

Milestones of speech, language and communication development

18- 24 Months

The rate of children's speech and language development can vary, depending on the child. Some children will develop certain skills quicker than others, and some children will be slow to develop certain skills compared to their peers, even if there are no related problems. This information sheet is just a general guideline, and many experts vary considerably on what they believe to be the normal stages of development.

You will see that many skills mentioned are repeated over several age groups as children are all different and some take longer to develop these abilities. So just use this chart as a very general guideline rather than read too much into it. There also may be some difference between boys and girls and when they develop certain skills.

To try and make this chart easier to read I have created a made-up child called Bill. Bill was lucky, he had a childhood free of any illness or accidents and he had pro-active parents who played with him and gave him lots of quality 1:1 attention and play-time

The milestones information sheets focus on 6 areas of development:

- Speech and Auditory Awareness
- Expressive Language and semantics (content)
- Social use of Language (use and pragmatics)
- Receptive language (comprehension, perceiving and understanding) and cognition
- Morphology and syntax (structure)
- Gross and fine motor skills

During the 18 -24 month period of development Bill is walking and exploring more and more. He can now understand between 200 and 300 words and is seeking others out to show them things. Bill's speech continues to develop as he starts to acquire more speech sounds.



Speech and Auditory Awareness: 18 - 24 Months

Bill's sound inventory is beginning to increase (**m n p b t d w h**) and he is using most vowel and diphthong sounds accurately. Other sounds that may be emerging are **k g t ng**, but many children will not have developed these yet.

Bill is now starting to regularly use up to 20 words during this period. As well as real words, he still uses jargon and may often chatter away in jargon when looking at a book. Many babies like to sing in jargon and their vocalisations will increase as their activity level increases. Babies will often try to imitate words others are saying.

Bill is beginning to put 2 syllables together, but it will generally be the same syllable duplicated e.g. "nana" for banana, "wawa" for water. Many words will be approximated and sounds that have not developed will be substituted. Final and medial sounds will also often be omitted.

Bill now has an auditory memory that can store 2 items.

Expressive Language and semantics (content): 18 - 24 Months

Bill's use of a few single words (nouns) is at around 10 - 20 during this period, with the occasional simple 2-word combination developing. He begins to understand that everything has a name and may try and request the name of an object. Bill can produce some animal sounds, refer to himself by name and says "no". He is using words now more often than gesture, but has learnt to shake and nod his head for yes/no.

Social use of Language (use and pragmatics): 18 - 24 Months

Bill is now initiating more communication and requesting help by gesturing and vocalising. He will show a preference for familiar people and more caution with strangers. He becomes more aware of the actions of others and will begin to imitate other children. He will also indicate his toilet needs.

Bill now does not just seek out adults for comfort and safety but seeks them out to show them things and interact. Bill often gets lots of positive feedback from people when he interacts and this encourages him to interact even more.



Receptive language (comprehension, perceiving and understanding) and cognition: 18 - 24 Months

By this age Bill is understanding many single words and a few two word combinations. His receptive vocabulary is far in excess of his expressive vocabulary and he is possibly understanding 250-300 words. There is also an understanding of some "wh" questions (what/where/who) and he can point to major body parts, clothing items, toys and food when asked and is discriminating between songs. Bill is beginning to understand personal pronouns (my, mine, you) and starting to understand that things fit into categories (animals, food etc).

His understanding and use of objects becomes more appropriate, with an ability to use simple conventional objects in an appropriate manner, e.g. hitting pegs with wooden hammer. Bill imitates some adult behaviour, plays simple games and points to objects in pictures.

Object permanence is now well demonstrated and Bill is able to find familiar objects when not in sight. Bill's understanding of cause and effect is also developing further, which makes certain toys more fun.

Morphology and syntax (structure): 18 - 24 Months

Bill is now understanding and following directions for simple actions (e.g. "jump down") and although he is not using these types of sentences he is hearing them regularly and beginning to decode very simple syntax. This modelling by carers and parents will slowly impact on Bill's use of language. As he develops through this stage he will be using two word combinations such as "more milk," "big boy," "daddy go".

Bill will be trying to tell others of his experiences by using jargon combined with real words.

Gross and fine motor skills: 18 - 24 Months

Bill is really becoming more active and inquisitive, running more freely, attempting to walk up stairs (holding on) and walking backwards while pulling a toy. He can throw a ball with direction, remove wrapping from a sweet and turn single pages in a book and pointing at the pictures.

Bill now attempts to undress a little, although it is sometimes difficult. He has started to eat independently and will be using a spoon, although often clumsily.

He likes drawing and although he mainly scribbles he can imitate a circular scribble. Overall his fine motor skills are coming into play a lot more, and he is developing and showing an ability to pick up smaller objects and able to place 3-6 pegs in a pegboard.

To learn more about child development, speech and language development, and what to do if your child has a speech and language delay visit our website www.icommunicatetherapy.com.



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Suggested Reading

The Wonder Years: Helping Your Baby and Young Child Successfully Negotiate The Major Developmental Milestones by American Academy Of Pediatrics (Author), Tanya Remer Altmann

Developing Child, The by Helen Bee and Denise Boyd

Milestones: Normal Speech And Language Development Across the Lifespan by Jr., Ph.D. Oller, et al John W.

Child Development by Laura E. Berk

Ages and Stages: A Parent's Guide to Normal Childhood Development by Charles E. Schaefer and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo

Child Development, Second Edition: A Practitioner's Guide (Social Work Practice with Children and Families) by Douglas D Davies

Child Development by Robert S. Feldman

What's Going on in There? : How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life by Lise Eliot

Child Development: Principles and Perspectives by J. Littlefield Cook & G. Cook

Let's Talk Together - Home Activities for Early Speech & Language Development by Amy Chouinard and Cory Poland

Born to Talk: An Introduction to Speech and Language Development by Lloyd M. Hult and Merle R. Howard

Speaking, Listening and Understanding: Games for Young Children by Catherine Delamain and Jill Spring

Childhood Speech, Language & Listening Problems: What Every Parent Should Know by Patricia McAleer Hamaguchi

The Parents Guide to Speech and Language Problems by Debbie Feit

The Handbook of Child Language Disorders by Richard G. Schwartz

Does My Child Have a Speech Problem? by Katherine L. Martin

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