

Milestones of speech, language and communication development

48 - 60 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 proactive 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

The 48 - 60 month period of development sees Bill becoming a confident speaker. He now has most of the speech sounds in his inventory, his expressive language contains up to 1500 words and he is 100% intelligible to everyone.



Speech and Auditory Awareness: 48 - 60 Months

Bill is totally intelligible to everyone now he has most sounds and clusters perfected - **m n p b t d w ng k g h f s y v z l r sh ch j th sp st sk sl sm sn sw tr gr br pr cr fl bl pl gl** .

Some of Bill's friends are still having difficulty with **r** and **l**, but many children of this age take a little longer to acquire these sounds.

Bill only gets tripped up on longer clusters **spr str scr spl**, and some clusters in the middle and end of words are still being reduced occasionally.

Bill is using 1500 plus words now and his rate, rhythm, intonation and volume are all normal.

Bill's auditory memory can now hold and repeat back 3 4 digits.

Expressive Language and semantics (content): 48 - 60 Months

Bill is using up to 1500 words and his utterances are longer and more complex, containing more complicated syntax and concepts (see Morphology and syntax sections).

Bill uses past tenses correctly and adjectives, pronouns and prepositions are all part of his everyday language. His use of plurals are consistent, both irregular and regular.

Social use of Language (use and pragmatics): 48 - 60 Months

Bill knows and understands the conventions of simple conversations e.g., turn taking, topic maintenance, and is aware when he is breaking them.

His confidence continues to grow and he speaks without avoidance or embarrassment. He is confident on the telephone and has an awareness of other capabilities, modifying his speech to age of listener.



Receptive language (comprehension, perceiving and understanding) and cognition: 48 - 60 Months

Bill is now understanding up to 2000 words. Bill is also developing another important skill, he has metalinguistic awareness, that is, he is able to think about and comment on what he (and others) are saying.

His understanding and thought processes continue to develop and his comprehension is now at a point where he can follow and process instructions containing 4+ information carrying words, or an 8 word sentence. He can follow 3-step commands when items/objects are not present. His story retell capabilities increase and he can retell a story from memory using 5 sentences. Bill can hold a message in his head and deliver it to another person.

Bill has learning to count, and can count objects to 4 or 5. He can sequence 3+ pictures and understands opposite concepts. He can name the primary colours on request and identifies crosses, triangles, circles, and squares, and makes comparisons of speed and weight.

His imagination is now feeding into his speech and he speaks of imaginary conditions with "pretend" or "I hope."

He can focus on a single activity for 11-12 minutes and he helps plan activities. His understanding of time concepts increases and he can follow language such as "early in the morning," "next month," "next year," "noontime" and the difference between past present and future and day, morning, afternoon, night.

His awareness of concepts related to spatial arrangements, e.g., "in front of," "behind," "far," and "near" also increases.

Morphology and syntax (structure): 48 - 60 Months

Bill's ability to comprehend complex sentences continues to increase. He is using 5-6 word sentences and he is using compound sentences combined with words such as "and," "but," "or," "so," and "because," e.g., "I'm four now but John is only three." He IS also now able to use past and present progressive tenses accurately e.g., "I ate," "I am going..."

Gross and fine motor skills: 48 - 60 Months

Bill is now learning to dance, skip and walk narrow line. He is agile and confident on his feet. His fine motor skills are still developing and will continue to do for some time. He can copy a square, letters and draw person and house in detail. Bill counts on his fingers, uses a knife and fork and undresses and dresses fully.

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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