



# Sesame Family Newsletter

March 1, 2006

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



## For Parents

### Learning to Talk

by *Jordan Brown*

A father marvels at his daughter's first words.

### Featuring:

- A Big Brother's Influence
- "Beh-Bee" and "Beh-Buh"
- Memories of a Late Talker
- Responding to Mistakes

> [Read this issue](#)

### Games and More: A Reading Celebration

Celebrate Read Across America Day on March 2!

- [Sesame Street Story Corner](#)
- [Sesame Street Game Room](#)
- [Coloring Pages](#)
- [Weekly Trivia](#)

### From the Workshop



[A charitable gift to support Sesame Workshop will go a long way...](#)

### Sesame Store



[Get Sesame Street ringtones and wallpapers for your cellphone at Sesame Street Mobile!](#)

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Earth's Best brings you fun, delicious, organic, healthy alternatives to kids' favorite foods with nutrient-rich Earth's Best Sesame Street breakfasts and snacks made from organic ingredients. Fortified with 8 essential vitamins, iron and zinc, Earth's Best helps to ensure that little tummies get the big nutrition they need.

📖 [Read all about it!](#)

## Learning to Talk

## A BIG BROTHER'S INFLUENCE

On a recent morning, as I was busy preparing breakfast, my 1-year-old daughter Olivia was playing with her 5-year-old brother Finn's action figures. She was having a grand time moving its arms and legs around, but then became frustrated. I had a hunch that Olivia was trying to "transform" it into a dragon the way she'd seen Finn do countless times before. Before I could intervene, Finn came to his sister's aid, made the proper adjustments, and--voila--Olivia had a dragon in her hands. I praised Finn for sharing his toy, and showing Olivia how to use it.

"No problem, Daddy" Finn replied. "Olivia doesn't know about the whole world yet."

"You're right," I said. "Good thing she has such a great big brother."

While Olivia doesn't "know about the whole world," there is one thing she's getting very good at--talking. Over the last couple months, my wife Ellen and I watch with wonder as Olivia has started to utter her first words. What's been especially fascinating is the huge influence Finn has had on her desire to master new things, from speaking to climbing on furniture and playing the piano keys.

Towards the end of breakfast, Olivia grabbed her juice cup and took a sip on her straw. When she was done, she gave a breathy, satisfied, "Ahhhhh!"--just like her big brother does. I laughed, and imitated Olivia's "Ahhhhh!" sound. She made the sound again, this time just for fun. Olivia was clearly proud. While "Ahhhhh!" isn't exactly up there with "mama" and "dada" as stereotypical "first words"--it was a proud parental moment.



**BABY TALK Q&A**  
[Questions and answers about language development.](#)

**LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: BIRTH TO TWO**  
[Your baby pays attention to the pitch and volume of adult speech.](#)

**LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: TWO TO FIVE**  
[By the time a child reaches age 5, he will use language as self-expression.](#)

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## "BEH-BEE" AND "BEH-BUH"

**Witnessing Olivia learn to speak is both compelling and mysterious.** After months of happily babbling only nonsense words, she started saying REAL words soon after her first birthday. At lunch one day, she called out "nana!" as I sliced her banana. During playtime, she'd point to the middle of her face and say, "noh" [nose]. The sight of our dog Satchmo would inspire her to say his nickname "Mo." The line between nonsense sounds and real words is sometimes blurry, so Ellen and I have to listen carefully when she speaks. There are many occasions when Olivia will appear to say something like "thank you," and we'll look



**SPEECH DEVELOPMENT**  
[When should my child begin speaking in full sentences?](#)

at each other and say, "Did she just say that?"

Of the dozens of words that Olivia has learned to say, my two favorites are "beh-bee" "beh-buh." To the average person, these early utterances might sound like nonsense, but by paying close attention to the context in which they were said, we figured out what they meant. Here is how we learned about each of these words...

"Beh-bee" -- When Olivia started saying this word, we figured out fairly quickly that it meant "baby." Like many children, Olivia is very social. She loves smiling, waving and flirting with strangers on the street. If anyone responds to her efforts, she blows kisses or plays peek-a-boo. She is especially fond of babies. Whenever she meets a baby, she grins ear to ear, and enthusiastically says "beh-bee."

"Beh-buh" -- We first heard this word when we'd change her clothes or diaper. At first, we thought she was pointing to herself and saying "baby," but then one day, she lifted her shirt to show us what she really meant--she was pointing to her belly button!

## BABY TALK

[How your older child helps teach the baby to speak.](#)

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## MEMORIES OF A LATE TALKER

**When it comes to learning new words, 15-month-old Olivia is like a sponge.** . As soon as she hears a new word, she tries it out. Yesterday while playing with one of her dolls, I noticed a ribbon on the doll's head. Pointing to the ribbon, I said, "That's a bow." She imitated my gesture and said, "bow." For many toddlers, this kind of imitation is par for the course. But every time I hear Olivia say a new word, I recall how my son took much longer to say his first words. In fact, Finn really didn't start talking until he was about two-and-a-half years old. Today, he is such a chatty kid with a rich vocabulary that you'd never know that learning to talk was a struggle for him. Yet another example of how children learn at their own pace.

If you're concerned that you're child is a "late talker," I encourage you to read the Sesame Family Newsletter "DELAYED SPEECH" I wrote back in August 2003, shortly after Finn's ability to speak "exploded." (see link at right)



## DELAYED SPEECH

[How one family handles a child's delayed talking.](#)

## SLOW TO SPEAK

[At the age of 3, my son is barely talking. What would cause a speech delay like this?](#)

## TODDLER TALK

[If your toddler isn't as talkative as his peers, you probably have no cause for concern.](#)

## SPEECH PROBLEMS

[My 5 year old has trouble pronouncing her R's. Should we take her to a speech therapist?](#)

## SPEEDING UP SPEECH

[What to do with a 2-year-old experiencing speech delays.](#)

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## RESPONDING TO MISTAKES

**Since most adults speak as easily as we breathe, it's easy to forget that, for many young children, saying new words is risky.** If you've ever tried learning a foreign language as an adult, you know that even saying the most basic words can make you feel foolish. That's why it is important for parents to offer plenty of encouragement--even when a budding speaker doesn't quite get everything right. As verbal as Finn is today, he says "in-peller" for propeller, "up-spy-down" for "upside down" and "miguel" for "gazelle" (the last word actually comes up a lot, when Finn pretends he's a fierce lion chasing his prey.) Whenever he pronounces words incorrectly, we rarely point this out, but we don't ignore it. Instead, we use the same word, pronounced properly, in our response. Pronouncing words correctly is important, but remember--eventually most children figure it out.

In the coming years, I look forward to Olivia and Finn having sophisticated conversations with each other. And of course I can't wait for that magical day when Olivia will be able to look into my eyes, and say, "I love you, Daddy."

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop



## HOW TO BE YOUR CHILD'S BEST CRITIC

[There are helpful--and hurtful--ways to give your child feedback.](#)

## THE BEST KIND OF PRAISE

[A smart way to encourage your child's efforts.](#)

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## Weekly Trivia

**Muppeteers usually work from the ground-- lying, sitting, or crouching down.** They are propped up on a rolling cushion that allows them to move in and out of a frame easily.

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## FROM THE WORKSHOP

In 1968 when it began, it was one little street. Now Sesame Street reaches around the world to over 120 countries. Your gift of support will allow Sesame Workshop, the non-profit organization behind Sesame Street, to use media for what may be the greatest good, helping children around the world reach their highest potential.

[Support the Workshop today!](#)

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### COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

[Tell us what's on your mind.](#) Kindly note that we are unable to respond to every email received.

### ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization making a meaningful difference in children's lives around the world. Founded in 1968, the Workshop changed television forever with the legendary Sesame Street. Today, the Workshop continues to innovate on behalf of children in 120 countries, using its proprietary research methodology to ensure its programs and products are engaging and enriching. Sesame Workshop is behind award-winning programs like Dragon Tales and Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat, Pinky Dinky Doo and ground breaking multimedia productions in South Africa, Egypt and Russia. As a nonprofit, Sesame Workshop puts the proceeds it receives from sales of Sesame Street, Dragon Tales and Sagwa products right back into its educational projects for children around the world. Find the Workshop online at [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org)

Sesame Workshop

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