

Speech and Language Milestones

What to expect at every age, and when to ask for help.

AGES

Birth to 7 years

The age bands on this page follow ASHA's Developmental Milestones, so you can check anything here against the source. Every range is wide on purpose. Milestones describe what most children do by a given age, not a schedule anyone is required to keep, and a child may not reach a milestone until the end of their age range. One missed milestone in an otherwise chatty, connected, curious child is usually nothing. Several missed milestones in the same band, or a skill that was there and then disappeared, is worth a conversation.

Birth to 1 Year (0-12 months)

Birth to 3 months

- Alerts to sound
- Quiets or smiles when you talk to them
- Turns or looks toward voices and people talking
- Recognizes loved ones and some familiar objects
- Makes sounds back and forth with you
- Makes different sounds depending on whether they are happy or upset
- Coos - sounds like ooooo, aahh and mmmmm

4 to 6 months

- Responds to facial expressions
- Looks at things that interest them and follows objects with their eyes
- Reacts to toys that make sounds, like bells or music
- Giggles and laughs
- Vocalizes during play or with objects in their mouth
- Vocalizes different vowel sounds, sometimes combined with a consonant
- Blows raspberries

7 to 9 months

- Looks at you when you call their name
- Stops for a moment when you say "no"
- Recognizes the names of some people and objects
- Looks for loved ones when upset
- Babbles long strings of sounds - mamamama, upup, babababa
- Raises arms to be picked up
- Pushes away things they do not want

10 to 12 months

- Responds to simple words and phrases like "go bye-bye" and "look at Mommy"
- Reaches for objects by about 10 months
- Points, waves, and shows or gives you objects
- Imitates and starts gestures during social play
- Tries to copy sounds that you make
- Enjoys dancing
- Says one or two words - mama, dada, hi, bye

Worth a conversation

- No babbling by 9 months
- No gestures such as pointing or waving by 12 months
- Does not respond to their name
- Does not look where you point
- Does not react to sound at all, at any age in this band

13 to 18 Months (13-18 months)

What to expect

- Looks around when asked "where" questions, like "where is your blanket?"
- Follows directions - "give me the ball", "hug the teddy bear", "come here", "show me your nose"
- Points to make requests, to comment, or to get information
- Shakes their head for no and nods for yes
- Understands and uses words for common objects, some actions, and the people in their life
- Identifies one or more body parts
- Uses gestures when excited, like clapping or a high-five, or when being silly
- Combines long strings of sounds, syllables and real words with speech-like inflection

Worth a conversation

- No words at all by 18 months
- Does not point to request or to show you things
- Does not follow simple one-step directions
- Loses words or skills they previously had

19 to 24 Months (19-24 months)**What to expect**

- Uses and understands at least 50 different words - food, toys, animals, body parts
- Speech may not always be clear - "du" for shoe, or "dah" for dog, is expected here
- Puts two or more words together - "more water", "go outside"
- Follows two-step directions - "get the spoon and put it on the table"
- Uses words like me, mine and you
- Uses words to ask for help
- Uses possessives, like "Daddy's sock"

Worth a conversation

- Fewer than 50 words by 24 months
- No two-word combinations by 24 months
- Does not imitate sounds, words or actions

- Loses words or skills they previously had

2 to 3 Years (2-3 years)

What to expect

- Uses word combinations often, though may still repeat some words or phrases
- Tries to get your attention - "look at me!"
- Says their name when asked
- Uses some plural words, like birds or toys
- Uses -ing verbs like eating or running, and adds -ed to talk about past actions
- Gives reasons for things and events - needing a coat because it is cold
- Asks "why" and "how"
- Answers questions like "what do you do when you are sleepy?"
- Correctly produces p, b, m, h, w, d and n in words
- Correctly produces most vowels in words

Worth a conversation

- Not combining words into short phrases
- Family cannot understand most of what the child says
- Does not follow two-step directions
- Does not ask questions

3 to 4 Years (3-4 years)

What to expect

- Compares things using comparative words
- Tells stories from books or videos
- Understands and uses location words like inside, on and under
- Uses articles - a, the - in speech
- Pretends to read, alone or with others
- Recognizes signs and logos like STOP
- Pretends to write or spell, and writes some letters
- Says all the syllables in a word
- Says the sounds at the beginning, middle and end of words
- Correctly produces t, k, g, f, y and -ing in words
- By 4, says all the sounds in a two-consonant cluster - the "tw" in "tweet" or the "nd" in "sand"
- By 4, talks smoothly and does not repeat sounds, words or phrases most of the time

Worth a conversation

- Unfamiliar adults cannot understand the child
- Not using sentences of three or more words
- Cannot answer simple "who" or "what" questions
- Repeats sounds or words with visible effort, tension or frustration

4 to 5 Years (4-5 years)

What to expect

- Produces grammatically correct sentences, which are longer and more complex
- Tells stories with main characters and a setting, joined with words like "and"
- Uses at least one irregular plural form, like feet or men
- Understands and uses location words like behind, beside and between
- Uses time words like yesterday and tomorrow correctly
- Follows simple directions and rules to play games
- Locates the front of a book and its title

- Recognizes and names 10 or more letters, and can usually write their own name
- Imitates reading and writing from left to right
- Blends word parts - cup + cake = cupcake - and identifies some rhyming words like cat and hat
- Produces most consonants correctly

Worth a conversation

- Still difficult for unfamiliar adults to understand
- Grammar errors a younger child would make
- Cannot tell a simple story with a beginning and an end
- Struggles to follow classroom directions

5 to 7 Years (5-7 years)

What to expect

- Produces every consonant correctly, including r, vocalic r and th
- Uses complex sentences with conjunctions - because, so, but, if
- Tells organized stories with a clear beginning, middle and end
- Explains how and why things happen
- Follows multi-step classroom directions
- Repairs communication breakdowns - "no, I meant..."
- Adjusts how they talk for different listeners and settings
- Reads and writes simple text

Worth a conversation

- Any sound errors remaining after age 7
- Difficulty telling or following stories
- Trouble finding words in conversation
- Struggles with rhyming, letter sounds or early reading