

Typical development of speech and language skills (0-3 years old)

Newborn to 3 months

- Startles to loud sounds
- Quiets or smiles when spoken to
- Seems to recognize your voice
- Increases or decreases sucking behavior in response to sound
- Makes pleasure sounds (cooing)
- Cries differently for different needs
- Smiles when he sees you

4 to 6 months

- Moves eyes in direction of sound
- Responds to changes in your voice
- Notices toys that make sounds
- Pays attention to music
- Babbling sounds (more speech-like); many different sounds including “p, b, m”
- Vocalizes excitement and displeasure
- Makes gurgling sounds when left alone and when playing with you

7 months to 12 months

- Enjoys games and peek-a-boo
- Turns and looks in direction of sounds
- Listens when spoken to
- Recognizes words for common items like “cup”, “shoe”, “juice”
- Begins to respond to requests (“Come here,” “Want more?”)
- Babbling has both long and short groups of sounds such as “tata upup bibibi”
- Uses speech or non-crying sounds to get and keep attention
- Imitates different speech sounds
- Has 1 or 2 words (bye bye, dada, mama) although they may not be clear
- Uses communicative gestures such as pointing and pulling

12 months to 15 months

- Maintains attention to pictures
- Understands simple directions especially with vocal or physical cues
- Uses one or more words with meaning

15 months to 18 months

- Says more words each month; vocabulary of 5-20 words
- Vocabulary composed mainly of nouns
- Much jargon-like speech
- Able to follow simple commands without cues (“Get your bear.”)

18 months to 21 months

- Points to a few body parts when named

- Follows simple commands and understands simple questions (“Roll the ball,” “Where’s your shoe?”)
- Listens to simple stories, songs, and rhymes
- Points to pictures in a book when named
- Uses many different consonant sounds at beginning of words
- Expressive vocabulary of 25-50 words
- Uses some 1-2 word questions (“What’s that?” “Daddy?” “Bye bye?”)
- Puts 2 words together (“more cookie”, “no juice”, “Mommy book”)
- Language explosion around 18-24 months; vocabulary of 150-300 words by 24 months

24 months to 36 months

- Understands differences in meanings of words (in/out, go/stop, up/down)
- Follows two requests (“Get the book and put it on the table”)
- Has a word for almost everything
- Uses 2-3 words to talk about and ask for things
- Speech is understood by familiar listeners most of the time
- Often asks for or directs attention to objects by naming them

36 months

- Hears you when you call from another room
- Answers simple “who?,” “what?,” “where?,” “why?” questions
- Talks about activities at school or friend’s home
- People outside family usually understand child’s speech
- Uses a lot of sentences that have 4 or more words

Adapted from: <http://www.childrensmemorial.org/documents/SpeechLangDevelMilest.pdf>