

1. How babies initiate connection

Babies are active and competent communicators. They proactively initiate connection rather than merely reacting to cues, but these are not always noticed.

“subtle initiations...get lost within daily rapidity of nursery life”

(Guard, 2023a)



Look at the photo. Think about what is supporting this moment of connection.



How babies initiate connection

What the research tells us

Babies adopt a wide range of communication methods and are willing to work hard to meet their need to connect ^(1,2).

- Video recordings of mother-baby interactions showed babies as young as a few weeks old not only respond to maternal cues but intentionally initiate and sustain communication ⁽¹⁾.
- In nursery settings, babies demonstrate similar intentionality, persistence and competence in their communication. A study of babies aged 4-11 months showed the ways they adjust their strategies dynamically, depending on whether the adults around them are available to communicate ^(2,3,4).

Close observation of everyday interactions reveals a pattern of communication babies tend to adopt. They:

- observe adults closely, often in silence and will seek eye contact to draw adults into a connection
- use facial expressions and body movements
- speak through coos, babbles and laughter
- may offer a gesture or a toy
- cry

Find out more:

1. Eirinaki (2022); 2. Guard (2023a)
3. Guard (2023b) 4. Guard (2025)

Download our **Thinking about babies** Guidance for Leaders and Managers of Early Years Settings on the Froebel Trust website.



Educator responsiveness and emotional availability matters. Take time to notice babies' unique communication cues and preferences.

