



P.O. Box 3000  
Indianapolis, IN 46206-3000

317-334-3322  
317-921-4019 fax

[childrensmuseum.org](http://childrensmuseum.org)

## Zero to Three, a Crucial Time to Talk to Your Child

It's highly likely you don't remember the first few years of your important cognitive development but 75 percent of your brain developed during your first year of life – 90 percent by your fifth birthday.

Vast amounts of recent research confirm what educators have known for ages – infants and young children need help feeding knowledge into the fastest growing organ in their bodies.

Early education expert, Dr. Barbara Wolf, Associate Vice President Family Learning and Research for The Children's Museum of Indianapolis has a descriptive way of explaining what's happening in a youngster's fertile mind, "It's like a rocket launch going off. It's just explosive and sometimes we can't see what they're learning because a lot of that explosion is internal."

Dr. Wolf advises parents to talk to babies constantly. The topic doesn't matter. She says they learn through interaction with humans, not through electronics. Dr. Wolf points to her own head and says of a child's brain, "The recorder is already working; so, don't wait until your child starts saying words to really have conversations with your child."

According to 2011 Minnesota Teacher of the Year, Katy Smith, "The more words a child hears in their first year of life, the better predictor that is of their third grade reading level."

The language most of us speak to babies is called "parentese" and it's perfectly fine to use, say our experts. Parentese is a musical, sing-song speech pattern that babies love. Hearing it is how they begin to learn language....any language.

Dr. Wolf says it is important for babies to hear language from three different people who have established relationships with them. That could be mom, dad, sibling, grandparent, caregiver, etc. The reason why - is that no two people say things or explain things in the same way. Babies learn best from hearing the differences.

The moral to this story....speak up!