

Developmental Milestones for your Child's Speech & Language

Birth to 5 months	Reacts to loud sound	
	Turns head toward a sound source.	
	Watches your face when you speak.	
	Vocalizes pleasure and displeasure sounds (laughs, giggles, cries, or fusses).	
6 - 11 months	Understands "no-no."	
	Babbles (says "ba-ba-ba" or "ma-ma-ma").	
	Tries to communicate by actions or gestures.	
	Tries to repeat your sounds.	
12 - 17 months	Attends to a book or toy for about two minutes.	
	Follows simple directions accompanied by gestures.	
	Answers simple questions nonverbally.	
	Points to objects, pictures, and family members.	
	Says two to three words to label a person or object	
	Tries to imitate simple words.	
18 - 23 months	Enjoys being read to.	
	Follows simple commands without gestures.	
	Points to simple body parts such as "nose."	
	Understands simple verbs such as "eat," "sleep."	
	Correctly pronounces most vowels and <i>n, m, p, h</i> , especially in the beginning of syllables and short words.	
	Says 8 to 10 words (pronunciation may still be unclear).	
	Asks for common foods by name.	
	Makes animal sounds such as "moo."	
	Starting to combine words such as "more milk."	
	Begins to use pronouns such as "mine."	
2 - 3 years	Knows about 50 words at 24 months.	
	Knows some spatial concepts such as "in," "on."	
	Knows pronouns such as "you," "me," "her."	
	Knows descriptive words such as "big," "happy."	
	Speech is becoming more accurate but may still leave off ending sounds. Strangers may not be able to understand much of what is said.	
	Answers simple questions.	
	Begins to use more pronouns such as "you," "I."	
	Speaks in two to three word phrases.	
	Uses question inflection to ask for something (e.g., "My ball?").	
	Begins to use plurals such as "shoes" or "socks" and regular past tense verbs such as "jumped."	



3 - 4 years	Groups objects such as foods, clothes, etc.	
	Identifies colors.	
	Uses most speech sounds but may distort some of the more difficult sounds such as <i>l, r, s, sh, ch, y, v, z, th</i> . These sounds may not be fully mastered until age 7 or 8.	
	Uses consonants in the beginning, middle, and ends of words. Some of the more difficult consonants may be distorted, but attempts to say them.	
	Strangers are able to understand much of what is said	
	Able to describe the use of objects such as "fork," "car,"	
	Has fun with language. Enjoys poems and recognizes language absurdities such as, "Is that an elephant on your head?"	
	Expresses ideas and feelings rather than just talking about the world around him or her.	
	Uses verbs that end in "ing," such as "walking," "talking."	
	Answers simple questions such as "What do you do when you are hungry?"	
	Repeats sentences.	
4 - 5 years	Understands spatial concepts such as "behind," "next to."	
	Understands complex questions.	
	Speech is understandable but makes mistakes pronouncing long, difficult, or complex words such as "hippopotamus."	
	Says about 200 - 300 different words.	
	Uses some irregular past tense verbs such as "ran," "fell."	
	Describes how to do things such as painting a picture.	
	Defines words.	
	Lists items that belong in a category such as animals, vehicles, etc.	
	Answers "why" questions.	
5 years	Understands more than 2,000 words.	
	Understands time sequences (what happened first, second, third, etc.).	
	Carries out a series of three directions.	
	Understands rhyming.	
	Engages in conversation.	
	Sentences can be 8 or more words in length.	
	Uses compound and complex sentences.	
	Describes objects.	
	Uses imagination to create stories.	

What Should I Do If My Child's Speech or Language Appears to Be Delayed?

You should talk to your family doctor if you have any concerns about your child's speech or language development. This checklist should help you talk about your concerns. Your doctor may decide to refer you to The Language Learning Center or another speech-language pathologist. The speech-language pathologist will talk to you about your child's communication and general development and perform a structured evaluation. He or She may suggest individual therapy for your child, therapist guided learning programs and/or activities for home to stimulate speech and language development.