

Basic Information:

Early childhood research indicates that the development of gestures from 9-16 months will predict a toddler's language ability at 2 years old. This is extremely significant because language skills play a very important role in a child's future academic success. When you are actively nurturing your infant's and toddler's gesture development you are also building their expressive vocabulary. This is because a child who points to or shows an object to their parent will likely say the word for that object within 3 months. A helpful guideline is by 16 months a child should have at least 16 gestures.



Parent/Caregiver Tips:

Gestures provide your child a way to express themselves before they have any words. While the order in which a young child acquires a specific gesture may vary slightly, a parent should expect their child between the **ages of 9-16 months to be using at least 2 new gestures each month**. This is the order in which gestures typically develop:

9 months old: Give an object to an outstretched hand, shake head for “no”.

10 months old: Reach for an object, arms raised to ask to be picked up.

11 months old: Hold up an object to show, wiggle hand to wave.

12 months old: Open hand point with fingers spread, tap with fingers together to draw the attention of others. (Gestures are now consistently combined with vocalizations*)

13 months old: Clap, blow a kiss.

14 months old: Point with Index finger, shhh gesture. (First words are being spoken)

15 months old: Head nod for yes, hand up to indicate “stop”.

16 months old: Shrug shoulders for “I don't know”, high 5.

*at around 18 months a child's gestures begin to be combined with words

Next Steps:

If additional support is needed in building your child's expressive vocabulary, it may be helpful to contact your pediatrician or contact a local pediatric therapy clinic such as Encompass, for an evaluation.

Additional Resources:

The Importance of Gestures: <http://www.hanen.org/helpful-info/articles/the-importance-of-gestures.aspx>

Baby and Toddler Milestones: 16 Gestures by 16 Months: <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/baby-and-toddler-milestones-16-gestures-16-months>

Baby Gestures: An Important Language Skill: <https://babysparks.com/2018/02/16/baby-gestures-an-important-language-skill/>