

Speech and Language Developmental Milestones

Please note these guidelines were developed by the staff of Braintree Rehabilitation Hospital's Pediatric Program. Variations in development do occur and do not necessarily indicate a problem. If you have concerns about your child, consult your pediatrician or family doctor.

Birth-3 Months

- Startles to loud sounds.
- Quiets or smiles when spoken to.
- Seems to recognize your voice and quiets if crying.
- Increases or decreases sucking behavior in response to sound.
- Makes pleasure sounds (cooing, gooing).
- Cries differently for different needs.
- Smiles when sees you.

4-6 Months

- Moves eyes in direction of sounds.
- Responds to changes in tone of your voice.
- Notices toys that make sounds.
- Pays attention to music.
- Babbling sounds more speech-like with many different sounds, including p, b and m.
- Vocalizes excitement and displeasure.
- Makes gurgling sounds when left alone and when playing with you.

7 -12 Months

- Enjoys games like peek-o-boo and pat-a-cake.
- Turns and looks in direction of sounds.
- Listens when spoken to and understands "no" and "hot".
- Recognizes words for common items like "cup", "shoe," "juice."
- Begins to respond to requests ("Come here," "Want more?").
- Babbling becomes more jargon like with both long and short groups of sounds, such as "tata upup bibibibi."
- Uses speech or non-crying sounds to get and keep attention.
- Imitates a variety of speech sounds.
- Has 1 or 2 words (bye-bye, dada, mama) although they may not be clear.

13-18 Months

- Points to a few body parts when asked.
- Follows simple commands and understands simple questions ("Roll the ball," "Kiss the baby," "Where's your shoe?").
- Listens to simple stories, songs, and rhymes.
- Points to pictures in a book when named
- Imitates individual words
- Uses echolalia and jargon, most of which is unintelligible
- Omits some initial consonants and almost all final consonants
- Says more words every month, with vocabulary of 3-20+ words
- Makes requests for more of desired items
- Combines gestures and vocalizations

19 - 24 Months

- Enjoys listening to stories
- Knows 5 body parts
- Accurately labels familiar objects
- Understands basic categories (e.g. toys, food)
- Points to pictures in a book when named
- Uses words more frequently than jargon
- Has an expressive vocabulary of 50-100 words
- Starts to combine nouns with verbs and nouns with adjectives
- Begins to use early pronouns
- Uses appropriate question intonation
- Speech is 25-50% intelligible to strangers
- Asks and answers simple questions (e.g. "What's that?")

2-3 Years

- Has a receptive vocabulary of 500-900 words
- Understands differences in meaning ("go-stop," "in-on," "big-little," "up-down").
- Follows two part commands ("Get the book and put it on the table.").
- Identifies several body parts
- Has an expressive vocabulary of 50-250+ words, with continued rapid growth.
- Uses 2-4 word phrases to talk about and ask for things.
- Asks 1-2 word questions
- Speech is understood by familiar listeners most of the time.
- Often asks for or directs attention to objects by naming them.
- Vowels are produced correctly
- Consistently marks initial consonants, though medial and final are not as consistent
- Uses auxiliary "is", some regular past tense, possessive morphemes, and pronouns
- Frequently exhibits repetitions, especially beginning of utterances (e.g. "I" and first syllables)
- Maintains topic over several conversational turns

3-4 Years

- Consistently responds when called from another room.
- Follows 2-3 part commands
- Is aware of past and future
- Understands object functions
- Understands simple, "who?," "what?," "where?," "why?" questions.
- Talks about activities at school or at friends' homes with details.
- Tells two events in chronological order
- Uses language to express emotion
- People outside family usually understand child's speech (80% at 3yrs and 100% at 4yrs)
- Repeats 6-13 syllable sentences accurately
- Consistently marks consonants and syllables in connected speech, making appropriate sound substitutions
- Uses a lot of sentences that have 4 or more words.
- Sentence grammar improves, though some errors persist
- Emerging use of compound and complex sentences
- Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words, though may still exhibit some variable repetitions

4-5 Years

- Pays attention to a short story and answers simple questions about it.
- Understands concept of numbers up to 3
- Identifies colors
- Voice sounds clear like other children's.
- Uses sentences that give lots of details (e.g. "I like to read my books").
- Tells stories that stick to topic.
- Communicates easily with other children and adults.
- Says most sounds correctly
- Uses the same grammar as the rest of the family.
- Reduces total number of repetitions significantly
- Answers questions about function
- Asks for word definitions
- Strangers understand 100% of what child says
- Answers 2 part complex questions
- Uses sentences of 4-8 words

Red Flags in Speech-Language Development...consult with your Pediatrician if.....

- No or limited babbling by 9 months.
- No first words by 15 months.
- No consistent words by 18 months.
- A vocabulary less than 50 words with no two word combinations by age 2yrs.
- Slowed or stagnant speech development.
- Problems understanding your child's speech at 24 months of age; strangers having problems understanding your child's speech by 36 months of age.
- Not showing an interest in communicating.
- Excessive drooling.
- Difficulty sucking, chewing, or swallowing.
- Problems with control and coordination of lips, tongue, and jaw.
- Stuttering that becomes more consistent and lasts for periods beyond 6 months or causes child embarrassment, frustration, or difficulty with peers.
- Poor memory skills by the time your child reaches kindergarten age (5 to 6 years). He or she may have difficulty learning colors, numbers, shapes, or the alphabet.

Other Red Flags Include:

- Failure to respond normally, such as not responding when spoken to. This may or may not include signs that the child does not hear well, such as not reacting to loud noises.
- A sudden loss of speech and language skills. Loss of abilities at any age should be addressed immediately.

Not speaking clearly or well by age 3