



Speech and Language Development...Is Your Child on Target?

There are no absolutes in speech and language development. Each child develops at his/her own pace. However, there are guidelines for the appearance of certain language milestones.

STAGES OF COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

At 6 months of age, your child should:

- babble for attention
- laugh, gurgle and coo with familiar people
- react to loud, angry and friendly voices
- turn and look at new sounds

At 8 months of age, your child should:

- respond to name
- produce four or more different sounds
- frequently use syllables ba, da, ka
- try to imitate sounds

At 10 months of age, your child should:

- shout to attract attention
- use jargon (babbling that sounds like real speech)
- repeatedly use syllable or sound sequence

At 12-24 months of age, your child should:

- recognize name
- say 2-3 words besides "mama" and "dada"
- imitate familiar words
- understand simple instructions
- imitate sounds of familiar animals and things
- give a toy on request
- hear well/discriminate between sounds
- scribble imitatively with a crayon

At 24-30 months of age, your child should:

- follow directions involving prepositions ("Put the ball on the table")
- recognize objects by function ("Show me what we use to drink our milk")
- consistently use 2-word sentences (More milk; Daddy home)
- request help
- be understood approx. 65 – 70% of the time

At 3 - 4 years of age, your child should:

- follow 2-step commands ("Get your shoes and wash your hands")
- understand the following questions: ("Who?" "Why?" "How?" "How many?")
- speak in 3-4 word sentences
- ask "How and Why" questions
- tell stories with a mixture of real and unreal
- be understood by others at least 80% of the time
- say most sounds correctly (except: S, R, L, Th, and blends)

At 4 - 5 years of age, your child should:

- follow 2 – 3 step commands
- understand info. from a child's TV program
- use complex question forms ("Whose?" "When?" "Which?")
- talk about imaginary conditions
- define words in terms of use ("What do you do with a pencil?")
- be understood by others 90% of the time
- say most sounds correctly (except: S, Th, and blends)

At 5 - 6 years of age, your child should:

- consistently follow 3-step commands
- watch life situation programs on TV and understand the content
- understand past and future events ("Tell me what you had for breakfast today?")
- solve simple problems
- count to ten
- provide simple opposites (A brother is a boy and a sister is a ____)
- say all sounds correctly (occasional errors with "Th", and blends)

AS A PARENT, YOU CAN STIMULATE YOUR CHILD'S SPEECH AND LANGUAGE BY...

At 6 – 12 months of age...

- respond to your child's coos and babbling
- talk to your child as you care for him/her
- read colorful books to your child
- keep your speech simple and concrete
- recite nursery rhymes and sing songs
- show interest in all different sounds you hear
- teach your child the names of everyday items and familiar people
- take your child to new places
- play simple games with your child such as "Pee-a-Boo" and "Pat-a-Cake"
- play simple music for your child

At 3 - 4 years of age...

- frequently use words he/she has trouble within your own speech
- teach your child relationships between words, objects and ideas
- talk about similarities or differences between things
- encourage your child to tell stories using books and pictures
- let your child play with other children
- read long stories to your child
- pay attention when your child is talking; remember that repeating words/sounds is normal during this period of growth

At 12-24 months of age...

- read colorful books to your child
- encourage imitation games
- recite nursery rhymes
- imitate baby's movements and vocalizations
- encourage early efforts at producing words
- talk to your child about everything you're doing when you're together
- don't pressure your child to perform for you

At 4 - 5 years of age...

- help your child classify objects and things
- teach your child correct use of a telephone
- let your child help you plan activities such as what you will make for a special dinner, etc.
- give your child more responsibility
- let your child tell and make up stories for you
- don't expect absolute perfection in the way he/she pronounces words

At 24-30 months of age...

- read books with simple colorful pictures
- be a good speech model
- help your child listen and follow instructions
- talk about what you are doing
- play music with your child
- listen your child when he/she is talking
- take your child on outings, talking about what you see
- carry on conversations with your child
- ask questions to stimulate additional thoughts and language

At 5 - 6 years of age...

- encourage your child to use language to express feelings, ideas, dreams, wishes, and fears.
- comment on what you did or how you think your child feels (this will stimulate more speech than a direct questions)
- allow your child to create new, free designs with crayons and pencils or paper
- encourage reciting songs, rhymes or verses from memory

Concerns should be expressed if a child demonstrates the following problems after age 5:

- Dysfluencies of language – disrupted language due to a high number of repetitions, revisions, unusual pauses and interjections ("I, I, um, um, um, went, um, I mean, we went, we went to the store.")
- Delays before responding to questions or statements made by another person in conversation
- Nonspecific vocabulary – i.e. "this", "stuff", "that", "over there", "thing"
- Inappropriate responses (easy to spot, but occur for a number of reasons)
- Poor topic maintenance – child makes rapid and inappropriate changes in topic without providing transitional cues