



Speech & Language Development



Language vs. Speech

When a person has trouble understanding others (receptive language), or sharing thoughts, ideas, and feelings completely (expressive language), then he or she has a **language** disorder.

When a person is unable to produce speech sounds correctly or fluently, or has problems with his or her voice, then he or she has a **speech** disorder.

Language is made up of socially shared rules that include the following:

- What words mean (e.g., “star” can refer to a bright object in the night sky or a celebrity)
- How to make new words (e.g., friend, friendly, unfriendly)
- How to put words together (e.g., “Peg walked to the new store” rather than “Peg walk store new”)
- What word combinations are best in what situations (“Would you mind moving your foot?” could quickly change to “Get off my foot, please!” if the first request did not produce results)

There are two different types of language, expressive and receptive. Expressive language refers to a person’s ability to express themselves, make requests, and communicate wants and needs, as well as appropriately use grammar. Receptive language refers to a person’s ability to understand language, learn, and follow directions.

Speech is the verbal means of communicating. Speech consists of the following:

Articulation

How speech sounds are made (e.g., children must learn how to produce the “r” sound in order to say “rabbit” instead of “wabbit”).

Voice

Use of the vocal folds and breathing to produce sound (e.g., the voice can be abused from overuse or misuse and can lead to hoarseness or loss of voice).

Fluency

The rhythm of speech (e.g., hesitations or stuttering can affect fluency).

Speech sound production, or articulation, errors can severely impact a person’s ability to communicate and make themselves understood. Articulation therapy may be appropriate for clients of any age and with many different diagnoses, including articulation delay, apraxia, and dysarthria.

Stuttering can affect people of all ages and can be characterized by repetitions of words and syllables, prolongations, blocks, and other secondary behaviors. I teach my clients skills to help improve their speech fluency and coach families to help support their loved ones.

Modified from: ASHA http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/language_speech/

What should my child be able to do?

BIRTH TO ONE YEAR

Birth to 3 months

- Startles to loud sounds
- Smiles or interacts with others
- Makes pleasure sounds (cooing, gooing)

4 to 6 months

- Babbling with different sounds, including p, b, and m
- Moves eyes in direction of sounds
- Responds to changes in tone of your voice
- Notices toys that make sounds and music

7 months – 1 year

- Uses gestures (e.g. waving, pointing)
- Imitates different speech sounds
- Has one or two words (hi, dog, dada, mama) around first birthday, although sounds may not be clear
- Recognizes words for common items like “cup”, “shoe”, “book”, or “juice”
- Begins to respond to requests (e.g. “Come here” or “Want more?”)

What can I do to help?

Have your child’s hearing checked and pay attention to recurrent ear infections.

Respond to your baby’s communication attempts and laughter and imitate his or her vocalizations.

Narrate or talk about what you’re doing while you’re doing things and label objects and actions (“You have a car” “Drive the car”).

Teach environmental and animal sounds (“A cow says ‘moo’” “Beep-beep” “Vroom”).

Teach your child turn-taking and to imitate actions and games, like peekaboo, clapping, blowing kisses, pat-a-cake, itsy bitsy spider, and waving bye-bye.

1 to 2 years

- Understands a few body part names and points to them
- Follows simple commands and understands simple questions (“Where’s your shoe?” “Go get your dolly”)

- Listens to and participates in simple stories, songs, and rhymes
- Points to pictures in books when named
- Says more words every month
- Uses some one- or two- word questions (“Go bye-bye?” “Where dada?”)
- Puts two words together (“more milk” “daddy book”)
- Uses many different consonant sounds at the beginning of words

What can I do to help?

Talk while doing things and going places. When taking a walk in the stroller, for example, point to familiar objects (e.g., cars, trees, and birds) and say their names. “I see a dog. The dog says ‘woof.’ This is a big dog. This dog is brown.”

Use simple but grammatically correct speech.

Play with sounds all day, in the bath, in the house, or outside (Tugboats say, “p-p-p-p”, clocks tick, “t-t-t-t”, airplanes say “v-v-v-v”).

If your child says one word, expand on their utterances by restating and adding another word.

Read to your child every day, starting with simple books with big pictures. Don’t just read the books, name and describe the pictures. Once you know they know the words, start asking the child to name the pictures.

2 to 3 years

- Understands simple opposites (go-stop, up-down, big-little)
- Follows 2-step directions (Get your shoes, and put them on)
- Listens to stories for longer periods of time
- Has a word for almost everything
- Uses 2-3 words to talk about and ask for things
- Uses k,g,f,t,d, and n sounds
- Familiar listeners can understand their speech most of the time
- Asks for or directs attention to things by naming them
- Asks “why?”

What can I do to help?

Use clear simple speech that is easy to imitate.

Repeat what your child says and then expand on it, add details, teach actions and function. For example, if your child says, “big dog”, you can respond, “Yes, that is a big dog. It is brown and says ‘woof’. Do you want to pet the dog?”

Let your child know that what they have to say is important to you even when you don’t understand. Explain what you did understand and then ask them to repeat what you didn’t understand.



Continue reading to your child every day and introduce new vocabulary with new books.

Teach and talk about colors, numbers, and letters. Practice counting.

Keep practicing labeling objects, teaching your child more vocabulary by labeling objects, actions, people, synonyms, and more.

Continue singing songs, playing games and teaching rhymes, these teach your child the rhythm and sounds of language.

Play a simple yes-no game to help strengthen your child's language comprehension (Are you a boy? Is that a dog?).

Give your child choices, "Do you want milk or juice?", instead of just asking yes-no questions.

3 to 4 years

- Hears you when you call from another room, hears at the same loudness level as other family members
- Understands words for some colors and shapes
- Understands words for family members, like uncle, aunt, grandma
- Talks about activities at school or friends' homes
- Answers simple "who?", "what?", and "where?" questions
- Asks "when" and "how" questions
- Says rhyming words, like cat-hat
- Uses pronouns, like I, you, me, we, and they
- Uses some plural words, like toys, birds, buses
- Uses a lot of sentences that have 4 or more words
- Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words

What can I do to help?

Expand on social communication and storytelling by participating with your child in imaginative play, role-playing, and dress-up.

Work on comprehension by asking your child questions.

Look at family pictures, make silly pictures with magazine cutouts, and have your child explain what is happening.

Read books that have a simple plot, and talk about the story line with your child. Help your child to retell the story or act it out with props and dress-up clothes. Tell him or her your favorite part of the story and ask for his or her favorite part.

Sort pictures and items into categories, increase the challenge by asking your child to point out the item that does not belong in a category.

4 to 5 years

- Understands order words of order, like first, next, and last, and time, like yesterday, today, and tomorrow
- Follows longer and more complex directions with 3-steps or multiple features, like "Get the purple shoes from your bedroom and put them under the stairs," at home and in the classroom
- Hears and understands most of what is being said at home and in class
- Says all speech sounds in words. May make mistakes on harder sounds like l,s,r,v,z,ch,sh,th
- Names letters and numbers
- Uses sentences that have more than one action word and is able to tell a short story

What can I do to help?

Talk about spatial relationships (first/middle/last; right/left) and opposites (up/down; big/little).

Describe or give clues for your child to identify what you are describing, playing games like "I Spy." Take turns.

Follow your child's directions, as he or she explains how to do something. Discuss anything that was unclear.

Continue building your child's vocabulary, providing definitions for new words and using them in context.

Encourage your child to ask for an explanation if they're not sure what a word means.

Sort items into more subtle categories with similarities and differences (things that are smooth vs. rough, heavy vs. light). Have your child identify what doesn't belong and have them explain why.

Continue to encourage imaginative play and role-playing, with dolls, dress-up, playing house, etc.

Read stories with easy to follow plots. Help your child predict what will happen next, ask "wh" questions (who, what, when, where, or why) to ensure understanding and comprehension.

Play age-appropriate board games, to encourage cooperative play and turn-taking.

Have your child help you plan and discuss daily activities, such as making a shopping list for the grocery store. Be sure to ask his or her opinion and involve your child in the decision making process.



If you think that your child may have a speech or language delay, or you're just not sure, contact Circle Creek Therapy for a free consultation.



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