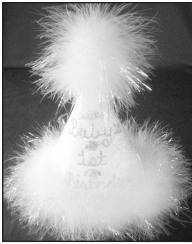




## Dear Baby TALK Parents,



Happy Birthday to Baby and you! This month as your little one turns "1" you are undoubtedly reflecting on the dramatic changes you have seen in him over the past year. Your love affair with each other has grown as you have watched him progress from a tiny newborn to a capable toddler. In addition to his learning many new skills, he has gone from being very **dependent** on you to seeking more **independence**. This struggle between his need for you and wanting to "strike out on his own" is an important issue for every twelve-month-old.

You can often see this struggle in your child as he is exploring. He may crawl or walk a short distance, turn around and look for you and then return to you. He feels "driven" to try to walk, and yet his very progress takes him away from the one he loves. He enjoys his earliest steps most when you are there to congratulate him on his success.

A few babies are walking already, but most are still crawling and taking a few steps holding on to the furniture on their first birthdays. **Try to avoid comparing your baby's progress with other babies!** Babies learn to walk at different ages; the age of walking is not a predictor of mental superiority. If you are concerned that your baby seems behind in this or any other skill, ask your doctor about it. Remember that **whatever** your baby can accomplish will bring him pride and should bring a pleased response from you.



There is a close connection between motor development and your baby's emotions. The struggle of learning to walk often expresses itself through the beginning of **temper tantrums**. Tantrums are


a part of your baby's sorting out his independence. He wants to make his own decisions, yet he needs you. Tantrums are often a healthy part of growth toward independence; you cannot eliminate them. Walking away until they are over is probably the best way to deal with them.


The toddler and preschool years ahead will be full of challenges and rewards with your developing child. A wonderful resource for parents is [Watch Me Grow: I'm One-Two-Three: A Parent's Essential Guide to the Extraordinary Toddler to Preschool Years](#) by Maureen O'Brien, Quill, 2002.


## SETTING LIMITS

Your baby is combining new skills to explore her world, including the basement steps, the medicine cabinet, the top of the kitchen table and the houseplants. She needs you to help her understand safe limits. These five practices may help you to teach your baby about limits which will protect her and mold her into a self-controlled human being:

-  **Prevent.** You can often prevent dangerous or forbidden situations. Move the crystal vase to a higher shelf and put a gate at the stairwell. Create a trouble-free environment when possible.
-  **Ignore.** Ignore behavior that is annoying but not harmful. If she drags all the pots and pans out of the kitchen cabinet, you may want to take a deep breath and ignore it. If you pay too much attention, it may teach her to do this again to gain attention. Choose your "battles" carefully. Save discipline for important things, so that it will be more meaningful when you do use it.

 **Distract or redirect.** Young children can often be distracted from one activity to another without your having to make an issue of it. If she has your keys and you need them, try offering another toy or activity. Your baby will probably let go of the keys and move on to the new toy. It's easier to get a baby interested in something else than to convince her to stop what she's doing.

 **Reward.** Reward your baby with loving attention when she plays nicely. Don't become a parent who only notices when your child does something wrong! Notice the good behaviors, and reward them with a smile, a laugh or a hug. Your attention is your child's most precious reward; use it to encourage good behavior.

 **Freedom within limits.** Your baby must have freedom to explore, but she has no common sense about what is safe. Babies kept in playpens or high chairs all the time may be safe, but are missing important opportunities to learn and develop. Providing freedom within safe limits may be the biggest challenge for parents of twelve-month-olds. It requires good judgment and constant effort.

Your baby will soon probably explore limits in other ways, too: biting, hitting and scratching other people. These behaviors are unpleasant, but expected. Remember that babies (like parents!) learn most from their mistakes. It is important to break the cycle of bad behavior with a time out, or a time on your lap in the rocking chair. Help your child learn from her mistakes, and then let her start over. Keep calm! Anger really doesn't help misbehaving toddlers to learn better behavior.

## PLAYTIME

Playtime is a learning time for your baby. Imitation games such as "Peek-a-boo," "So big" and "Pat-a-cake" give him an opportunity to practice many new skills, and usually result in squeals of laughter. Babies at this age love an audience and will be pleased to

perform "Pat-a-cake" or wave "Bye-bye" to you. Don't count on them to perform for "outsiders," though, unless they initiate that themselves! "Peek-a-boo" continues to give your baby practice in learning **object permanence**. When you are out of sight, he may make a noise or try out a forbidden task in order for you to respond by coming to him.

Your baby is becoming more and more curious about **how things work**. He may spend a great deal of time dropping objects into a container, dumping them out and putting them back in again. He may be fascinated with figuring out how a plastic lid fits on a container, or how a wind-up toy works.



**Household items make wonderful toys!** Pots and pans are not only fun to bang like a drum, but they are also interesting to try to fit together as a nesting toy.

## LET'S TALK

For the last twelve months, your conversations with your little one have been slightly "one-sided." While you have communicated with your baby in many ways, most of her communication with you has been non-verbal. You have probably enjoyed hearing her explore speech sounds, babbling and cooing for the sheer pleasure of playing with her voice. Now comes your reward for all the months of talking and singing and explaining and chanting nursery rhymes. Very soon, your baby will begin to say **real words** like "Mama," "Dada," "ball," "baby" and "NO!"

At last, she will be able to communicate with you through speech. However, she will continue to use pointing and gesturing to let you know what she wants. It will still be some time before she can articulate her needs clearly through language. When she points to something she wants, **say** the word for her: "Do you want a drink now?" She is eager to learn to speak, and this is the best way to give her new words. You may be amazed at how much language she can **understand**. She can probably follow simple instructions from you, such as "Bring me your truck." Her receptive language will be far more developed than her spoken language for most of her childhood.



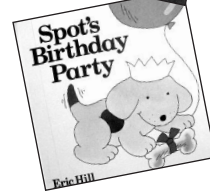
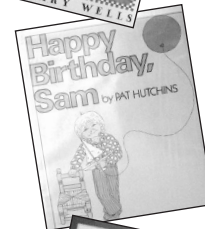
## READ TO ME!

Have you begun reading to your baby? At the age of twelve months, most babies are more interested in learning to walk than in sitting still. But they still love books, even if they mostly use them "on the go!" When your toddler is standing, holding on to the furniture or when he plops down for a few minutes on the floor, you can share a book with him. In short snatches of time, you can talk about an illustration or read a few pages of text. Never force an active toddler to "sit still" to listen to books. Just keep presenting books in a positive, loving way. Eventually, his curiosity will get the better of him and he will want to hear more and more of the story!

## BIRTHDAY BOOKS

Having a birthday for the very first time must be a confusing experience! The singing, the candle, the cake, the presents, the people, the excitement—it's all wonderfully exciting, but undoubtedly bewildering for a twelve-month-old baby. It is easy to overwhelm a little one with too much celebration. A lovely way to celebrate a first birthday is to check out some books about birthdays from the public library. Here are some wonderful examples:

- Ask Mr. Bear  
Marjorie Flack, Macmillan 1932
- Birthday Monsters!  
Sandra Boynton,  
Workman 1993
- Bunny Cakes  
Rosemary Wells,  
Puffin 2000
- Happy Birthday Maisy  
Lucy Cousins,  
Candlewick 1998
- Happy Birthday, Sam  
Pat Hutchins,  
Greenwillow 1978
- Jack – Happy Birthday!  
Larousse Elgar,  
Kingfisher Chambers  
1998
- Max's Birthday  
Rosemary Wells,  
Dial 1998
- Spot's Birthday Party  
Eric Hill, Putnam 1982



BEST WISHES FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT BABY TALK