

Speech and Language Development

Please keep in mind that these are general guidelines and that each child varies.

Sound Acquisition

Age	Sound
3 to 4 years	m,b,n,t,p,d,k,g,w,h, and vowels
5 to 6 years	sh, ch, l, l blends
7 years	v,j,th, s,z,r,s blends, r blends

Generally, children should make the following sounds correctly by the ages indicated.

Vocabulary and Sentences

Age		
12 to 18 months	first words	
2 years	2-word sentences	
3 years	3 to 4 word sentences	400 to 900 word vocabulary
5 years	5 to 6 word sentences	1500 to 2500 word vocabulary

After age 5, the child rapidly advances. The child understands many more words than he can say.

Fluency

Hesitations in speech are normal from ages three to six. Listen to your child, encourage and praise him. Don't correct him or appear anxious about his speech. Don't make him speak or recite before strangers or visitors. Let him do so if he wishes, but only then. Try to keep your own speech clear and unhurried. If you are very concerned, consult a speech-language pathologist for help.

What Parents Can Do

1. Talk with your child about everything! Children need a lot of verbal stimulation from infancy on. Play games with sounds and words. Your children pick up most of their vocabulary from you.
2. Listen to your child and expand on their language. Use well-formed sentences that are a little longer than his. Use new vocabulary.

Child: "Truck broke."

Parent: "The truck is broken. It needs a new windshield."

3. Read to your child frequently. Talk about pictures and situations in books. Your child learns new vocabulary, concepts, and the patterns of language from being read to. Read cereal boxes, signs, everything! Use the library and make reading part of your daily home life.
4. Play games with your child. He can learn coordination, how to follow the rules, how to communicate with others, and new concepts.
5. Play hospital, zoo, store, barber shop, restaurant, or airport with your child. Use puppets. These activities develop creativity and help your child learn about life situations.
6. Classify. Help your child make scrapbooks or sort things to he'll learn the concepts of color, size, matching, comparisons, and so forth.
7. Provide new experiences. Take field trips, make things, cook, do science experiments. Involve your child in daily activities. Talk about all of these.
8. Use television to its best advantage. Limit its use to good programs and spend more time with family interactions.
9. Make language and speech fun for your child. Reinforce his attempts and praise him.
10. Concerning your child's speech and language attempts: don't allow other family members to tease, make fun of, imitate, or label him.
11. Encourage your child to use language when requesting items. Rather than giving them what they want because you know what they want, have them ask (even if it is a word approximation they imitate from you). Put favorite toys out of reach so the child has to communicate to have their needs met.