes in voice (loudness, etc.)
- changes in skin tone
- movement of body



Then, at **Level II**, our children, like **Ben**, take a great deal of joy in all the discoveries they make. They become interested in the people and things that enter their ever-expanding world. As they continue to experience, grow, and explore, their facial expressions and their gestures are easier for us to understand.

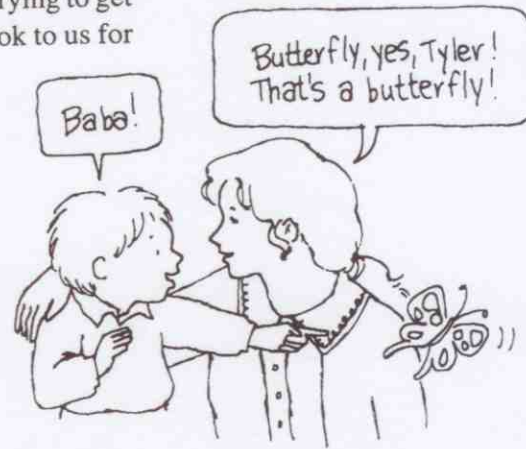
At Level II, we can expect:

- facial expressions
- movement toward objects and/or persons
- variety of consonant and vowel sounds
- ability to focus on objects and/or persons

At **Level III**, our children's communication skills increase, and like **Tyler**, they are able to connect and interact more easily with us. They direct more and more of their efforts toward trying to get our attention, help, or approval. They also begin to look to us for information.

At Level III, we can expect:

- pointing at specific objects or persons
- nodding and waving
- acting out what they mean
- making sounds that stand for words
- occasionally using single words/signs
- combining eye gaze, vocalization and gestures



At **Level IV**, our children, like **Katie**, begin to use words and/or signs consistently. Their body language and facial expressions still help us to interpret their feelings.



At Level IV, we can expect:

- frequent use of single words/signs
- combinations of words which may be difficult for us to understand
- combinations of two or more words/signs in phrases or sentences

Then, at **Level V**, our children begin to combine three or more words into sentences. The information in this book focuses on helping children progress to Level V.

The developmental checklists at the back of this book will help you learn what level your child is at and give you detailed information about what you can expect your child to do next.