

READ MY CUES, DAD

Speaking for the Baby x SMS4dads Campaign

Babies are wired for social interaction from birth and are keen to learn ways to communicate with you. Your baby will work hard to understand what you are trying to communicate. As you spend time with them, Dad, you will get to know what your baby likes, what they don't, what they need and what they are interested in.

It's like cracking a code!

Being curious while watching your baby really helps. What might be going on for them? What could they be feeling, wanting or needing in this moment?

Levels of alertness

A big part of figuring out your baby's communication is through recognising when your baby is needing to sleep, is hungry or is ready for play.

You might see six levels of alertness in your baby. All babies cycle through being wide awake, sleepy, relaxed and fussy many times through the day. Each baby is different in how they look or sound, but it might help you to manage their needs if you can recognise their level of alertness

Learn my cues, Dad!

I communicate with you
from a very early age
with my face, my voice
and my hands. Learn
to understand my early
signals Dad.

Ummmm, you're tired...?



Here are the six levels of alertness:

Level	What Your Baby Does
1. <i>Deep sleep</i>	Lies quietly without moving; eyes are firmly closed; breathing is deep and regular with no motor activity; baby may have brief startles but will not really wake; in this state growth hormones are active.
2. <i>Active (light) sleep</i>	Moves while sleeping; startles at noises; eyes are firmly closed, but there may be slow rotating movements of the eyes, as this state is REM (rapid eye movement) sleep; bodily twitches and irregular or shallow breathing may be apparent; facial movements include frowns, grimaces, smiles, twitches, mouth movements and sucking; brain growth may occur during active sleep.
3. <i>Drowsy state</i>	Eyes may open and close, but look glazed in appearance; may doze; arms and legs may move smoothly; breathing is regular but faster and shallower than in sleep; babies in this state may be stimulated to a more alert, responsive state.
4. <i>Awake, alert state</i>	Body and face are relatively quiet with bright shining eyes. Sights and sounds will produce usual responses. In this state the baby can be very rewarding for parents. This is the state in which your baby is most ready to play.
5. <i>Alert but fussy state</i>	This is a transitional state to crying; may be soothed or brought brighten up to being alert. if noise or activity are too much, may break down to fussiness; movements are jerky, disorganized and these movements may startle them.
6. <i>Crying</i>	Cries, perhaps screams; sets off dads and mums automatic response of concern, and maybe guilt; this is the most effective mode for attracting you to pay attention; different types of cries can mean hunger, pain, boredom, discomfort and tiredness.

The six levels are adapted from *'The Earliest Relationship'*, by T. B. Brazelton & B. G. Cramer

Written by *A/Prof Richard Fletcher and Dr Bronwyn Leigh*
for *SMS4dads* and the *Centre for Perinatal Psychology*.

Illustrations by *Jess Racklyeft* for the *Speaking for the Baby Campaign*.

