

BABIES

Babies usually say their first word at about 12 months. More words follow – slowly at first, but from around the age of 2, the process speeds up. By the time they start school most children are competent talkers.

This summary shows how a typical child develops speech and language:

AT 18 MONTHS

Has a vocabulary of approximately 20 words – mostly the names of people or things

- Can follow simple commands e.g. Pick up Teddy
- Understands some everyday words and phrases such as Milk, Coat, All gone



AT 2 YEARS

Uses approximately 50 words and understands many more

- Can put two words together e.g. Baby crying, Bye-bye Daddy, More juice
- Understands simple questions like Where's Teddy
- You can understand most of what (s)he says

AT 3 YEARS

Speaks in sentences of 3 – 5 words

- Asks who, what, where questions
- Knows the difference between big and little
- You can understand almost all (s)he says

AT 4 YEARS

Uses and to link sentences together

- Understands and uses descriptive words such as colours
- Talks about things that have already happened or will be happening
- People outside the family can usually understand him or her

AT 5 YEARS

Talks well, with few grammatical errors

- Understands most of what you say
- Should be completely intelligible
- Is beginning to learn abstract concepts e.g. words relating to time
- Understands language well enough to appreciate simple jokes and ask what a new word means



Communication

AFTER 5 YEARS

Produces the final few speech sounds, if not already in place:

l, r, ng by 6 years and th, sl, spr by 7-8.

Continues to:

- Learn more words
- Use and understand figurative language and more complex sentences.
- This later language development is related more to children's learning at school and elsewhere than innate processes in the brain, so it is not really possible to give clear milestones.

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