

Your Child is Talking to Learn

Milestones for Speech and Language Development 2 to 5 Years

Age 2 to 3rd birthday

- Combines words in 2-3 word sentences, such as “me do it.”
- Follows simple directions, such as “put the teddy-bear to bed.”
- Answers simple questions, such as “what’s your name?”, “which one is the big doll?”
- Can put a toy “in,” “on,” “under” when asked
- Answers simple questions about objects, such as “which one do we eat?”
- Is able to sit and attend to a book for a few minutes

When to be concerned:

- Child shows frustration when trying to talk
- Child’s speech is difficult for you to understand
- Child does not yet combine 2 words together

Age 3 to 4th birthday

- Follows 2 related directions, such as “Close the book and give it to me.”
- Tells first and last name
- Understands questions about a picture story, such as “where did the bunny go?”
- Reasons – answers “what do you do when you’re hungry/cold?”
- Tells a short story, such as “Two kids played ball.”
- Sentences are usually 3 and 4 words long
- Gives directions, such as “Fix this for me.”
- Asks many questions, such as “what,” “where,” “why”

When to be concerned:

- Child’s speech is difficult for strangers to understand
- Child has difficulty playing imaginary games with others

Age 4 to 5th birthday

- Follows 3 related directions, such as “Get your crayons, make a picture and give it to the baby.”
- Speaks sounds accurately except perhaps for “l, r, th, ch, sh”
- More reasoning – answers questions, such as “What do you do when you are sleepy/thirsty?” or “What should you do if you hurt yourself?”
- Can tell you in detail about their day
- Can show you “top,” “bottom,” and several colours
- Can explain the meaning of words



When to be concerned:

- Child does not use complete sentences
- Child stutters
- Child does not seem to be able to follow directions



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Milestones for Speech and Language Development

Birth to 5 years



Your Child is Learning to Talk

Milestones for Speech and Language Development **Birth to 2 Years**



Speech and language abilities are important. They prepare children to play, learn and get along with others. Children with

strong speech and language skills are better prepared for school and successful learning.

First 3 months of life

- Becomes startled at loud noises
- Is soothed by calm, gentle voices
- Likes to cuddle and enjoys being held
- Cries, gurgles, grunts, says “ah”
- Sucks and swallows well

When to be concerned:

- Baby shows no reaction to sound

4 months to 6 months

- Watches your face with interest when you talk
- Tries to “talk” to you by cooing or babbling
- Enjoys “talking” with you, smiles at you
- Coos and squeals for attention
- Has a special cry when hungry

When to be concerned:

- Absence of any of these behaviors

6 months to 1st birthday

- Understands some common words when used with gestures, such as “bye, bye,” “up,” “give me” and own name
- Tries to say sounds and words, such as “ba, ba,” “na, na”
- Tries to “sing” along with radio/TV
- Laughs and may imitate a cough or sound

When to be concerned:

- Child seems to babble or play less than same age peers
- Child gets frequent ear infections

Age 1 to 18 months

- Babbles – sounds like making sentences
- Understands simple questions/statements, such as “Where is your nose?,” “Give me.”
- Says a few words, though not necessarily clearly
- Nods “yes” and shakes head for “no”
- Enjoys rhythm and likes to “dance” to music

When to be concerned:

- Child does not use any words
- Child does not seem to be sociable

18 months to 2nd birthday

- Says some 2-word sentences, such as “More milk,” “All gone,” “Me go”
- Asks for a cookie or toy
- Understands “Where is mommy/ daddy?”
- Understands simple directions, such as “Get your coat”
- Understands more words than can speak/say



When to be concerned:

- Child uses more gestures than words
- You are concerned about your child’s ability to talk and/or understand

Early detection of difficulties at any age can make learning to talk easier. If your child shows any of the warning signs listed for his or her age group, please contact: Speech and Language Services at your local Community Health Centre. Visit vch.ca for locations.

