

# SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST 0–5 YEARS

Age	Comprehension	Expression	Speech	Red flags
<b>By three months</b>	Startles to loud noises Turns eyes/head towards sound Watches carer's face Quietens to familiar voice	Reacts to familiar situations by smiles, coos and excited movements Vocalises sounds for pleasure and displeasure	Mostly open vowel sounds	No reaction to sound ?hearing Lack of interest, eg, in watching faces
<b>By six months</b>	Searches for speaker Recognises own name Stops crying when spoken to Anticipates feeding Understands angry v friendly voices	Directs vocalisation and babbling to others Stops babbling when another person vocalises Vocal play and imitation First throaty chuckles and laughs	Strings of sounds, "p" and "b"	Limited responses to others No vocalisations
<b>By nine months</b>	Some anxiety to strangers Finds toy that is hidden Understands "no" and "bye" Anticipates play activities Recognises names of family members	Waves goodbye Copies sounds and syllables Shouts or vocalises for attention Sings along to familiar song Vocalises during games	Repetitive babbling	Not babbling
<b>By 12 months</b>	Identifies two body parts Gives objects and understands instructions in familiar routines within context, eg, "hands up" when dressing, "get your cup" at meal time	Says "mama" or "dada" meaningfully Symbolic noises, eg, animal sounds Uses a word to call a person Says one to two words spontaneously Imitates name of familiar objects	"p", "b", "t", "d", "m", "n"	Not babbling Difficulty understanding familiar routines and object words
<b>By 18 months</b>	Identifies familiar objects when named Understands use of objects Understands up to 50 words Understands simple commands Identifies 3–6 body parts	Pointing and vocalising Expressive jargon – sounds like conversation but nonsense words First words, around 3–20	Wider range of sounds May leave off ends of words	Difficulty identifying familiar objects Not using any single words
<b>By two years</b>	Understands some action words Follows simple directions without gesture Follows two key word command, eg, "Give dolly a drink" Symbolic/pretend play, eg, dolls, pretend foo	Uses around 50 words Uses lots of gesture Some early pronouns ,eg, "my" Some two word combinations, eg, "more juice" Uses some question words, eg, "What's that?"	Speech at least 50 per cent intelligible Still often omit final sounds	Doesn't understand simple instructions Not using two syllable words Using less than eight words
<b>By three years</b>	Role play Understands activities in pictures Matches objects and pictures Understands commands with 2–3 key words Understands concepts such as in/on/under and big/little	Stuttering and jargon can be common Asking lots of questions, eg, "What's she doing?" Increase in vocabulary Putting 2–4 words together into sentences	Emergence of sounds at back of mouth "k" and "g" and long hissy sounds, eg, "f" and "s" Sometimes "f" and "s" produced as "b" or "d"	Difficulty following commands Vocabulary of less than 200 words No four syllable phrases, eg, says "Mummy gone work"

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<b>By four years</b>	<p>Understands commands with 3-4 key words, eg, "Put the spoon in the big cup"</p> <p>Understands some colours</p> <p>Greater understanding of past, present and future tenses</p> <p>Understands negatives, eg, "not"</p> <p>Can make inferences</p>	<p>Using pronouns "I," "me" and "you" correctly</p> <p>Engages in monologues</p> <p>Using 4–5 word sentences</p> <p>Joining sentences with "and", "because"</p> <p>Some grammatical errors, eg, mouses, dranked</p> <p>Retells a story</p> <p>Uses what, where, who, and when questions</p>	<p>"f" and "s" produced</p> <p>Emergence of "l", "sh" and "ch"</p> <p>Often reduce clusters of sounds to single sounds, eg, spoon to "poon"</p> <p>Usually now producing sounds at end of words</p>	<p>Difficulty understanding verbal information</p> <p>Unintelligible</p>
<b>By five years</b>	<p>Follows more complicated commands, eg, "Put the cup under the big table"</p> <p>Understands more abstract concepts, eg, "if" "might" and time concepts, eg, "yesterday"</p> <p>Follows simple story without needing picture</p> <p>Understanding simple jokes</p>	<p>Holds a true conversation</p> <p>Adapts language to listener</p> <p>Can begin to explain meaning of words</p> <p>Starting to rhyme</p> <p>Answers "why" questions</p>	<p>Intelligible</p> <p>Emergence of "r" and "th" though may still be using "w" and "f/v", respectively</p> <p>May still lisp, this often disappears when adult teeth emerge</p>	<p>Difficulties with understanding verbal language</p> <p>Continues to be unintelligible</p>