



How Does Your Child Hear and Talk?

[en Español]

Your child starts communicating with you long before he says his first word. Learn more about what your child should do in his first 5 years and how you can help.

Speech, language, or hearing problems can lead to trouble making friends and doing well in school. Give your child success—get help early.

Find your child's age below and learn about her speech, language, and hearing development.

- Birth to One Year
- One to Two Years
- Two to Three Years
- Three to Four Years
- Four to Five Years

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES FOR EACH AGE RANGE ATTACHED

Children develop at their own rate. These charts tell you when **most** children who speak only one language will reach each milestone. Your child should master the skills listed by the time he reaches the top of the age range. Missing one skill in the age range does not mean he has a problem. You may want to seek help if you answer "no" to most of the skills.

What should I do if I think that my child may have a speech, language, or hearing problem?

To find a professional near you, visit ProFind.





Birth to One Year

[en Español]

How Does Your Child Hear and Talk? | One to Two Years | Two to Three Years |
Three to Four Years | Four to Five Years | Learning Two Languages |
What should I do if I think my child has a problem?

Children develop at their own rate. Your child might not have all skills until the end of the age range.

What should my child be able to do?

Hearing and Understanding

Birth–3 Months

- Startles at loud sounds.
- Quiets or smiles when you talk.
- Seems to recognize your voice. Quiets if crying.

4–6 Months

- Moves her eyes in the direction of sounds.
- Responds to changes in your tone of voice.
- Notices toys that make sounds.
- Pays attention to music.

Talking

Birth–3 Months

- Makes cooing sounds.
- Cries change for different needs.
- Smiles at people.

4–6 Months

- Coos and babbles when playing alone or with you.
- Makes speech-like babbling sounds, like *pa*, *ba*, and *mi*.
- Giggles and laughs.
- Makes sounds when happy or upset.

7 Months–1 Year

- Turns and looks in the direction of sounds.
- Looks when you point.
- Turns when you call her name.
- Understands words for common items and people—words like *cup*, *truck*, *juice*, and *daddy*.
- Starts to respond to simple words and phrases, like “No,” “Come here,” and “Want more?”
- Plays games with you, like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake.
- Listens to songs and stories for a short time.

7 Months–1 Year

- Babbles long strings of sounds, like *mimi upup babababa*.
- Uses sounds and gestures to get and keep attention.
- Points to objects and shows them to others.
- Uses gestures like waving bye, reaching for “up,” and shaking his head no.
- Imitates different speech sounds.
- Says 1 or 2 words, like *hi*, *dog*, *dada*, *mama*, or *uh-oh*. This will happen around his first birthday, but sounds may not be clear.

What can I do to help?

- Check if your child can hear. See if she turns to noises or looks at you when you talk. Pay attention to ear problems and infections, and see your doctor.
- Respond to your child. Look at him when he makes noises. Talk to him. Imitate the sounds he makes.
- Laugh when she does. Imitate the faces she makes.
- Teach your baby to imitate actions, like peek-a-boo, clapping, blowing kisses, and waving bye-bye. This teaches him how to take turns. We take turns when we talk.
- Talk about what you do during the day. Say things like “Mommy is washing your hair”; “You are eating peas”; and “Oh, these peas are good!”
- Talk about where you go, what you do there, and who and what you see. Say things like, “We are going to Grandma’s house. Grandma has a dog. You can pet the dog.”
- Teach animal sounds, like “A cow says ‘moo.’”
- Read to your child every day.
- Talk to your child in the language you are most comfortable using.



One to Two Years

[en Español]

How Does Your Child Hear and Talk? | Birth to One Year | Two to Three Years
Three to Four Years | Four to Five Years | Learning Two Languages
What should I do if I think my child has a problem?

Children develop at their own rate. Your child might not have all skills until the end of the age range.

What should my child be able to do?

Hearing and Understanding

- Points to a few body parts when you ask.
- Follows 1-part directions, like "Roll the ball" or "Kiss the baby."
- Responds to simple questions, like "Who's that?" or "Where's your shoe?"
- Listens to simple stories, songs, and rhymes.
- Points to pictures in a book when you name them.

Talking

- Uses a lot of new words.
- Uses *p*, *b*, *m*, *h*, and *w* in words.
- Starts to name pictures in books.
- Asks questions, like "What's that?", "Who's that?", and "Where's kitty?"
- Puts 2 words together, like "more apple," "no bed," and "mommy book."

What can I do to help?

- Talk to your child as you do things and go places. For example, when taking a walk, point to and name what you see. Say things like, "I see a dog. The dog says 'woof.' This is a big dog. This dog is brown."
- Use short words and sentences that your child can imitate. Use correct grammar.
- Talk about sounds around your house. Listen to the clock tick, and say "t-t-t." Make car or plane sounds, like "v-v-v-v."
- Play with sounds at bath time. You are eye-level with your child. Blow bubbles, and make the sound "b-b-b-b." Pop bubbles, and make a "p-p-p-p" sound. Engines on toys can make the "rrr-rrr-rrr" sound.

- Add to words your child says. For example, if she says “car,” you can say, “You’re right! That is a big red car.”
- Read to your child every day. Try to find books with large pictures and a few words on each page. Talk about the pictures on each page.
- Have your child point to pictures that you name.
- Ask your child to name pictures. He may not answer at first. Just name the pictures for him. One day, he will surprise you by telling you the name.
- Talk to your child in the language you are most comfortable using.

© 1997-2021 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association



Two to Three Years

[en Español]

How Does Your Child Hear and Talk? | Birth to One Year | One to Two Years |
Three to Four Years | Four to Five Years | Learning Two Languages |
What should I do if I think my child has a problem?

Children develop at their own rate. Your child might not have all skills until the end of the age range.

What should my child be able to do?

Hearing and Understanding

- Understands opposites, like go–stop, big–little, and up–down.
- Follows 2-part directions, like "Get the spoon and put it on the table."
- Understands new words quickly.

Talking

- Has a word for almost everything.
- Talks about things that are not in the room.
- Uses *k, g, f, t, d,* and *n* in words.
- Uses words like *in, on,* and *under*.
- Uses two- or three- words to talk about and ask for things.
- People who know your child can understand him.
- Asks "Why?"
- Puts 3 words together to talk about things. May repeat some words and sounds.

What can I do to help?

- Use short words and sentences. Speak clearly.
- Repeat what your child says, and add to it. If she says, "Pretty flower," you can say, "Yes, that is a pretty flower. The flower is bright red. It smells good too. Do you want to smell the flower?"
- Let your child know that what he says is important to you. Ask him to repeat things that you do not understand. For example, say, "I know you want a block. Tell me which block you want."
- Teach your child new words. Reading is a great way to do this. Read books with short sentences on each page.

- Talk about colors and shapes.
- Practice counting. Count toes and fingers. Count steps.
- Name objects, and talk about the picture on each page of a book. Use words that are similar, like *mommy, woman, lady, grown-up, adult*. Use new words in sentences to help your child learn the meaning.
- Put objects into a bucket. Let your child remove them one at a time, and say its name. Repeat what she says, and add to it. Help her group the objects into categories, like clothes, food, animals.
- Cut out pictures from magazines, and make a scrapbook. Help your child glue the pictures into the scrapbook. Name the pictures, and talk about how you use them.
- Look at family photos, and name the people. Talk about what they are doing in the picture.
- Write simple phrases under the pictures. For example, "I can swim," or "Happy birthday to Daddy." Your child will start to understand that the letters mean something.
- Ask your child to make a choice instead of giving a "yes" or "no" answer. For example, rather than asking, "Do you want milk?" ask, "Would you like milk or water?" Be sure to wait for the answer, and praise him for answering. You can say, "Thank you for telling mommy what you want. Mommy will get you a glass of milk."
- Sing songs, play finger games, and tell nursery rhymes. These songs and games teach your child about the rhythm and sounds of language.
- Talk to your child in the language you are most comfortable using.



Three to Four Years

[en Español]

How Does Your Child Hear and Talk? | Birth to One Year | One to Two Years |
Two to Three Years | Three to Four Years | Four to Five Years | Learning Two Languages |
What should I do if I think my child has a problem?

Children develop at their own rate. Your child might not have all skills until the end of the age range.

What should my child be able to do?

Hearing and Understanding

- Responds when you call from another room.
- Understands words for some colors, like *red*, *blue*, and *green*.
- Understands words for some shapes, like *circle* and *square*.
- Understands words for family, like *brother*, *grandmother*, and *aunt*.

Talking

- Answers simple who, what, and where questions.
- Says rhyming words, like *hat–cat*.
- Uses pronouns, like *I*, *you*, *me*, *we*, and *they*.
- Uses some plural words, like *toys*, *birds*, and *buses*.
- Most people understand what your child says.
- Asks when and how questions.
- Puts 4 words together. May make some mistakes, like “I goed to school.”
- Talks about what happened during the day. Uses about 4 sentences at a time.

What can I do to help?

- Cut out pictures from old magazines. Make silly pictures by gluing parts of different pictures together. For example, cut out a dog and a car. Glue the dog into the car as the driver. Help your child explain what is silly about the picture.
- Sort pictures and objects into categories, like food, animals, or shapes. Ask your child to find the picture or object that does not belong. For example, a baby does not belong with the animals.
- Read, sing, and talk about what you do and where you go. Use rhyming words. This will help your child learn new words and sentences.

- Read books with a simple story. Talk about the story with your child. Help her retell the story, or act it out with props and dress-up clothes. Tell her your favorite part of the story. Ask for her favorite part.
- Look at family pictures. Have your child tell a story about the picture.
- Help your child understand by asking him questions. Have him try to fool you with his own questions. Make this a game by pretending that some of his questions fool you.
- Act out daily activities, like cooking food or going to the doctor. Use dress-up and role-playing to help your child understand how others talk and act. This will help your child learn social skills and how to tell stories.
- Talk to your child in the language you are most comfortable using.

© 1997-2021 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association



Four to Five Years

[en Español]

How Does Your Child Hear and Talk? | Birth to One Year | One to Two Years |
Two to Three Years | Three to Four Years | Four to Five Years |
Learning Two Languages | What should I do if I think my child has a problem?

Children develop at their own rate. Your child might not have all skills until the end of the age range.

What should my child be able to do?

Hearing and Understanding

- Understands words for order, like *first*, *next*, and *last*.
- Understands words for time, like *yesterday*, *today*, and *tomorrow*.
- Follows longer directions, like “Put your pajamas on, brush your teeth, and then pick out a book.”
- Follows classroom directions, like “Draw a circle on your paper around something you eat.”
- Hears and understands most of what she hears at home and in school.

Talking

- Says all speech sounds in words. May make mistakes on sounds that are harder to say, like *l*, *s*, *r*, *v*, *z*, *ch*, *sh*, and *th*.
- Responds to “What did you say?”
- Talks without repeating sounds or words most of the time.
- Names letters and numbers.
- Uses sentences that have more than 1 action word, like *jump*, *play*, and *get*. May make some mistakes, like “Zach gets 2 video games, but I got one.”
- Tells a short story.
- Keeps a conversation going.
- Talks in different ways, depending on the listener and place. Your child may use short sentences with younger children. He may talk louder outside than inside.

What can I do to help?

- Talk about where things are in space, using words like *first* and *last* or *right* and *left*. Talk about opposites, like *up* and *down* or *big* and *little*.
- Give your child clues, and have him guess the object.

- Talk about categories, like fruits, furniture, and shapes. Sort items into categories. Have your child tell you which item does not belong. Talk about why it doesn't belong.
- Let your child tell you how to do something.
- Pay attention when your child speaks. Respond, praise, and encourage him when he talks. Get his attention before you speak. Pause after speaking, and let him respond to what you said.
- Keep teaching your child new words. Define words, and help your child understand them. For example, say, "This *vehicle* is on the highway. It is a car. A bus is another kind of vehicle. So are a train and an airplane."
- Teach your child to ask for help when she does not understand what a word means.
- Point out objects that are the same or different. Talk about what makes them the same or different. Maybe they are the same color. Maybe they are both animals. Maybe one is big and one is little.
- Act out stories. Play house, doctor, and store using dolls, figures, and dress-up clothes. Have the dolls talk to each other.
- Read stories that are easy to follow. Help your child guess what will happen next in the story. Act out the stories, or put on puppet shows. Have your child draw a picture of a scene from the story. You can do the same thing with videos and TV shows. Ask who, what, when, where, or why questions about the story.
- Play game like "I Spy." Describe something you see, like, "I spy something round on the wall that you use to tell the time." Let your child guess what it is. Let your child describe something he sees. This helps him learn to listen and to use words to talk about what he sees.
- Give your child 2-step directions, like "Get your coat from the closet and put it on." Let your child tell you how to do something. Draw a picture that he describes. Write down your child's story as she tells it. Your child will learn the power of storytelling and writing.
- Play board games with your child. This will help him learn to follow rules and talk about the game.
- Have your child help you plan daily activities. For example, have her make a shopping list for the grocery store. Or, let her help you plan her birthday party. Ask her opinion, and let her make choices.
- Talk to your child in the language you are most comfortable using.