

## Department of Child Development

### Language Milestones And Activities

#### Birth to One Year

##### **Expressive Language**

Age	Milestones
Birth to 3 months	Cries differently for different needs
	Smiles when he/she sees you
4-6 months	Chuckles and laughs
	Vocalizes excitement and displeasure
	Makes gurgling sounds when left alone and when playing with you
7 months – 1 year	Uses gestures for communication (waving, holding arms to be picked up)

##### **Receptive Language**

Age	Milestones
Birth to 3 months	Quiets or smiles when spoken to
	Seems to recognize your voice and quiets if crying
4-6 months	Moves eyes in the direction of sounds
	Responds to changes in the tone of your voice
7 months – 1 year	Enjoys games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake
	Turns and looks in the direction of sounds
	Listens when spoken to
	Recognises words for common items like “cup”, “shoe”, “book”, or “juice”
	Begins to respond to requests (e.g. “Come here” or “Want more?”)

##### **Speech**

Age	Milestones
Birth to 3 months	Makes pleasure sounds (cooing, gooing)
4-6 months	Babbles sounds more speech-like with many different sounds, including p, b and m
7 months- 1 year	Babbling has both long and short groups of sounds such as “tata upup bibibibi”
	Uses speech or non crying sounds to get and keep attention
	Imitates different speech sounds
	Has one or two words (hi, dog, dada, mama) around his/her first birthday, although sounds may not be clear)

## Language Milestones And Activities

### **Activities to Encourage your Child's Language Development**

- Check your child's ability to hear, and pay attention to ear problems and infections, especially when they keep occurring.
- Reinforce your baby's communication attempts by looking at him or her, speaking, and imitating his or her vocalizations.
- Repeat his or her laughter and facial expressions.
- Teach your baby to imitate actions, such as peekaboo, clapping, blowing kisses, pat-a-cake, itty bitsy spider, and waving bye-bye. These games teach turn taking that is needed for conversation.
- Talk while you are doing things, such as dressing, bathing, and feeding (e.g., "Mommy is washing Sam's hair"; "Sam is eating carrots"; "Oh, these carrots are good!").
- Talk about where you are going, what you will do once you get there, and who and what you'll see (e.g., "Sam is going to Grandma's house. Grandma has a dog. Sam will pet the dog.").
- Talk about colors (e.g., "Sam's hat is red").
- Practice counting. Count toes and fingers.
- Count steps as you go up and down them.
- Teach animal sounds (e.g., "A cow says 'moo'").

## Language Milestones And Activities

### One to Two years

Expressive Language	Says more words every month
	Uses some one-or two word questions (“Where kitty?” “Go bye-bye” “What’s that?”)
	Puts two words together (“more cookie”, “no juice”, “mommy book”)
Receptive Language	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
Speech	Uses many different consonant sounds at the beginning of words
	Starts to use p, b, h, m, w sounds

### **Warning Signs**

- Does your child use more gestures than words?

### **Activities to Encourage your Child’s Language Development**

- Talk while doing things and going to places. E.g. When taking a walk, point to familiar objects (e.g., cars, trees, and birds) and say their names.
- Use simple but grammatical speech that is easy for your child to imitate.
- Make sounds that are representative of the toys. E.g. Blow bubbles and make the sound "b-b-b-b." Make the sound "rrr-rrr-rrr" to imitate the engine of cars
- Expand on words. For example, if your child says "car," you respond by saying, " red car"
- Continue to find time to read to your child every day. Try to find books with large pictures and one or two words or a simple phrase or sentence on each page. When reading to your child, take time to name and describe the pictures on each page.
- Have your child point to pictures that you name. Also, ask your child to name pictures. He or she may not respond to your naming requests at first. Just name the pictures for him or her.

## Language Milestones And Activities

### Two to Three years

Expressive Language	Has about 450-word vocabulary
	Uses two- or three- words to talk about and ask for things e.g. “I want more” or “I want mum-mum”
	Combines nouns and verbs e.g. “mummy go”
	Able to say his name, and holds up his fingers to tell his age
	Refers to himself as “me” instead of his name
	Often asks for or directs attention to objects by naming them.
	Identifies, matches and names common pictures and things
	Carries on “conversations” with himself and dolls
	Asks “what’s that?” and “where’s my”
	Asks “where” questions verbally instead of pointing
	Uses plural ‘s’ like “hands”
	Starts to use “-ing” for verbs
	May say “no” when he means yes in mischief
	Talks to other children as well as adults
	Tries to solve problems by talking instead of hitting/crying
Can answer simple questions about object function e.g. “which one do you use to eat”	
Receptive Language	Understands differences in meaning (“go-stop,” “in-on-under,” “big-little,” “up-down”)
	Matches 4-5 colours, knows big and little
	Identifies body parts
	Follows two – step requests (“Get the book and put it on the table”)
	Listens to and enjoys hearing stories for longer periods of time
	Likes to hear the same story repeated
	Understands the concept of “one” If he is playing with 6 blocks, and you ask him for one, he should be able to hand you just one block
Understands time concepts e.g. “yesterday” and “tomorrow”	
Attention	Concentrate on an activity for 6-7 minutes
Speech	Starts to use k, g, t, d, and n sounds
	Speech is understood by familiar listeners most of the time.

### **Warning Signs**

- Is your child frustrated when he is trying to talk?
- Do you have difficulty understanding your child’s speech?
- Does your child only use one word at a time and has difficulty putting two words together on his own?

## Language Milestones And Activities

### **Activities to Encourage your Child's Language Development**

- Use clear, simple speech that is easy to imitate.
- Repeat new words over and over.
- Listen attentively as your child talks to you. Show this by answering what he says, smiling and nodding your head.
- Show your child that you are interested in what he or she says to you by repeating what he or she has said and expanding on it. For example, if your child says, "want biscuit", you say "Adam wants more biscuit".
- Help your child listen and follow instructions by playing games "pick up the ball", "Touch Daddy's nose"
- Expand on your child's vocabulary. Introduce new vocabulary through reading books that have a simple sentence on each page. Try to make it part of the bed time routine.
- Name objects and describe the picture on each page of the book. State synonyms for familiar words (e.g., mommy, woman, lady, grown-up, adult) and use this new vocabulary in sentences to help your child learn it in context.
- Put objects into a bucket and have your child remove one object at a time, saying its name. You repeat what your child says and expand upon it: "That is a comb. Sam combs his hair." Take the objects from the bucket and help your child group them into categories (e.g., clothes, food, drawing tools).
- Cut out pictures from old magazines and make a scrapbook of familiar things. Help your child glue the pictures into the scrapbook. Practice naming the pictures, using gestures and speech to show how you use the items.
- Look at family photos and name the people. Use simple phrases/sentences to describe what is happening in the pictures (e.g., "Sam swims in the pool").
- Write simple appropriate phrases under the pictures. For example, "I can swim," or "Happy birthday to Daddy." Your child will begin to understand that reading is oral language in print.

## Language Milestones And Activities

- Ask your child questions that require a choice, rather than simply a "yes" or "no" answer. Be sure to wait for the answer, and reinforce successful communication: "Thank you for telling mommy what you want. Mommy will get you a glass of milk."
- Continue to sing songs, play finger games ("Where is Thumbkin?"), and tell nursery rhymes ("Hickory Dickory Dock"). These songs and games introduce your child to the rhythm and sounds of language.
- Strengthen your child's language comprehension skills by playing the yes-no game: "Are you a boy?" "Is that a zebra?" "Is your name Joey?"
- Take your child on trips/ expose your child to different surroundings (e.g. take a walk in the park, go shopping in the supermarket). Be sure to talk about what you see before, during and after the trip
- Describe what you are doing, planning or thinking.
- Have the child deliver simple messages for you e.g. "Mummy, Daddy wants to talk to you"

## Language Milestones And Activities

### Three to Four years

Expressive Language	Talks about activities at school or at friends' homes.
	Uses a lot of sentences that have 3 to 5 words
	Has a vocabulary of 1000 words
	Can tell 3 or 4 events in a story after you've read the story to them
	Names at least 2 colours
	Asks many questions e.g. "What is this", "Where we go?", "Why?"
Receptive Language	Answers simple "who?", "what?", "where?", and "why?" questions.
	Understands "yesterday", "dinnertime", "tonight", "big-small", "fast-slow"
	Begins to follow 2-step related instructions like "close the book and give it to me"
	Knows his address and some children's songs e.g. "Twinkle twinkle little star"
Speech	People outside of the family usually understand child's speech
	Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words.
	Starts to use f and kw sounds
	Also starting to use clusters e.g. st, sp, sm, sn, sk, gl, bl, pl

### **Warning Signs**

- Do you find it hard to understand your child's speech?

## Language Milestones And Activities

### **Activities to Encourage your Child's Language Development**

- Pay attention to your child when he's talking
- Cut out pictures from old catalogs. Then make silly pictures by gluing parts of different pictures together in an improbable way. For example, glue a picture of a dog to the inside of a car as if the dog is driving. Help your child explain what is silly about the picture.
- Sort pictures and items into categories, but increase the challenge by asking your child to point out the item that does not belong in a category.
- Expand vocabulary and the length of your child's utterances by reading, singing, talking about what you are doing and where you are going, and saying rhymes.
- Read books that have a simple plot, and talk about the story line with your child. Help your child to retell the story or act it out with props and dress-up clothes. Tell him or her your favorite part of the story and ask for his or her favorite part.
- Look at family pictures, and have your child explain what is happening in each one.
- Expand on social communication and storytelling skills by "acting out" typical scenarios (e.g., cooking food, going to sleep, or going to the doctor)
- Talk about how objects are same/ different
- Teach your child to distinguish between square and round shapes
- Encourage your child to play with other children
- Talk to your child about places you've been or will be going
- Play games that need objects to be moved up and down, on top and below
- Get him to describe attributes of the toy when he is playing with the toy e.g. big red car

## Language Milestones And Activities

### Four to Five years

Expressive Language	Uses sentences (5 to 6 words) that give lots of details ("The biggest peach is mine").
	Has a vocabulary of about 1500 words
	Tells stories that stick to topic
	Communicates easily with other children and adults.
	Says rhyming words
	Names common animals some letters and numbers
	Uses the same grammar as the rest of the family
	Able to give meanings of words
	Describes objects and events
	Answers questions that require reasoning e.g. "What do you do when you fall down?"
	Answers questions related to senses e.g. "What do you do with your eyes/nose/ ears?"
	Answers logical questions e.g. "what do you do when you want to cross the road?"
Receptive Language	Pays attention to a short story and answers simple questions about them
	Hears and understands most of what is said at home and in school
	Points to colours: red, blue, yellow, green
	Identifies triangles, circles and squares
	Understands "morning", "afternoon", "next"
	Follows 3-step instructions e.g. Get your colour pencils, draw a picture and give it to mummy
	Identifies objects by their function "Which one is used to tell the time?"
	Able to identify the different coins by pointing e.g. 5 cent, 10 cent, etc.
Speech	Starts to use sounds like ch, j, l, s, sh, y, bl

### **Warning Signs**

- Does your child not seem to be able to follow directions?
- Does your child not use complete sentences?
- Does your child stammer/stutter?

## Language Milestones And Activities

### **Activities to Encourage your Child's Language Development**

- Talk about spatial relationships (first, middle, and last; right and left) and opposites (up and down, big and little).
- Talk to your child about what interests him
- Offer a description or clues and have your child identify what you are describing.
- Work on forming and explaining categories e.g. fruits, clothes, animals. Encourage your child to identify the object that does not belong in a given category, and to explain why the item does not belong.
- Give full attention to your child when he or she is speaking, and acknowledge, praise, and encourage him or her afterward. Before you speak to your child, be sure to get his or her undivided attention. Pause after speaking, allowing him or her to respond to what you have said.
- Build on your child's vocabulary. Provide definitions for new words, and use them in context: "This vehicle is riding on the highway. It is a car. A bus is another kind of vehicle. So are a train and an airplane."
- Encourage your child to ask for an explanation if he or she does not understand what a word means.
- Point out things that are the same or different. Play games incorporating these concepts. Also, teach him to distinguish with differences e.g. which one is bigger, a dog or a mouse?
- Expand on social communication and narration skills (telling a story) by role-playing. E.g. cooking, doctor, at the supermarket.
- Read stories with easy-to-follow plots. Help your child predict what will happen next in the story. Ask "wh" questions (who, what, when, where, or why) and monitor his or her response. Let him tell and make up stories for you
- Expand on your child's comprehension and expressive language skills by playing "I Spy": "I spy something round on the wall that you use to tell the time." After your child guesses what you have described, have him or her give you clues about something that he or she sees.
- Have your child help you plan and discuss daily activities. E.g. helping to make a shopping list for the grocery store

## Language Milestones And Activities

### Five to Six years

Expressive Language	Uses their language skills in learning to read, write and spell
	Has a sentence length of 5-6 words
	Has a vocabulary of around 2000 words
	Defines objects by their use and can tell what objects are made of
	Use language for different purposes and in a range of social situations e.g. greeting, asking questions, persuading
	Share and discuss more complex ideas
	Counts up to 10 objects
Receptive Language	Learn that the same word can mean two things, e.g. 'orange' the fruit and 'orange' the colour
	Learn that different words can mean the same thing such as 'minus' and 'take away'
	Understand feelings and descriptive words like 'carefully', 'slowly' or 'clever'
	Understands spatial relations like "on top", "behind", "far" and "near"
	Knows his address
	Knows common opposites like "big/little"
	Understands "same" and "different"
Speech	Says most sounds correctly, including clusters, except for a few e.g. z, sl, sp, sw, th

### Warning Signs

- Does your child have trouble coping in kindergarten?
- Do unfamiliar adults find him difficult to understand when he talks?

### Activities to encourage your child's language

- Continue to read longer stories
- Listen to him attentively when he talks to you
- Comment on what you did or what you think your child feels
- Talk to him as you would to an adult
- Look at family photos and talk to him about your family history