

Speech and Language Developmental Milestones

Witwer Children's Therapy

Speech and Language Milestones in the First Five Years of Life

It is important to note all children are unique in their development. The guidelines below can help you identify the need for a speech therapy referral from a physician.

Age 0-6 Months

- Calmed by a familiar, friendly voice when fussy
- Looks toward new sounds/voices when heard
- Looks directly at a speaker's face when they are talking (eye contact)
- Vocalizes back when a voice is heard
- Laughs and smiles when playing
- Grunts or uses other sound to show displeasure
- Begins vocal play with squeals, growls, and yells
- At 4-6 months, the child uses simple consonant and vowel combinations such as "pah" or "ahm"

Age 6-12 Months

- Responds to "no"
- Responds to name
- Points to familiar object when the object's name is spoken (when you say ball, the child points to the ball)
- Copies simple actions of others
- Begins to follow simple requests such as "come here"
- At 7-9 months, repetitive syllable combinations emerge such as "mama" or "baba"
- At 10-12 months, different syllable combinations are used, such as "bameguh" or "tikati" (not true words)
- At 12 months says 2-3 words besides "mama" and "dada"

Age 1-2 Years

- Carries out 2-step requests, such as "get the ball and give it to me" with cueing as needed (like gestures or pointing)
- Points to familiar objects or people when asked
- Engages in pretend play
- Understands simple spatial concepts (in, on, up, down)
- Approximate words in speaking vocabulary: 10 words at age 15 months, to 200 words at age 2
- Sentence length is 1-2 words
- Understood by others approximately 25-50% of the time

(Continued on back)

Age 2-3 Years

- Points to objects when described (“What do you wear on your head?” Child then points to hat)
- Identifies body parts and clothing
- Can identify actions in pictures (like swimming, running, etc.)
- Understands numbers (one, two), size (big, small) and time concepts (soon, later, wait)
- Approximate words in speaking vocabulary: 200 words at age 2 to 1,000 words at age 3
- Sentence length is 2-3 words or more
- Understood by others approximately 50-75% of the time
- Mastering sounds such as /p,m,h,n,w,b/

Age 3-4 Years

- Follows 2 step directions without cues such as gestures, pointing and repeating
- Understands simple “wh” questions (who, what, where, when, why) relating to their current activities and environment
- Understands quantity (empty, a lot), equality (same, both), and positional (behind, in front) concepts
- Approximate words in speaking vocabulary: 1,000 words at age 3 to 1,600 words at age 4
- Sentence length is 3-4 words long
- Understood by others approximately 75% of the time
- Mastering sounds such as /k,g,d,t,ng,f,y,r,l,s/

Age 4-5 Years

- Follows 3 step directions without cues such as gesturing, pointing and repeating
- Understands comparatives (big, bigger, biggest), time (yesterday, today, tomorrow) and positional (first, middle, last) concepts
- Approximate words in speaking vocabulary: 1,600 words at age 4 to 2,500 words at age 5
- Sentence length is 4 or more words in length
- Understood approximately 75-90% of the time
- Mastering sounds such as /ch, sh, z, j, v, th/

Concerns Warranting Attention and Potential Referral to Speech Therapy:

By age 2 (20-24 months):

- Child is not talking; no understandable words; not verbally imitating
- Child uses mostly vowel sounds for words

By age 3:

- Speech is difficult to understand
- Omits beginning and/or final sounds of words
- Difficulty following directions
- Not producing sentences; significantly reduced vocabulary

By age 4:

- Stuttering behaviors

By age 5:

- Substitutes easy sounds for difficult ones
- Drops words, mixes up words or uses ungrammatical sentences

By age 7:

- Child has difficulty with any speech sound

References:

Information obtained from “LinguSystems Guide to Communication Milestones, Receptive-Expressive Emergent Language Test-Third Edition and Pro. Ed