

Let's Talk About...

Language Development

Many people take for granted how important language is in our lives. It is used to remember, to plan, and to make sense of our world. We need language in order to feel in control and form social bonds with others.

Children's language skills develop slowly. They learn language in stages. From birth, babies connect words they hear with feelings and actions. They know more than they can say and begin responding to your voice by the third day of life. When you respond to your child's first coos, she learns that these sounds are a powerful way to connect with the world. After children begin babbling (about four months of age) it

becomes easier to know what they are saying, what they want, and how they are feeling. If children do not babble or imitate any sounds by the seventh month, there could be a problem with hearing or speech development. A baby with a partial hearing loss still can be startled by loud noises, turn her head in the direction of the noise and may even respond to your voice but will have trouble imitating speech. If your child has frequent ear infections she might have some fluid in her inner ear. This could interfere with hearing. If your child does not babble or produce a variety of sounds, alert your pediatrician.

Receptive (What child understands)	Expressive (What child says)
Birth to 3 months	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can tell the difference between human speech and other noises • Responds to familiar voice and sounds • Can tell difference between the angry and pleasant voice • Looks at speaker • Sucks faster to sounds of human voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matches body movements with care giver's language • Different cries for hunger, pain, and anger • Begins cooing • Often vocalizes with two or more syllables • Will coo when you talk to her
4 to 6 months	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves head or body to find sound • Recognizes own name • Recognizes familiar words such as "Mommy," "Daddy" and "bye-bye" • Responds to friendly or angry voices and tones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeats a series of same sounds (babababa) • Stops babbling when someone else is speaking • Babbles more when you interact with her
7 to 9 months	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to simple phrases such as "Get the ball" • Stops activity when told "no" or when you call her name • Pays attention for up to one minute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses gestures to communicate • Babbling becomes sentence-like, but without true words • Imitates sounds • Changes babbling for different people and situations • Listens to others' speech, then responds

Receptive (What child understands)	Expressive (What child says)
10 to 12 months	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases attention span Understands simple instructions given in a vocal or physical approach Pays attention up to one minute Is aware of the social value of speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to say first words such as “Mama”, “Dada” or “bye-bye” Attempts to imitate new words Points at objects of interest Connects action with words (waves “bye-bye”) Uses one or more words with meaning (this may be part of a word)
13 to 18 months	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies one body part Comprehends simple questions Understands meaning of many nouns (person, place or thing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with true words and gestures Repeats words overheard in conversation Watches others to see if they understand Has a vocabulary of 5-20 words
19 to 24 months	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies up to five body parts Identifies common objects and pictures when named Recognizes new words daily Understands some complex sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks up to 150-300 words Begins using two-word sentences Begins using pronouns Refers to self by name Begins talking about things she is interested in—things that move, do something, or things she can do something with
3 years	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands comparisons such as little and big, hot and cold Attends to activities for up to 10 minutes Understands what objects do, such as a toaster Understands at least three prepositions (usually in, on, under) Understands most simple questions dealing with her environment and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses sentences three to six words in length Uses a vocabulary of almost 1,000 words Repeats up to three numbers Uses pronouns such as I, you, and me correctly Uses some words in plural and past tense Handles three-word sentences easily About 90% of what a child says should be understandable Able to give her sex, name, and age Relates experiences so that they can be followed with reason
4 years	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies basic colors Demonstrates interest in “why” & “how” questions Knows the names of familiar animals Understands contrasts such as longer, larger Easily follows simple (one-step) commands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expresses complex ideas in short sentences Counts to 10 Uses up to 1,500 words Begins using past tense correctly Repeats words, phrases, syllables, and even sounds Names common objects in picture books or magazines

Receptive (What child understands)	Expressive (What child says)
5 years	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carries out more complex commands of two or three steps • Comprehends right and left • Follows three commands given without interruptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses sentences of five to six words • Others understand most of what she says • Has a working knowledge of most of the basic principles of her native language. • Knows common opposites: big-little, hard-soft, heavy-light, etc • Defines common objects in terms of use (hat, shoe, chair) • Grasps simple time concepts: morning, afternoon, night, day, later, after, tomorrow, yesterday, today • Speech, on the whole, is grammatically correct

What if I have other questions?

If you have any questions about your child’s language, please talk with your child’s doctor or a Speech Language Pathologist at Primary Children’s Rehab Centers.

To schedule an appointment at any of our facilities, please call 801.662.4949.

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Also available in Spanish.