

Communication
Strategies for the Early Language
Learner

Lakeshore Speech Therapy, LLC

Developmental Milestones

Birth-3 months

Hearing and Understanding

- Startles to loud sounds
- Quiets or smiles when spoken to.
- Seems to recognize your voice and quiets if crying
- Increases or decreases sucking behavior in response to sound

Talking

- Makes pleasure sounds (cooing, gooing)
- Cries differently for different needs
- Smiles when see you.

4-6 months

Hearing and Understanding

- Moves eyes in the direction of sounds
- Responds to changes in the tone of your voice
- Notices toys that make sounds
- Pays attention to music

Talking

- Babbling sounds more speech-like with many different sounds including *p, b, m*
- Chuckles and laughs
- Vocalizes excitement and displeasure
- Makes gurgling sounds when left alone and when playing with you

7 months to 1 year

Hearing and Understanding

- Enjoys games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake
- Turns and looks in the direction of sounds
- Recognizes words for common items like “cup”, “shoe”, “book”, or “juice”
- Begins to respond to requests (e.g. “Come here”)

Talking

- Babbling has both long and short such as “tata upup bibibibi”
- Uses speech or noncrying sounds to get and keep attention
- Uses gestures to communicate (waving)
- Imitates different speech sounds
- Has one or two words (hi, dog, dada, mama) although sounds may not be clear

What can we do to help?

- Check child's ability to hear. Pay attention to ear problems (recurrent ear infections).
- Reinforce communication attempts by looking at him, her , speaking, and imitating vocalizations.
- Repeat his or her laughter or facial expressions.
- Teach the baby to imitate actions such as peek-a-boo, blowing kisses, pat-a-cake, bye-bye
- Talk while you are doing things such as dressing, bathing, and feeding (Mommy is putting shoes on)
- Talk about where you are going and what you are doing . (We are going outside. We will swing on the swings.)
- Talk about colors. Practice counting. Count steps as you go up and down.
- Teach animal sounds.

One to Two Years

Hearing and Understanding

- Points to a few body parts when asked
- Follows simple commands and understands simple questions (“Roll the ball,” “Kiss the baby,” “Where’s your shoe?”)
- Listens to simple stories, songs, and rhymes
- Points to pictures in a book when named

Talking

- Says more words every month
- Uses some one- or-two word questions (“Where kitty?” “Go bye-bye.” “What’s that?”)
- Puts two words together (“more cookie,” “no juice”).
- Uses many different consonant sounds at the beginning of words.

What can we do to help?

- Talk while doing things and going places. While on a walk point to and label familiar objects (e.g. “I see dog, dog says woof.”)
- Use simple but grammatical speech that is easy for the child to imitate (e.g. “Put coat on.” “Time for tubby.” “ Pop the bubbles.”)
- Expand on words. If child says “baby, “ you respond by saying, “Baby crying.” “She’s hungry.”
- Continue to read to child everyday. Find books with large pictures and one or two words or a simple phrase on each page. Take time to name or describe the pictures on each page.
- Have child point to pictures you name. Ask child to name pictures.
- Communicative Temptations (handout)

Two to Three Years

Hearing and Understanding

- Understands differences in meaning (go-stop, in-out, up-down)
- Follows two requests (“Get the book and put it on the table.”)
- Listens and enjoys hearing stories for longer periods of time.

Talking

- Has a word for almost anything.
- Use two or three words to talk about and ask for things.
- Uses *k, g, f, t, d and n sounds*.
- Speech is understood by familiar listeners most of the time.
- Often asks for or directs attention to objects by naming them.

What can we do to help?

- Use clear, simple speech that is easy to imitate.
- Show the child that you are interested in what he or she is saying by repeating it and expanding upon it.
- Let the child know that what he or she says is important to you by asking them to repeat what you do not understand. (e.g. “I know you want a block. Tell me again which block you want.”).
- Expand vocabulary. Introduce vocabulary through reading books that have simple sentences on each page. Name and describe pictures on each page of the book.
- Ask the child a question that require a choice , rather than a simple yes or no. (e.g. “Do you want milk or juice?”). Be sure to wait for an answer and reinforce successful communication.
- Sing songs, play finger games, and tell nursery rhymes.
- Strengthen your child’s language comprehension skills by playing the yes/no game: “Are you a boy?” “Is this a zebra?”

Three to Four Years

Hearing and Understanding

- Hears you when you call from another room.
- Hears television or radio at the same loudness level as other family members.
- Answers simple “who?”, “what?”, “where?”, and “why?” questions

Talking

- Talks about activities at school or friends’ homes.
- People outside the family usually understand the child’s speech.
- Uses a lot of sentences that have 4 or more words
- Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words.

What can we do to help?

- Sort pictures and items into categories, but increase the challenge by asking the child out the item that does not belong.
- Expand vocabulary and length of child's utterances by reading, singing, talking about what you are doing and where you are going.
- Read books that have a simple plot, and talk about the story line. Help the child to retell the story or act it out with props or dress up clothes.
- Work on comprehension skills by asking simple "wh" questions.
- Expand on social communication and storytelling skills by acting out typical scenarios (e.g. cooking food, going to sleep, going to the doctor).

Prerequisite Skills for Language

- Social: Before a baby begins to talk, he must be social and have a desire to be with people.
- Interactive: Secondly, a baby must be able to initiate and respond to interaction with joint attention, facial expressions, and early gestures.
- Comprehension: Lastly, and just as important as saying words, a baby must also begin to understand words.
- All of these things must occur before a toddler learns to speak.

Social Games

Traditional Parent/Child Social Routines

Peek-a boo, Patty Cake, Gimme 5, So Big, This Little Piggy

Original Games

Up-Down, Ah-Boom, Choo-choo song

Early Play

Blowing Bellies, Tickling, Chase, Rocket Ship

Finger plays and Songs

Row your Boat, Ring Around the Rosie, The Wheels on the Bus, Open Shut Them, Happy Birthday

Its not the game...its how you play the game!!

Comprehension/Receptive Language

- A child must understand words **before** he begins to use words to talk
- The most obvious indicator of receptive language problems is that a child is not following simple directions during daily routines after he's reached an age of 15-18 months

Receptive Language Strategies

- Simplify: Use language one step above where child is expressively,
- When a child doesn't understand a command do the following:

TELL HIM. SHOW HIM. HELP HIM.

Verbal Cue: Get shoe

Visual Cue: Get shoe (point)

Tactile Cue: Take child to shoe and help him pick it up.

Receptive Language Strategies

- Teaching Body Parts: Start with ones that are far away from each other (hair, belly, toes). These work great because kids can see them.
- Give a child a command for something he is about to do.
- Target comprehension by establishing play routines and then transition words to the same activities. (night, night example)
- What, Where, Who questions acquired in that order.

Expressive Language

- Start with words not sounds (e.g. ball not b-b-ball).
- Research supports Signing. Signing does not cause a child not to talk. It is the fastest and easiest way to reduce frustration associated with late talking.
- First Signs- All requests: *more, eat, milk, all done, please, go, open*

Expressive Language

- **Communicative Intent:**
Teach the toddler that he
has to: **DO SOMETHING TO
GET SOMETHING!**

Imitation

Early Gestures: Gimme five, wave, clap, reaching to be picked up

Simple Actions: Bang on table, jump, push car, hit balloon

Non-verbal Actions with Mouth: Air kisses, blowing (hot foods, bubbles) pretend licking

Vocal actions with Mouth: Fake sneeze, blowing raspberries, snore

Play Words/Sounds: Mmm, animal sounds, car sounds: beep/vroom, uh-oh, ouch

Early Words: up, mom, dad, go, dog, no

Expressive Language

- Model to get kids to imitate new words
- Once imitating, use choices often
- Withhold to make those easily imitated words spontaneous (communicative temptations)
- Sabotage to work on initiating communication
- Accept what the child gives you. It doesn't have to be perfect
- Waiting is key!!!!

Articulation

Articulation: How the child produces speech sounds

By 24 months: /p, b, m, t, n, d, h, k, g/ (initial)

By 28 months: /f, y/

By 32 months: /w/

By 36 months: /s/

References

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/23.htm>

- Early Speech-Language Development: Taking Theory to the floor. Laura Mize

www.teachmetotalk.com

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