

Later developing narratives sound more story like, which are usually about small childhood problems such as a fall, or a pet injury. The child begins to learn how to repair communication breakdowns, such as asking, “what?”.

### Three to four years

Complex sentence structures appear including prepositional phrases, and conjoined sentences. Consonant blends (seen in words such as flag, stop, etc) become accurately pronounced, as well as the final ending of words. The child begins to develop the understanding of abstract words needed for preschool work including basic color words, words describing family relationships, why and how question forms, shapes, adjectives, and conjunction words. Expressively, the child begins to use abstract language such as reporting past events, reasoning, predicting outcomes, empathy, and maintaining a conversation. Importantly, narratives become more advanced. Narratives sound more like a true story, using a logical sequence of events surrounding one main theme. These are known as “primitive narratives” which follow the same structure as the adult narrative except for reflective components. The child’s language begins to adopt politeness, such as asking rather than demanding for help.



### Four to five years

Speech is generally 100% understandable, and the child is beginning to segment words into syllables. Speech errors may continue to persist on /s, r, and th/. Adult like sentence forms appear. The child continues to develop the understanding of more abstract words to help her be successful in school, such as the knowledge of letter names and sounds; knowledge of numbers and counting; conjunction words (when, so, because, if); and concepts (first, last, middle, empty, full, more, less, different). Additional narrative forms may appear including “chains”. These chains have a weak plot, but are logically linked sequences of events conjoined by the words “because”, or “and then”. Communication repair becomes more sophisticated with specific requests for clarification. Politeness also becomes more advanced. For example, the child may ask for something indirectly (i.e. no mention of asking to close the door yet stating “it’s cold in here”).

### Additional Information

Although this brochure provides general information on language development, keep in mind that the range of normal development varies considerably from child to child. If your child seems significantly behind in language development, talk with your local school district or physician regarding your concerns and they can help you decide what direction to take from there.

For more information on speech and language development be sure to visit the American Speech Language and Hearing Association web site at [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org).

S P E E C H

A N D

L A N G U A G E

D E V E L O P M E N T



SPEECH TREE

*...growing communication skills for life*

KATHRYN MCLACHLAN MS, CCC/SLP

PHONE: OFFICE: 763-537-3528

EMAIL: [INFO@SPEECH-TREE.COM](mailto:INFO@SPEECH-TREE.COM)

WEBSITE: [WWW.SPEECH-TREE.COM](http://WWW.SPEECH-TREE.COM)

0 – 6 months	8 – 12 months	1 – 2 years	2.5 – 3 years	3 – 4 years	4 – 5 years
crying, babbling, smiling, cooing, gazing	waving, pointing, babbling becomes word like, first real word said	50–100 words spoken at 18 months, speech is 50% understandable	simple sentences, rhyming, speech is 75% understandable	complex sentences, blends and final sounds are clear	speech is 100% understandable, segment words into syllables
joint attention and reference, quiets to caregiver's voice, moves eyes to sound	joint attention and reference, 3–50 words understood	understands single words for objects out of sight, points to body parts or pictures when named, follows simple commands	understands question forms, basic concepts	understanding of simple academic words such as color and shapes	adult like sentence forms, knowledge of numbers, and abstract concepts
communication is completely interpreted by caregiver	communication becomes self initiated vocally and with gestures	talk of past events, protesting (no bath), greeting (hi doggy), requesting (more milk)	talk during play, talk of small childhood problems, talk of a remembered setting	talk of stories with sequence, polite talk is used	communication repair, stronger narrative forms, indirect requests

## What is language

Language is a symbolic system used to exchange messages between people. It is the vital link between people and the world. All language systems are made up of symbols, meaning, and use. Symbols are the sounds, words, and/ or gestures we use to convey a message. Meaning is the understanding of the message, and use is the function or purpose of the message.

## Birth to six months

The newborn begins her communication with pre-symbolic sounds, such as crying, cooing, gazing, and smiling. Once the baby begins babbling (identifiable consonant + vowel repetitions, i.e. dada) then symbolic language is beginning to take form. Meaning of language is also beginning to take form through the act of joint attention/referencing. Joint attention/referencing refers to focused attention on each other or an external object through dialogues initiated and established by the caregiver during routines and games. The infant quiets to caregiver's voice. Eyes move in the direction of sounds. The use of infant communication is dependent on

the caregiver's interpretation and reaction to her communications.

## Eight to twelve months

More gestures and vocalizations become firmly established. The child is beginning to wave bye-bye, shake her head, point at objects seen, and use a variety of syllable combinations for babbling. Babbling is beginning to resemble word like structures. The child continues to learn the meaning of communicated messages through the act of joint referencing, and 3–50 words are understood. The child's first real word appear(s), typically in the form of the name of familiar people and objects (around 12 months of age). The child no longer solely depends the caregiver's interpretation of communications, and begins to self initiate both vocal and gestural messages.

## One to two years of age

By 18 months of age the child is using 50–100 recognizable words. By two years of age, the child's vocabulary has tripled to 200–300 words, and speech is roughly 50% understandable. The child is able to follow simple commands, point to simple body parts or pictures when named. Around two years of age, the child moves away from

single word utterances and begins to combine two words together to convey a message. These two word utterances may be used to express a request (more milk), greeting (hi doggy), protest (no bath), requesting an answer (grandma go?). The child also begins to talk about past events.

## Two and one half to three years

Basic sentence structures begin to emerge including the "pronoun + is + verbing form. Word endings such as ed, ing, and plural forms begin to appear but may be over generalized, for example "I eated it". Production of rhyming appears and speech is now 75% understandable. The child continues to build upon knowledge of previously acquired words. This allows the ability to learn new words on the basis of limited or few exposures to it. The child also understands what, who, and where question forms as well as some basic concepts such as in, on, under, open, closed. Language is used for play. Early narrative forms emerge, which may not sound like stories, but rather a series of random descriptions. This important narrative allows the child to describe a setting surrounding an event.