

TALKING TO LITTLE HUMANS

**A Quick Guide to Parentese
& Speech Development in Infants**



What is Parentese?

Parentese (or infant directed speech) is a natural way of speaking to babies using a higher pitch, slower pace, and exaggerated vowels. It's not baby talk — it uses real words and grammar.

Key Features:

Higher Pitch, Musical Tone

Captures baby's attention
more effectively



Exaggerated Intonation

Tones and rhymes make speech more
engaging and helps convey emotions



Simplified Vocabulary

Simpler words and shorter
sentences help baby learn better



Repetition, Pauses

Repeated words and longer pauses
reinforce learning and provide
more response time



Parentese In Action

How Parentese can feature in every day situations

Getting Dressed:



"One arm in, two arms in, yay, we did it!"

"Where's your head? There it is!"

"Shoes on! Left foot, right foot, all done!"

Meal Time:



"Mmm, rice! Do you want more rice?"

"More? Here comes the rice!"

"Yum! That's your favourite, isn't it? Chicken!"

Play Time:

"Look at the big red ball! Can you say ball?"

"Ball!"

"You found the teddy bear! Teddy bear is soft, so soft!"



Tip!

Always follow your child's lead. Prolonged, high energy animated speech can be overstimulating. Talking to your child in regular speaking voice and letting them listen to how adults actually converse is helpful too!

Why It Works

The benefits of Parentese, particularly in the first year of life



Research has shown that parentese is far more than baby talk – it's actually one of the most powerful tools you have as a parent.

The benefits at a glance:



- **Builds vocabulary faster:** Babies who hear parentese regularly produce more real words and have larger vocabularies by 18 months.
- **Teaches conversational skills:** The natural back-and-forth of parentese helps babies learn the importance of turn-taking.
- **Aids speech segmentation and sound recognition:** Helps babies identify individual words from a string of speech.
- **Strengthens bonds:** The warm, melodic nature of parentese isn't just good for language, it also helps baby feel safe, loved, and connected to you.

Speech Milestones

0 – 12 Months

0-3 Months:

- startles at loud noises
- quiets down at your voice
- makes soft cooing noises



4-6 Months:

- giggles and laughs
- responds to facial expressions
- vocalises different vowel sounds

7-9 Months:

- responds to their name
- understands simple words like "no"
- links identical syllables ("ba ba ba")



10-12 Months:

- imitates and initiates gestures
- responds to simple words & phrases: "look at mummy"
- says 1-2 simple words

Remember:

Every child develops at their own pace. These are general guidelines. Talk to your paediatrician if you have concerns.