

Speech and Language Milestones

These are general developmental norms and vary from child to child. Use these benchmarks as guidelines to your child's communicative behavior. If you continue to have concerns consult your pediatrician, speech and language pathologist as well as your child's primary teacher.



From birth to three months the child should ...

- Startle or cry at loud noises;
- Stop moving and seem to listen to speech or sounds;
- Awaken at a loud sound.

From three to six months your child should ...

- Look toward a sound or speaker;
- Smile when spoken to;
- Recognize mother's voice;
- Enjoy rattles and other toys that make sounds.

From six to nine months your child should ...

- Respond to his or her name;
- Babble and make lots of different sounds;
- Respond to "no".
- Imitates vocalizing to another person;

From 9-12 months your child should...

- Vocalize in front of the mirror;
- Vocalizes during play;
- May acquire first true word;
- Babbling – combines different syllables in vocal play;
- Can name or look for subject out of sight;
- Squeezes doll to make them squeak;
- Plays ball with another person;
- Places blocks in and out of a large container;
- Shakes head "no" and pushes undesired object away;
- Waves "bye";
- Affectionate to people;
- Participates in "pat-a-cake".

From 12-18 months old your child should...

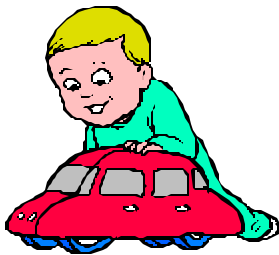
- Use sentence like intonation (jargon);
- Follows simple one step commands;

- Points to recognized objects;
- Begins to claim certain objects;
- Uses 3-20 words;
- Vocalizes with gestures;
- Begins to use “all gone.”
- Self play;
- Imitates many things (i.e. sweeping, combing);
- 50% of all utterances are nouns;
- Brings objects to show adults;
- Solicits another person’s attention vocally (e.g., “mommy!”);
- Answers simple ‘wh’ questions although speech may be unintelligible.



From 18 months to 2 years of age your child should...

- Uses more words than jargon;
- 65% of speech is almost intelligible;
- Comprehends approximately 300 words;
- Uses approximately 50 recognizable words;
- Says own full name upon request;
- Verbalizes “no”
- Parallel play;
- Talks to self as he/she plays;
- Transports blocks rather than just building towers;
- Follows directions using one or two spatial concepts (i.e., *in, out*);
- Names objects in front of others;
- Much verbal turn taking.



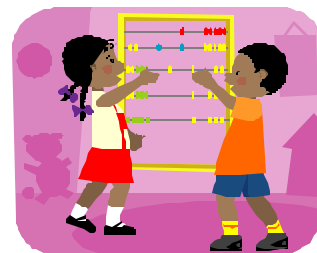
At age 2 years, your child ...

- Listens for meaning of words, not just sounds;
- Understands simple questions and commands;
- Identifies body parts;
- Mainly uses names of things, actions, persons and situations in his/her language
- Carries on “conversation” with self and dolls;
- Asks, “what’s this?” “what’s that?” and “where’s my ____?”
- Sentence length is composed of 2-3 words;

- Refers to self by name;
- Names pictures;
- Uses 2-word negative phrases such as “not go,” “not right,” “no want”;
- Has around 300 words in speaking vocabulary;
- Builds an 8 block tower;
- Asks for drink, toilet, food;
- Listens to stories with pictures;
- Stays with one activity for 6-7 minutes.

At age 2 ½ years, your child ...

- Has a 450 word vocabulary;
- Verbally states first name;
- Uses past tense and plurals and combines nouns and verbs;
- Understands simple time concepts; “last night,” “tomorrow”;
- Refers to self as “me” rather than by name;
- Tries to get adult attention: “watch me”;
- Likes to hear same story repeated;
- Uses “no” or “not” in speech and may say “no” when means “yes”;
- Builds tower of 8 blocks;
- Talks to other children as well as adults;
- Begins to control behavior verbally rather than just physically;
- Answers “where” questions;
- Can name common pictures and things he/she comes in contact with regularly;
- Uses short sentences to announce what he/she has done or will do like, “me do it,” or “me want to jump”;
- Matches 3-4 colors;
- Knows big and little;
- Holds up fingers to tell age.



At age 3 years, your child ...

- Can match primary colors, names one color;
- Knows night and day;
- Understands “yesterday,” “summer,” “lunchtime,” “tonight,” “little-big”;
- Begins to obey prepositional phrases like “put the block under the chair”;
- Uses words to relate observations, concepts, ideas and relationships;
- Frequently practices by talking to himself;
- Knows his/her last name, sex, name of street on which he/she lives and several nursery rhymes;
- Can tell a story or relay an idea to someone;
- Has sentence length of 3-4 words;
- Has a vocabulary of nearly 1,000 words;

- Can produce consistently “m,n,ng,pf,h and w;
- May repeat sounds, words and phrases;
- Can draw circle and vertical line;
- Can sing songs;
- Expresses fatigue verbally;
- Can stay with one activity for 8 or 9 minutes;
- Asks “what” questions frequently.

At age 4 years, your child ...

- Points to colors red, blue, yellow and green;
- Identifies crosses, triangles, circles and squares;
- Follows commands even though objects not present;
- Understands “early in the morning,” “next month,” “next year,” “noontime”;
- Can speak of imaginary conditions such as “suppose that” or “I hope”;
- Asks MANY questions although more interested in how answers fit his/her own thoughts rather than just the explanation;
- Has a sentence length of 4-5 words;
- Asks “who?” and “why?”;
- Begins to use complex sentences;
- Uses contractions such as “it’s a” or “there’s a”;
- Uses past tense correctly;
- Copies a line and a circle;
- Has a vocabulary of nearly 1,500 words;
- Uses the following sounds correctly m,n,ng,pf,h,w,y,k,b,d,g,r;
- Stays with one activity 11-12 minute.



At age 5 years, your child ...

- Defines objects by their use (e.g., You eat with a fork) and can tell what objects are made of;
- Knows spatial relations like “on top,” “behind,” “far” and “near”;
- Knows his/her address;
- Identifies a penny, nickel and dime;
- Has a sentence length of 5-6 words;
- Has a vocabulary of around 2,000 words;
- Uses all speech sounds correctly with the possible exceptions of t, v, th,j,z and zh (as in ‘measure’);
- Knows common opposites like “big/little” and “hard/soft”;

- Understands “same” and “different”;
- Counts ten objects;
- Carries a plot in a story;
- Uses future, present and past tense;
- Stays with one activity for 12-13 minutes;
- Questions for information;
- Distinguishes left and right hand in himself but not in others;
- Uses all types of sentences, some of which will be complex, for example, “I can go in the house after I take off my muddy shoes.”



At age 6 years, your child ...

- Has correct articulation of all speech sounds;
- Uses adult-like grammar in sentences and conversations;
- Understands the meanings of most sentences;
- Names days of week in order and counts to 30;
- Predicts the next sequence of events and tells a 4 to 5 part story;
- Tells month and day of birthday, name and address, left and right
- Knows most opposites and the meaning of through, away, toward, and from;
- Knows the meaning of today, yesterday and tomorrow
- Asks lot of why, what and how questions.