



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 164:
Title: “Babies”
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How to use this transcript

Print this transcript:

- We try to reduce our paper consumption, but we really recommend that you print out this document.

Write on it and take notes:

- Circle, highlight and note anything that you want. We have even provided space for you to do so!

Listen first without the transcript:

- Don't worry about understanding every single word. Just focus on training your ears to the sound of English.

Listen again with the transcript:

- Listen a second time with the transcript, pausing whenever you want to take notes in the spaces provided.

Enjoy! :-)

00 :00	You are listening to the Déclic Anglais Podcast, THE podcast for intermediate, French-speaking learners of English. This podcast is like a steppingstone (<i>un tremplin</i>) to help you understand more advanced materials in English. There is a transcript (<i>une transcription</i>) available for this and every episode of this podcast. You can download the transcript for free from the link in the description of this episode. Or go to www.declicanglais.com/podcast. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
01:07	Hello there, dear listeners. Welcome to this episode of <i>The Déclic Anglais Podcast</i>, the podcast for French speakers who want to improve their English while learning something interesting along the way. For those of you who don't know me already, my name is Tom. I'm an English native speaker, and I am your host on this podcast. April 2026 was a very important month for my wife Charlotte and I. We became parents for the first time! <i>(En avril 2026, ma femme Charlotte et moi sommes devenus parents pour la première fois).</i> Yes indeed, dear listeners: In April we welcomed a little girl into our hearts. Our daughter is a healthy and happy little girl, who already has brought us so much joy. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
02:25	Now, I know that many of you who listen to this podcast are already parents yourselves. You know already that having a baby is a steep learning curve. (<i>Vous savez déjà qu'avoir un bébé, c'est un véritable parcours d'apprentissage</i>). There is the crying: is my baby too hot, too cold, hungry, thirsty...? The nappies (<i>les couches</i>) – of course, your baby is drinking milk. All that milk has to go somewhere! <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

03:13	Plus the organisation of everything, the logistics... And all of that on maybe just a few hours of sleep per night. Oh yes, dear listeners, the lack of sleep (<i>le manque de sommeil</i>). We can do anything when we have had enough sleep. But when your baby wakes up every two to three hours crying for milk – ah, there things become more difficult. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
03:53	Although, I will say dear listeners: I have been amazed at how much is possible on such little sleep. I dreaded being sleep-deprived (<i>je redoutais de manquer de sommeil</i>). But so far, (<i>jusqu'à présent</i>) things are not too bad. Sure we are tired: everything is slower, everything takes a bit longer to do. But honestly, Charlotte and I are surviving quite well... so far! <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
04:41	What I am absolutely loving about this journey with our little baby daughter, is watching her development. Babies are little human beings “in training” – they are learning how to be human! Oh yes, don't let that cute little baby fool you (<i>ne vous laissez pas tromper par ce petit bébé tout mignon</i>) – they are far more remarkable than many people realise, and there is a lot happening behind their sweet little eyes. Babies are learning machines, they are like sponges (<i>comme des éponges</i>) – always watching, always listening, always trying to understand the world around them. And so, in this episode, we will explore some fascinating facts about babies. Even if you don't have children yourself, I think you will find today's episode really quite surprising. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

06:07	So, dear listeners, are you ready? Let's start at the beginning... (<i>Commençons par le début...</i>) <i>Euh, Tom, quel début ? Je sais déjà comment on fait les bébés, merci !</i> Yes, of course you do! Everyone knows that the storks (<i>les cigognes</i>) bring the babies! So let's skip forward (<i>passons directement à la suite</i>) and start when the baby finally arrives... <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
06:48	When a baby is born it is already working hard! It might seem that all they do is sleep, cry, and eat. Well, dear listeners, that's only partly true! The truth is that something extraordinary is happening in their little brains. In the first few months of life, a baby's brain (<i>le cerveau d'un bébé</i>) is growing at an incredible speed. As you know, a baby's head is disproportionately large compared to the rest of their body. It would be like an adult having a head like a beach ball! (<i>C'est comme si un adulte avait une tête aussi grosse qu'un ballon de plage !</i>) But by the time a child is two years old, their brain has already reached about eighty percent (80%) of its adult size. That's astonishing, isn't it? <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
08:19	And it's not just the brain that's growing either – babies regularly experience growth spurts (<i>des poussées de croissance</i>), periods where their growth (<i>leur croissance</i>) is faster than usual. Some babies might even grow around a centimetre per week! That's enormous when you think of the size of a newborn baby. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

08:54	A fact that I find particularly interesting is that newborn babies are born with around two hundred and seventy (270) bones in their bodies. Adults on the other hand, we have around two hundred and six (206) bones. That's a difference of around sixty-four (64) bones! So what happens to the extra sixty-four? <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
09:43	Well, they don't disappear — they slowly fuse together (<i>les os se soudent peu à peu</i>) as the child grows. For example, let's look at the skull (<i>the cranium – the bones in the head</i>). So, my little daughter currently has about forty-four (44) separate bony parts in her skull... Me and you have around twenty-two (22). If you have ever touched the head of a newborn baby, you can feel these soft spots where the bones are connected by a kind of flexible cartilage – it's a very strange sensation, especially when you have never touched a baby's head before! Over time, the bones in my daughter's skull will fuse together, making her head feel more solid. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
10:56	The reason why a baby's skull has so many parts is fascinating – and it goes to show how amazing nature is! A flexible skull with many small bones makes birth easier (<i>l'objectif est de faciliter l'accouchement</i>). A flexible skull travels more easily through the birth canal (<i>un crâne souple passe plus facilement par le canal génital</i>). Giving birth is already very difficult... (<i>I know... I know... It's a big understatement to say that giving birth is "difficult"!</i>) (<i>Dire que l'accouchement est « difficile », c'est vraiment un euphémisme !</i>) But if a baby's skull were more like an adult's – that is, solid with only twenty-two bones - it would be even more difficult, perhaps even impossible to give birth naturally. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

12:18	<i>Tom, tu as dit tout à l'heure qu'un adulte avait « environ » 206 os ? Pourquoi « environ » ? N'avons-nous pas tous le même nombre d'os ?</i> Actually, no! Most healthy adults have two-hundred and six bones, but sometimes people might have some more or less than usual. For example, some people might have an extra rib (<i>une côte supplémentaire</i>), or perhaps have tiny extra bones in their feet and hands. Most of the time, these extra bones cause no problems. In fact, there is often no way of knowing that you have an extra bone unless you have an X-ray scan. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
13:17	Alright then, dear listeners, let's now talk about newborns and their senses. (<i>Parlons maintenant des nouveau-nés et de leurs sens</i>). What exactly can a newborn baby see, hear, and feel when they are born? Let's begin with sight (vision). A little baby can't see very well at all. They can only see clearly around twenty (20) to thirty (30) centimetres in front of them – not far at all. But interestingly, twenty to thirty centimetres is about the distance between a baby's face and the face of the person holding them. That's great, because it allows them to learn to recognise their parents! Some researchers believe that there is an evolutionary advantage (<i>il y a un avantage évolutif</i>) to this. It's important to a child's survival to recognise their parents. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
14:46	Yes, babies are particularly drawn (<i>they are particularly attracted</i>) to human faces. They prefer looking at faces over any other shape or object. In the case of my daughter, from the very day she was born, she has been absolutely fascinated by faces. Sometimes she stares at me (<i>elle me fixe</i>) and I really have the feeling of being <i>studied</i>! I have no idea what she might be thinking, dear listeners, maybe something like: <i>Pourquoi ce type a-t-il autant de poils sur le visage ? Est-ce que tous les adultes sont aussi poilus ? Oh là là, regarde ses sourcils... Ne me dis pas que j'aurai les mêmes un jour !</i> <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

15:45	In fact, the human brain is really good at identifying faces. It's a skill that we never lose. The brain even sees faces where there are none! <i>(Le cerveau humain est tellement doué pour reconnaître les visages qu'il en voit là où il n'y en a pas !)</i> For example, dear listeners, take a look at the clouds <i>(les nuages)</i> in the sky. I guarantee that if you stare at the clouds <i>(si vous fixez des nuages)</i> long enough, you will begin to see faces. You can try the same thing with your breakfast cereal, the wallpaper in your bedroom, the raindrops on your window... Human being are great at identifying shapes that remind us of faces. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
16:54	But coming back to babies: as I said, dear listeners, in the first weeks and months of life, a baby's vision isn't great. Their vision is blurry <i>(flou)</i>, because their eyes are not fully mature at birth. It's a common myth that babies see only in black and white, but this isn't entirely true. Babies can see some colours, especially strong reds. For newborns, colours are all muted <i>(sourdes, en demi-teinte)</i> – it's like having a filter on your camera that dims the richness of the colours. And so that's why babies much prefer looking at high contrasts – like a bright window or a shiny mirror. It's only from four to six months of age that a baby's eyesight improves and becomes more like an adult's. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
18:14	Now, smell <i>(l'odorat)</i> is a different story, dear listeners! A newborn baby has a well-developed sense of smell. They can recognise the smell of their own mother within hours of their birth. They can also distinguish the smell of breast milk <i>(le lait maternel)</i> very easily! Indeed, because their eyesight is so poor, a baby's sense of smell is very helpful in guiding them to their mother's breast. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

19:02	A baby's sense of touch (<i>le toucher</i>) is also highly developed. A baby can't see their parents well, but feeling the warm embrace of a parent has wonderful benefits for a baby. Skin-to-skin contact (<i>le contact peau-à-peau</i>) is wonderful for a baby's wellbeing. It soothes them (<i>that is, it calms them</i>), skin-to-skin contact reassures them, and also helps to stabilise their body temperature. (Ecrivez vos notes ici).
19:53	And finally, what about a baby's sense of hearing (<i>l'ouïe</i>)? Those cute little ears on a baby's head, do they work? Yes, they do indeed! Babies generally have pretty good hearing, even when they are inside the womb (<i>the uterus</i>). In the third trimester of pregnancy (<i>au cours du troisième trimestre de la grossesse</i>), a baby begins to hear sounds – both inside and outside of their mother. And so experts recommend that parents talk and sing to their unborn babies. An unborn baby certainly can't understand what you're saying, but research suggests that it helps babies recognise their parents' voices immediately after birth. (Ecrivez vos notes ici).
21:03	In fact, the womb (<i>the uterus</i>) is actually quite a noisy place. (<i>L'utérus est un endroit bruyant</i>). An unborn baby can hear their mother's heartbeat (<i>les battements du cœur</i>), the digestive system, movements, their mother's voice... And it's because of this that many newborn babies don't like silence. It's crazy, isn't it? Instinctively, when we see a baby, everyone speaks quietly, everyone whispers (<i>tout le monde chuchote</i>)... but you really don't need to! Many new parents soon discover that newborn babies love the sound of a vacuum cleaner! (<i>Beaucoup de nouveaux-nés adorent le bruit de l'aspirateur !</i>) Yes, vacuum cleaners! If you have a little baby at home that doesn't want to sleep, try turning on your vacuum cleaner – it's like a white noise machine (<i>un générateur de bruit blanc</i>). I can personally tell you from first hand experience: it works! (Ecrivez vos notes ici).

22:48	Alright then, dear listeners, let's now get into my favourite part of this episode – how babies learn language! Yes, language acquisition is particularly interesting to me, especially as a language learning enthusiast and teacher. In linguistics, we talk about phonemes: these are the little units of sound that build a language (<i>les phonèmes sont les petites unités sonores qui constituent une langue</i>). Every language is built of phonemes: vowels, consonants, diphthongs, etc. Every single baby in the world – no matter where they are born – is what scientists call a “universal listener” at birth. So, what this means is that babies can hear and distinguish sounds/phonemes very easily. This is because in the very beginning, babies don't have a language – their brains are like a blank canvass (<i>d'un point de vue linguistique, les cerveaux des bébés sont comme des toiles vierges</i>). They don't understand language, and they certainly can't speak either. So, little babies, what else can they do? They listen to what the adults around them are saying. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
24:51	Their brains are incredibly open to sounds/phonemes. Slowly but surely, from six to twelve months of age, babies begin specialising, they start focusing on the sounds (<i>the phonemes</i>) of the languages spoken around them. So, their little brains become more and more specialised in the sounds of their native languages. The more a baby gets used to the languages of their parents, the less they are a “universal listener”. <i>(Plus un bébé s'habitue aux langues de ses parents, moins il est un « auditeur universel »).</i> Now, this doesn't mean that babies can't learn new sounds later on in life, of course not – it's just that it's not as easy as in the very beginning. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

25:55	Babies also understand far more than they can say. They can have a large “receptive language”, that is, they understand many words and phrases even though they cannot speak yet. In this podcast, I often talk about passive vocabulary (<i>the words that you understand</i>) versus active vocabulary (<i>the words that you actually use</i>). Well, this “receptive language” is like the “passive vocabulary” – babies understand tons of words even though they can’t use them yet. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
26:49	At around four to six months of age, babies begin understanding tone of voice (<i>le ton</i>), emotional expression, and perhaps even their own names. From six to nine months, a baby might understand the most frequent words, especially when they are associated with familiar routines (<i>les bébés peuvent comprendre les mots les plus courants, surtout lorsqu'ils sont associés à des routines familières</i>) – for example, <i>milk, bottle, hungry...</i> They might understand “no” – but it might take time before they start to obey it! <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
27:46	It’s only after about a year that a baby really starts building their “expressive language” – that is, the language that they can actually say themselves. This is because language production is really hard work for a baby! Think about it, dear listeners: how do you produce spoken language? (<i>Comment produit-on le langage parlé ? Quand on y pense, c’est un processus incroyablement complexe !</i>) <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

28:21	Well first, you must fill your lungs (<i>vos poumons</i>) with air – that's easier said than done when you are a baby! (<i>Si vous avez déjà remarqué à quel point la respiration des bébés est irrégulière au début, vous voyez ce que je veux dire !</i>) (<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).
28:45	Then from your lungs, you need to push that air through your vocal cords (<i>vos cordes vocales</i>) AND you must make your vocal cords vibrate in just the right way. And then, on top of all that – you need to make strange shapes with your tongue, lips, cheeks, and teeth to change the sound even more. And voilà: you have produced speech! The adults around you might not understand you, but you have still produced speech. (<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).
29:35	You and I, as adults, do this constantly and we never give it a second thought. (<i>Vous et moi, en tant qu'adultes, nous faisons cela tout le temps sans même y prêter attention</i>). But it's incredibly difficult for a little baby – especially when you think that their little bodies are already so focused on growing and developing everything else. It's no wonder (<i>il n'est pas étonnant</i>) that it takes so long for children to learn how to talk properly. (<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).
30:23	Very interestingly, one of the easiest sounds for babies to make is “mama” or “baba” – or variations of those sounds. And therefore, it's no coincidence that so many languages around the world share similar words for <i>mother</i> and <i>father</i>: in French “<i>maman / papa</i>”, in Mandarin Chinese “<i>māmā / bàba</i>”, in Swahili “<i>mama / baba</i>”, in Bengali “<i>maa / baba</i>”. Crazy, isn't it? (<i>Ecrivez vos notes ici</i>).

31:07	And so, dear listeners, what about emotions? Babies have a rich emotional life very early on in their lives. They can feel happiness, discomfort, surprise, and fear (<i>la peur</i>) from birth. Certain more complex emotions take a little longer to develop, such as embarrassment (<i>la gêne, l'embarras</i>). Yes, small children have absolutely no sense of embarrassment – perhaps you have noticed this one already! <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
31:50	Researchers believe babies only begin to feel embarrassed at around 18 months, because embarrassment requires a certain level of self-awareness (<i>conscience de soi</i>). To feel embarrassed, we need to understand that other people are looking at us, judging us. Babies need some time before they reach that level of thinking. <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
32:21	Going back to happiness (<i>le bonheur</i>): when exactly do babies start smiling? (<i>À quel âge exactement les bébés commencent-ils à sourire ?</i>) Well, babies can smile from birth. But in the very beginning, a baby smiles reflexively – that is, it's automatic. They are not smiling because something is funny. It could be that your baby has gas! (<i>Il se pourrait bien que votre bébé ait des gaz !</i>) A “social smile” – that is, a “real” smile comes at about six weeks of age, and you know it when you see it! A smiling baby is a beautiful thing to behold. (<i>Un bébé qui sourit, c'est un vrai bonheur pour les yeux</i>). <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>

33:35	Alright then, dear listeners, we're coming to the end of this episode. I hope you've enjoyed today's episode as much as I've enjoyed making it. Babies really are quite extraordinary little beings — full of surprises, developing at an astonishing pace, and already working so very hard to understand the world around them. In today's episode, we spoke about language acquisition and active versus passive vocabulary. If you would like to know more about how our language skills interact and influence each other, I really recommend that you listen to episode 142 of this podcast: "The Four Skills Connection". Have a lovely day, dear listeners! I look forward to seeing you all in the next episode. Bye for now! <i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i>
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