

## Can We Talk?

**F**rom the time I was born, I have wanted to tell you what life is like for me. I wanted to tell you how I feel, what I think, and that I love you! But I haven't had the words to tell you these things.

Finally, I'm starting to learn words to express myself. This is so exciting, but it's also frustrating. I really want to talk. But right now, all I can do is make funny sounds.

### What I Want You to Know

My words come slowly at first - simple words like "mama" or "dada." I need you to respond to my attempts at language. Imagine we are having a conversation. Use words that I already



know or will soon learn. If I use one word, respond with two or three. If I

point at the light and say "LIGHTS!" you could respond, "The lights are bright!" As my abilities increase, so should your responses.

I understand a lot more than I can say. Having you speak to me using correct language will prepare me to speak well. Someday I may be a great teacher or an inspiring leader.

## Here's How You Can Help Me

*Talk with me throughout my day.* At meal times tell me what I'm eating. At bath time, tell me about the water. Tell me about your day, how you're feeling. When I get older, ask me how I'm feeling. Let me tell you about my day.

*Try to notice what my body is telling you.* Sometimes I may seem happy, frustrated, hungry, or tired. Talk about what you see. Help me learn the words that describe what I am feeling.

I love story time. When I'm young, *read books to me* that contain simple and repetitive language and big colorful pictures. As I get older and more capable, you can provide books that are more challenging for me.

When story time rolls around, let me pick out my favorite book for you to

read to me. As we read the story, you can ask me questions about it or let me guess what will happen next.

I love to sing with you. *Singing in simple words and rhythms* helps me to learn the rhythms of language and prepares me to think in abstract ways.

*Play games with me.* When I get a little bit older, games like "Simon Says" will help me develop listening skills.

*Playing with other children is especially important.* Play dates will help me to develop social and language skills that will be important the rest of my life.

This really is one of the most exciting times of my life. All of these things will help me to love reading and learning.

*Hey, can we talk?*

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

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