You did it! Your baby is a year old! She has progressed from taking reflexive baby steps during her first month to walking, or crawling, quickly. Your baby moves about independently and has many opinions and preferences.

Your baby understands what you say to her and may say some words herself. Her first birthday marks the end of being a baby and the beginning of childhood.

Learning to listen and talk
Babies listen to language long before they learn to speak themselves. Even though your baby may say only a word or two by his first birthday, but he is busy learning language. He is listening, learning new words and will soon repeat words he hears.

What can I do to help my baby learn to listen and talk?
INFORMATION
The following are tips to help your baby learn communication skills:

1. **Talk directly to your baby.**
   Your baby does not yet learn new language by listening to general conversations. He learns language when you speak directly to him. Make time each day to talk to your child.

2. **Use labeling words when you talk.**
   Your baby listens closely to words that occur repeatedly in different sentences, such as the word “shoe.” When you are looking for your baby’s shoes, say “Where are your shoes?” rather than “Where are they?” Say your baby’s name rather than “you.” He will listen more attentively, and learn more, if you say, “Here are your shoes, Jayden!” rather than “Here they are!”

3. **Talk to your baby about everything around him.**
   If you talk about things your baby can see and touch, your baby will make an immediate connection between the object and the word. “Wasn’t that a pretty flower?” (referring to a flower he saw yesterday) is not as meaningful as “Look at the flower. It is pretty and red.” (referring to a flower he is looking at right now).
4. **Talk about things that interest your baby.**
He may not understand everything you’re saying, but he’ll be more likely to pay attention and learn if you talk about things he knows well.

5. **Be expressive. Use lots of gestures.**
Point to things as you talk about them. Change the sound of your voice. If you are excited, talk faster and higher, if you are picking her up after she fell, speak softer and slower. She may not understand all the words, but she will understand the meaning, based on your gestures and tone of voice.

6. **Try to understand your baby’s words, invented words and gestures.**
When your baby feels she is effectively communicating with you, she will communicate more. Respond when your baby tries to tell you something. If he makes a sound and gestures towards something from his highchair, look to where he is pointing and list for him all the things that you can see that he might have meant. If you guess the right one, his face will light up. He is communicating!

7. **Don’t correct your baby or pretend not to understand her “words.”**
If you refuse to understand her efforts, your baby will stop trying. Her invented words are the best she can do right now. If she says “gaba!” and means “grandpa”—say “Yes, that is your grandpa!” Delight in her efforts.

**Action Steps**

1. Talk to your baby during routines. As you dress your baby, tell him which part of his body is going in what piece of clothing. For example, “Let’s put your shirt on. Your arm is coming out of the sleeve. That’s Miguel’s arm!”

2. Sit outside with your baby. When she points, list all the things she could be pointing at and watch her reaction. When her face lights up, you’ve found what she was indicating with her finger. Talk with her about what you see together. For example, “See the car. That car is going fast, isn’t it?”

**What books does my baby like at this age?**

**INFORMATION**

Your baby will love books if you and she spend time reading each day. Alphabet, picture books, books with large, colorful, uncomplicated pictures are perfect at this age. Point to the pictures as you read. Name objects your baby notices.

**Action Steps**

When your baby is in a quiet alert state, have her sit on your lap while you read a book to her. Books with thick, strong pages are best. Your baby will want to explore the book by listening, touching and putting it in her mouth.