

Language Development

Children develop their understanding of language and ability to talk as they grow. Below is a brief guide on what to expect as your child learns to communicate.

I am 6 to 12 months

I am babbling (e.g. “mama”, “bubu”).

I am learning to copy actions like waving and clapping.

I know two body parts.

I might say my first word around 12 months.

I am 12 to 18 months

I will say my first words.

I will imitate sounds.

I know three or more body parts.

I enjoy simple songs.

I take some turns in simple games.



I am 18 to 24 months

At 18 months I can say about 50 words.

I will start to combine words (e.g. “bye daddy”, “more drink”).

I enjoy simple songs.

I understand simple questions (e.g. “Where’s the dog?”).

I can answer simple questions (e.g. “What’s that?”).



I am 2 to 3 years

At 24 months I will say about 200 – 300 words.

I will go from using little sentences of two words to longer sentences of 5+ words.

I will understand and say simple location words (e.g. in, on, under, up and down).

I will start using words like “I”, “me”, “you”, “he”, “she”, “big”, “little” and “same”.

I can find simple pictures in books and know my body parts.

I can follow instructions with two parts.

I can understand and answer questions (e.g. ‘what is the boy doing?’).



I am 3 to 4 years

At 36 months I will say about 900 – 1000 words.

I will talk in sentences and tell simple stories.

I will understand and say colour words and simple shapes.

I will start using words like “a” and “the” and will make longer sentences with words such as “and” and “because”.

I will use regular past tense verbs (e.g. climbed).

I will understand simple questions containing “who”, “what”, “where”, “when” and “why”.

I can listen carefully and understand 3 or more key words in a sentence (e.g. The tall boy is throwing an apple).



I am 4 to 5 years

I am talking in sentences.

I am able to tell stories with a beginning, middle and end.

I can listen to simple stories and answer ‘wh’ questions about them.

I can answer ‘when’, ‘how’ and ‘how many?’ questions.

I can say words such as ‘myself’ and ‘himself’.

I can follow two to three part instructions.

I can understand and say later concepts like ‘in front’, ‘behind’, ‘before’ and ‘after’.



Health
Northern Sydney
Local Health District

If you have any concerns about your child’s language development please contact your local Speech Pathology department.

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