

## Information for Parents

Source: Early Support – Helping Every Child Succeed DfES Publication 2005

### Language Development

All children learn language at different rates. Being a bit faster or slower than other children of the same age normally has little bearing on how individuals turn out later on.

The following chart provides a simple guide to how language normally develops during the first years of a child's life.



Age	Social and Play	Understanding	Talking
(by) 1 year	Makes eye contact. Smiles at familiar people. Waves goodbye. Shows affection to parents. Enjoys games like 'Round and round the garden'	Listens when spoken to. Recognises own name. Understands 'No'. Points to head, arm and leg when asked.	Makes sounds when spoken to. Babbles in strings of connected but different sounds (eg 'ba-da-ba'). May say 'mama'. Laughs a lot. May use 10 words or more. Tries to copy new words. Talks nonsense to self, which sounds like speech.
18 months	Uses objects and toys appropriately. Will draw an adult's attention to something by pointing. Clearly wants to communicate.	Understands simple requests (eg 'Pick up your teddy' ). Points to familiar objects on request (eg 'Where are your shoes?').	May use 10 words or more. Tries to copy new words. Talks nonsense to self, which sounds like speech.

2 years	<p>Recognises pictures and can match them to toys.</p> <p>Anticipates/joins in action songs.</p> <p>Can concentrate for five minutes.</p> <p>Simple pretend play with dolls etc</p>	<p>Acts on simple commands (eg 'Kick the ball to mum').</p> <p>Listens to stories with pictures.</p>	<p>Takes turns in conversation.</p> <p>Can use at least 20 words.</p> <p>Tries to copy new words.</p> <p>Joins two words together (eg 'Want drink').</p> <p>Asks questions (eg 'What's this?').</p> <p>Asks for food and drink.</p> <p>Can't always be understood.</p>
2 1/2 years	<p>Watches others at play and may join in or copy.</p> <p>Joins in rhymes and songs.</p> <p>Tries to get adult's attention.</p>	<p>Follows simple stories.</p> <p>Understanding mainly linked with here-and-now.</p>	<p>Uses three words together.</p> <p>Omits some 'little' words (eg 'the', 'is').</p> <p>Mainly talks about here-and-now.</p> <p>Difficulties with some sounds (eg f, s, sh)</p> <p>Talks to other children as well as adults.</p>
3 years	<p>Understands activity in pictures.</p> <p>Can pretend an object is something else (eg a saucepan is a hat; a brick is a car).</p> <p>Pretend play, like 'mummies and daddies' or 'doctors'.</p>	<p>Understands words such as 'in', 'on', 'under' and some adjectives (eg 'big', 'wet').</p>	<p>Uses sentences of four words and more.</p> <p>Mainly intelligible, although some sounds are immature.</p> <p>Talks about past events but tenses may be confused, (eg 'I goed to the park')</p>
4 years	<p>Plays 'pretend' games with other children.</p> <p>Plays games with simple rules.</p> <p>Beginning to understand numbers.</p> <p>Can stay with one activity for 10 minutes.</p>	<p>Understands past and future ('yesterday' and 'tomorrow').</p> <p>Understands 'hot' and 'cold'.</p>	<p>Uses complete sentences, including link words like 'because' and 'but'.</p> <p>Asks 'Why?' and 'When?' but may not listen to the answers.</p> <p>Uses threats, insults, promises and praise.</p>
5 years	<p>Can play in groups.</p> <p>Takes place in a structured classroom.</p>	<p>Understands spatial relations (eg 'on top', 'near').</p> <p>Understands 'What is the opposite of...?'</p>	<p>Speech is easy to understand (although may still say 'w' for 'r' and 'f' for 'th').</p> <p>Can explain meaning of simple words.</p> <p>Uses longer sentences.</p> <p>Can tell a simple story.</p>