

Encouraging Your Child's Speech and Language Development



Speech and Language Milestones for Your Preschooler



This booklet provides information on what most children should be able to do within certain age ranges and how you can help them to develop their speech and language skills. While it's true that every child does develop at their own pace, it helps to be informed on how children's speech and language develop, to either put your mind at rest, or help you decide to ask for assistance.



Between the age of 2-3 years:

Listening and Understanding

- * Enjoys listening to stories for longer and longer periods of time

Talking

- * Uses some pronouns, but not always correctly (you, me, I)



- * Follows requests with more than 1 direction (eg., "Get your plate and put it on the table").
- * Starts to understand some opposites (big-little, up-down, stop-go).
- * Points to pictures and objects in books and when you ask them to.
- * Understands some body parts (ear, hair, toes).
- * Answers simple **Where** and **Who** questions (Where's daddy? Who is that?).
- * Understands some prepositions like **on** and **in**.
- * Understands between 500-900 words.
- * Uses between 200-500 words.
- * Starts to use regular plurals (ex., blocks, doggies).
- * Parents should understand about 50-75% of their child's speech.
- * Child may have trouble with sounds, s, f, sh, j, th, r, l and with 2 sounds together (ex., br, gr, st, sk, etc).
- * Requests items by name.
- * Names common pictures and objects.
- * Asks **where** and **what** questions.
- * Uses negative phrases (ex., no want, no bed, etc).
- * Puts 2 to 3 words together (ex., More juice mammy).

Between the age of 3 - 4 years:

Listening and Understanding

- * Understands some time concepts like day, tonight, yesterday.
- * Understands about 1200-2000 words.
- * Answers simple **Who, What, Where** and **Why** questions.
- * Understands more opposites.
- * Understands more challenging body parts (thumb, eyebrow).
- * Follows 3 part directions (ex., Put the cup on the table, the ball on the floor and sit down).
- * Understands functions of objects (ex., What do you use to brush your teeth?).
- * Understands descriptive concepts (hairy, stinky, empty).

Talking

- * Parents should understand 75-100% of their child's speech.
- * Child may still have difficulty with sh, th, r, j.
- * Child may substitute 'w' for 'r' and 'l' (child says 'weg' for 'leg').
- * Child may still have difficulty with 2 sounds together and may not say all the syllables in a word (child says 'bella' for 'umbrella').
- * Puts 4-5 words together (ex., Mammy look at the train).
- * Have some grammatical errors (ex., I goed to the shop).
- * Names at least one colour correctly.
- * Uses between 800-1500 words.
- * Can ask and answer simple **Who, What, Where** questions.
- * Uses 'is', 'are' and 'am'.
- * May start to use some irregular plurals (ex., sheep, mice).
- * Starts to use possessives (ex., daddy's dinner).



Between the age of 4-5 years:

Listening and Understanding

- * Identifies 3-4 colours.
- * Understands about 2000-2800 words.
- * Identifies simple shapes.
- * Pays attention to stories and answers questions about them.
- * Can follow longer and longer instructions.
- * Understands prepositions (in, on, under, next to, on top).
- * Understands more time concepts like morning, afternoon, night time.
- * Understands sequential concepts (first, then, last).
- * Understands relational differences (big, bigger, biggest).

Talking

- * Parents should understand all of their child's speech.
- * Child may still substitute 'w' for 'r' and 'l'.
- * Uses between 1500-2000+ words.
- * Uses sentences between 4-8 words.
- * Sentences are almost grammatically correct.
- * Uses 'his', 'hers' and 'myself' pronouns.
- * Counts to 10.
- * Retells a story and sticks to the topic.
- * May still have difficulty with sounds r, sh.
- * Says rhyming words.
- * Names some letters and numbers.



You are your child's first teacher and you know your baby better than anyone else. If you are ever concerned for their development, always seek professional advice. It is better to be told that your child is fine than to hold off on listening to your gut instinct when there may be a communication delay. The earlier a speech and language need is identified, the earlier help can be sought out. The earlier help is attained, the better the outcomes for your child.

If you are concerned with your child's speech and language development, do not hesitate to ask a professional for help. Contact either

- Your local Health Centre for a speech and language therapy referral
- Your GP
- Your Public Health Nurse

Remember, you know your child best! If you are concerned, it's better to ask for help than to 'wait and see.'

Helping Your Child Develop Their Speech and Language Skills



Parents are the first teachers a child will ever have. Children love spending time with their parents and learn SO much from those they are closest to. Here are some simple things you can do with your child to encourage their speech and language development.

Between the age of 2-3 years:

- * Use clear speech that your child can copy.
- * Show you are interested in what your child says by expanding. If your child says “cup empty,” you may say back, “Oh no! Your cup is empty!”.
- * If you don’t understand what your child says, ask them to repeat what they said. For example, “I know you want cereal. Tell me again which cereal you want?”.
- * Read books that have simple sentences. This is a great way to expand their vocabulary!
- * While you are out and about with your child, point to and label everything!
- * Go through family albums and name the people and what they are doing. For example, “That’s mammy! Mammy is jumping!”.
- * Talk to your child about what objects are for. For example, “It’s your toothbrush! We can brush your teeth”.
- * Give your child choices of objects or activities. For example, “Do you want milk or juice?”. Or, “Will we read a book or play dollies?” Pause to allow your child to answer and praise your child for making a choice.
- * Sing fun songs with your child that require hand and body movements, like “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”, “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”.
- * Ask your child simple “yes/no” questions, like “Are you a girl?” or “Is that your juice?”.
- * Put a bunch of your child’s toys in a basket or box. Take them out with your child, label them and help your child to put them into categories (ex., animals, dolls, bricks, etc).
- * Give your child crayons and paper, or finger paints and encourage them to make marks on the paper. Draw pictures and label them for your child.
- * Make sure you have your child’s attention before speaking to them.
- * Play ‘games’ that require you to be face-to-face with your child, like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or Pattycake.
- * Limit the amount of time your child watches telly.

Between the age of 3-4 years:

- Ask your child more difficult questions. For example, "What do you brush your teeth with?"
- Read books together with a more detailed story line. Talk about the story with your child and encourage your child to act out the story with you, using dress up and props!
- Sort pictures or objects into categories, but then add something to a category that doesn't belong and see if your child can find the odd one out.
- Continue to build your child's vocabulary and length of sentences by reading books and singing fun songs.
- Always talk about what you are doing and HOW you are doing it. Pause after describing something and allow your child to comment too.
- Rhymes are important for children to learn. Sing songs with loads of rhymes (ex., Jack and Jill) frequently with your child. Then, once they know the song/nursery rhyme, take pauses to allow your child to fill in the blank. For example, "Jack and Jill went up the...".
- Encourage your child to clap to the beat of songs and to copy patterns that you clap and stomp.
- Play with your child with pretend play toys (ex., doll houses, tea sets, farm houses, doctor sets, etc). Encourage your child to 'act out' scenarios with the toys. For example, feed a dolly, burp the dolly, change her nappy and put the dolly to bed.
- Give your child crayons and paper and write out their name for them. Encourage them to 'pretend' to write on the paper and to draw pictures.
- If your child mispronounces a word, repeat the word how it should be said without telling them they are wrong. For example, if your child says, "Look! A tat!" You might say, "Wow! A cat! A big, stripy cat!"

Between the age of 4-5 years:

- Talk with your child about the order of events. Talk about what you two are doing together using words like, "first, next and last".
- Describe things to your child and see if they can guess what you are talking about.
- When reading to your child, follow along with the text with your finger.
- Encourage your child to write/draw with a variety of writing tools, like crayons, markers, chalk, or even their finger in shaving foam on the table.
- Play Simon Says with your child.
- Encourage your child to help with daily activities and chores ("Put the forks, spoons and knives on the table please"). This not only makes them feel helpful, but they learn directions. Make sure to praise your child for helping.





- Point out to your child things that are similar and/or different. Talk to your child about WHY things are different.
- Encourage your child to act out social routines and activities using props and dress up. For example, going to the doctor, teacher and pupils, going to the shop, etc.
- Play age appropriate board games with your child, like “Snakes and Ladders” or “Funny Face”.
- Encourage your child to give YOU directions that you then follow. If you do it wrong, let them tell you how to fix it.
- Encourage your child to recognise the letters in their name when you are out and about. For example, if your child has an ‘s’ in their name and you pass a STOP sign, you might say, “Look Jessica! Look at the ‘s’ in that STOP sign. There’s an ‘s’ in Jessica too!”.
- Play with words with your child. Make funny rhymes with words (ex, finger, binger, dinger, linger, etc).
- When reading with your child, see if they can guess what’s on the next page by saying, “what do you think happens next?”.



South Dublin County Childcare Committee
C6, Clondalkin Civic Offices, 9th Lock Road, Clondalkin, D22.
T 01 4570122 F 01 4570322 E info@southdublinchildcare.ie
www.southdublinchildcare.ie

