

ABC Pediatric Therapies

Imitating Gestures

Why work on the imitation of gestures?

The development of communication is crucial in the first year of life and this goes beyond just learning to talk; social communication helps children connect, learn and play. Gestures are an important part of communication development! In fact, research shows that the development of gestures between 9 and 16 months predicts language ability in the preschool years. Teaching children how to imitate gestures will help them develop this important skill!



Strategies



Model

Show your child how to use gestures by demonstrating during daily routines. For example, wave hello and goodbye, blow kisses, and clap!



Exaggerate

When using gestures, exaggerate the movement and the length of time that you are using them to give your child time to see and try!



Use Hand-Over-Hand

Teach your child how to do the gesture by doing it with them. Put your hands over theirs when clapping or waving.

Tip!

Make it fun and interactive by adding gestures to songs like “The Wheels on the Bus”, “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider” and “If you’re Happy and You Know It”.

Milestones

9-11 months

give, shake head, raise arms, reach, show, and wave



12-13 months

open-hand point, tap fingers together, clap, blow kiss



14-16 months

index finger point, shh gesture, head nod, thumbs up, hand up (wait), other symbolic gestures (peace, high five, I dunno)



Source: 16 by 16, First Words Project