# Stages of Language Development Chart

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There are two main areas of language:

- **Receptive language (understanding):** Comprehension of language.
- **Expressive language (using language):** The use of language through speech, sign or alternative forms of communication to communicate wants, needs, thoughts and ideas.

Note: Each stage of development assumes that the preceding stages have been successfully achieved.

* See the Appendix beneath for explanation of terms.

How to use this chart:

Review the skills demonstrated by the child up to their current age. If you notice skills that have not been met below their current age contact Kid Sense Child Development on 1800 KIDSENSE (1800 543 736).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Sentences</th>
<th>Verbal grammar</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Possible implications if milestones not achieved</th>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6-12 months</th>
<th>1-2 years</th>
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</table>
| • Attends to sounds and voices  
• Recognises facial expressions and tones of voice | • Responds to familiar requests (e.g. come here) and own name  
• Understands gestures (e.g. wave for ‘bye’) |
| • Babbling (e.g. ma-ma, da-da)  
• Takes turns vocalising with others  
• Recognises names of a few objects | • Babbling (e.g. ma-ma, da-da)  
• Takes turns vocalising with others  
• Recognises names of a few objects |
| • No specific milestones | • No specific milestones  
• No Specific milestones |
| • No specific milestones  
• Can understand one key word in a sentence (e.g. Where’s your **nose**?) | • May have difficulties socialising with parents and joint attention  
• May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention |
| • May have difficulties socialising with parents and joint attention  
• May affect muscle tone in the face as babbling helps to strengthen the muscles |
| 2-3 years | • Follows 2 part instructions (e.g. Go to your room and get your shoes) | • Names actions (e.g. go, run) | • Minimum of 2-3 words in a sentence (e.g. Daddy go work) | • Talks about present events | • Position: on; off; in; out; up; down; under; top; open; shut | • Understands and asks What and Where questions |
| | • Points to main body parts, clothing items, toys and food when asked | • By 2 years vocabulary is 250-300 words | • By 3 years uses 1000 words | • Regular Plurals - e.g. 1 dog, 2 dogs | • Size: big; small/little; long | • May have difficulties socialising with peers and joint attention |
| | | • Still talks to self in long monologues | • Articles - ‘a’ and ‘the’ | • Quantity: 1; 2 | | • May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention |
| | | • Progresses -ing - e.g. The boy is jumping | • Uses Pronouns - ‘you, I, me, mine’ | • Other: stop; go/start; loud; quiet; heavy; soft; fast; hot; cold | | • May have difficulties following instructions |
| | | • Regular Past Tense - e.g. “I climbed” | • Possessive ‘s - e.g. “Daddy’s car” | | | • May have difficulties being understood by peers |
| | | | | | | • May have difficulties being understood by unfamiliar people |
| | | | | | | • May have difficulties expressing wants, needs, thoughts and ideas |
| 3-4 years | • Follows 3 part instructions (e.g. point to the cat, the dog and the monkey)  
• Understands longer, more complex sentences | • By 4 years uses nearly 1500 words  
• Minimum of 3-4 words  
• Tells you what they are doing  
• Tells you the function or use of an object | • Begins to talk about past events  
• **Auxiliary ‘is’** - e.g. The girl is skipping  
• **Pronouns ‘he/she’** - e.g. “He is running” or “She is drinking”.  
• **Connector ‘and’** - e.g. “I want a banana and an apple”  
• **3rd Person Singular** - e.g. “He wants the ball”; “It eats grass”; “She reads books”  
• **Contracted Negative** - e.g. isn’t, doesn’t, haven’t, shouldn’t  
• **Contracted Copula** - e.g. He’s happy  
• **Past Participle** - e.g. It’s broken | • 3 to early 4 years:  
• **Position:** bottom; behind; first; near  
• **Size:** short (length) - emerging; short (height)  
• **Quantity:** 3; every; none  
• **Other:** hard; slow; light (weight); many colours | • Understands **Who** questions  
• Asks **What, Why, When and How** questions  
• **Contracted Negative** - e.g. isn’t, doesn’t, haven’t, shouldn’t  
• **Contracted Copula** - e.g. He’s happy  
• **Past Participle** - e.g. It’s broken | • May have difficulties socialising with peers  
• May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention  
• May have difficulties following instructions at home, child care, kindergarten  
• May have difficulties being understood by peers  
• May have difficulties being understood by unfamiliar people  
• May have difficulties expressing wants, needs, thoughts and ideas  
• May have difficulties responding appropriately to questions  
• Word finding difficulties causing disfluent speech |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-5 years</th>
<th>Minimum of 4-5 word sentences</th>
<th>Mid-late 4 years</th>
<th>Late 4-5 years</th>
<th>Understands How questions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Follows the meaning of others’ conversations - Can generally understand colour and shape words (e.g. red, square) - Can sort objects into simple categories (e.g. animals, food)</td>
<td>- Talks about past and future events - <strong>Pronouns</strong> ‘his, hers, theirs’ - e.g. “It is his/hers/theirs” - <strong>Comparative</strong> -er and <strong>Superlative</strong> -est: e.g. big, bigger, biggest - <strong>Use of ‘is’ vs ‘are’</strong> - e.g. “The monkey is eating a banana” vs “The monkeys are eating the bananas”) - <strong>Past Tense</strong> “to be” - e.g. “I was running” and “They were running” - <strong>Connector</strong> ‘because’ - e.g. The boy was crying because he fell over and hurt his knee” - <strong>Adverb</strong> -ly - e.g. quickly, slowly, quietly - <strong>Irregular Plurals</strong> - e.g. mice, men</td>
<td>- <strong>Position</strong>: middle; around; away from; between; through; next to/beside; last - <strong>Size</strong>: short (length); short (height); tall; fat - <strong>Quantity</strong>: 4; most; few</td>
<td>- <strong>Position</strong>: in front; in a line; corner; middle - <strong>Size</strong>: thin - <strong>Quantity</strong>: 5 (emerging); pair - <strong>Other</strong>: same; different (size); different (function)</td>
<td>- Asks meanings of words - May have difficulties socialising - May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention - May have difficulties following instructions at home, kindergarten - May have difficulties being understood by peers - May have difficulties being understood by unfamiliar people - May have difficulties expressing wants, needs, thoughts and ideas - May have difficulties responding appropriately to questions - Word finding difficulties causing disfluent speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5-6 years | • Follows the meaning of others’ conversations  
  • Follows multi-step instructions  
  • Vocabulary comprehension increases | • Vocabulary comprehension increases | • Uses more complex sentences  
  • Uses imaginative language in play – likes to pretend and act out stories  
  • Tells several attributes about an object | • Irregular past tense – e.g. fell, broke, ate | • Time: yesterday, tomorrow, morning, afternoon, later | • Uses How and Where questions | • May have difficulties socialising  
  • May have poor attention and concentration  
  • May have difficulties following instructions at home, school  
  • May have difficulties retelling events  
  • May have difficulties being understood by unfamiliar people  
  • May have difficulties expressing thoughts and ideas verbally and in written form  
  • May have difficulties responding appropriately to questions  
  • Word finding difficulties causing disfluent speech |
| 6-7 years | • Ideas are shared  
• Follows multi-step instructions | • Can classify objects according to more specific traits (e.g. form, colour, use or composition—what it is made of) | • Gives short oral reports  
• Uses language at a higher level to make jokes, tease, engage in sarcasm, argue point of view, explain complex situations, talk about movies or past events in detail  
• Develops written language skills and ability to write descriptive paragraphs and stories | • Grammar is mature  
• Position: left; right  
• Other: same; different; season; time of day  
• Can understand the difference between reality and fantasy | • Able to make predictions, justify decisions, provide solutions and give explanations  
• May have difficulties socialising  
• May have poor attention and concentration  
• May have difficulties following instructions at home, school  
• May have difficulties retelling events  
• May have difficulties being understood by unfamiliar people  
• May have difficulties expressing thoughts and ideas verbally and in written form  
• May have difficulties responding appropriately to questions  
• Word finding difficulties causing disfluent speech  
• May have difficulties with reading fluency and comprehension |
| 7-8 years | Can listen for a sustained period of time (e.g. attend to a guest speaker at school) | No specific milestones | Can express their opinion • Can retell both imaginary and real events | Uses appropriate grammar in their speech and written work | Can problem solve | Will ask questions to clarify information | • May have difficulties socialising • May have poor attention and concentration • May have difficulties following instructions at home, school • May have difficulties retelling events • May have difficulties problem solving • May have difficulties expressing thoughts and ideas verbally and in written form • May have difficulties responding appropriately to questions • Word finding difficulties causing disfluent speech • May have difficulties with reading fluency and comprehension |

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**Appendix**

**Grammar Explanations**

**Regular Plurals** - adds a ‘s’ to the end of words to represent more than one (e.g. 1 dog, 2 dogs)

**Articles** - learns to use the words ‘a’ and ‘the’ (e.g. “I would like a piece of fruit please” or “I would like the blue lolly please”)
Progressive -ing – adds -ing to the end of verbs (e.g. The boy is jump<em>ing</em>)

Uses Pronouns ‘you, I, me, mine’ – e.g. “What are <em>you</em> doing?”; “I am happy”; Adult: “Who wants a lolly? Child: Me!; “That’s mine”

Regular Past Tense – learns to put -<em>ed</em> on the end of verbs to represent that something has happened earlier. This tends to be used for all verbs even if it requires an irregular past tense (e.g. “I runn<em>ed</em>” instead of “I ran”)

Possessive ‘s – learns to put an ‘s on the end of nouns (i.e. naming words) to indicate possession (e.g. “Daddy’s car”)

Auxiliary ‘is’ – learns to include the “helping verb” ‘is’ in a sentence (e.g. The girl <em>is</em> skipping)

Pronouns ‘he/she’ – learns that when talking about males we use the pronoun ‘he’ and when talking about females we use the pronoun ‘she’ (e.g. “He is running” or “She is drinking”)

Connector ‘and’ – learns to join two small sentences together using the word ‘and’ (e.g. “I want a banana and an apple” rather than “I want a banana. I want an apple”)

3rd Person Singular – learns to add an ‘s’ to the verb (action word) when it is followed by a 3rd person pronoun (he/she/it) – e.g. “He wants the ball”; “It eats grass”; “She reads books”

Contracted Negative – learns to combine the auxiliary verbs (e.g. is, does, have, should) with the negative ‘not’ – (e.g. isn’t, doesn’t, haven’t, shouldn’t)

Contracted Copula – learns to combine a pronoun with a copula (i.e. a verb that connects the subject of the sentence to the word after the verb) – e.g. He’s happy

Past Participle – It’s broken

Pronouns ‘his, hers, theirs’ – e.g. “It is his/hers/theirs”

Comparative –er and Superlative -est: e.g. big, bigger, biggest

Use of ‘is’ vs ‘are’ – learns to use ‘is’ and ‘are’ based on the number (i.e. ‘is’ for singular and ‘are’ for plural – e.g. “The monkey <em>is</em> eating a banana” vs “The monkeys <em>are</em> eating the bananas”)

Past Tense “to be” – e.g. “I <em>was</em> running” and “They <em>were</em> running”

Connector ‘because’ – learns to join two sentences together using the word ‘because’ – e.g. The boy was crying because he fell over and hurt his knee

Adverb –ly – e.g. quickly, slowly, quietly

Irregular Plurals – irregular plurals are used fairly consistently by the age of 5 years (e.g. mice, children, men)

Irregular past tense – irregular past tense is used consistently (e.g. fell, broke,
This chart was designed to serve as a functional screening of developmental skills per age group. It does not constitute an assessment nor reflect strictly standardised research.

The information in this chart was compiled over many years from a variety of sources. This information was then further shaped by years of clinical practice as well as therapeutic consultation with child care, pre-school and school teachers in South Australia about the developmental skills necessary for children to meet the demands of these educational environments. In more recent years, it has been further modified by the need for children and their teachers to meet the functional Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) requirements that are not always congruent with standardised research.

Contact us today to make an initial enquiry or book an assessment for your child on 1800 KID SENSE (1800 543 736)