

Stages of Language Development Chart

[< Back to Child Development Charts](#)

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).

| Age | Listening | Vocabulary | Sentences | Verbal grammar | Concepts | Questions | Possible implications if milestones not achieved |
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| 6-12 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends to sounds and voices • Recognises facial expressions and tones of voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have difficulties socialising with parents and joint attention • May affect muscle tone in the face as babbling helps to strengthen the muscles |
| 1-2 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to familiar requests (e.g. come here) and own name • Understands gestures (e.g. wave for 'bye') | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand one key word in a sentence (e.g. Where's your nose?) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have difficulties socialising with parents and joint attention • May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention |

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| 2-3 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows 2 part instructions (e.g. Go to your room and get your shoes) Points to main body parts, clothing items, toys and food when asked | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names actions (e.g. go, run) By 2 years vocabulary is 250-300 words By 3 years uses 1000 words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum of 2-3 words in a sentence (e.g. Daddy go work) Still talks to self in long monologues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks about present events Regular Plurals - e.g. 1 dog, 2 dogs Articles - 'a' and 'the' Progressive -ing - e.g. The boy is jumping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses Pronouns - 'you, I, me, mine' Regular Past Tense - e.g. "I climbed" Possessive 's - e.g. "Daddy's car" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position: on; off; in; out; up; down; under; top; open; shut Size: big; small/little; long Quantity: 1; 2 Other: stop; go/start; loud; quiet; heavy; soft; fast; hot; cold | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands and asks What and Where questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May have difficulties socialising with peers and joint attention May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention May have difficulties following instructions May have difficulties being understood by peers May have difficulties being understood by unfamiliar people May have difficulties expressing wants, needs, thoughts and ideas |
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| 3-4 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows 3 part instructions (e.g. point to the cat, the dog and the monkey) Understands longer, more complex sentences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 4 years uses nearly 1500 words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum of 3-4 words Tells you what they are doing Tells you the function or use of an object | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 | <p>3 to early 4 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position:bottom; behind; first; near Size:short (length) - emerging; short (height) Quantity:3; every; none Other:hard; slow; light (weight); many colours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands Who questions Asks What, Why, When and How questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 |
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| 4-5 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows the meaning of others' conversations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to expand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can generally understand colour and shape words (e.g. red, square) Can sort objects into simple categories (e.g. animals, food) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum of 4-5 word sentences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talks about past and future events 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' - e.g. "The monkey is eating a banana" vs "The monkeys are eating the bananas" Past Tense "to be" - e.g. "I was running" and "They were running" Connector 'because' -e.g. The boy was crying because he fell over and hurt his knee" Adverb -ly - e.g. quickly, slowly, quietly Irregular Plurals - e.g. mice, men | <p>Mid-late 4 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position: middle; around; away from; between; through; next to/beside; last Size: short (length); short (height); tall; fat Quantity: 4; most; few <p>Late 4-5 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position: in front; in a line; corner; middle Size: thin Quantity: 5 (emerging); pair Other: same; different (size); different (function) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands How questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks meanings of words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 |
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| 5-6 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows the meaning of others' conversations • Follows multi-step instructions • Vocabulary comprehension increases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary comprehension increases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses more complex sentences • Uses imaginative language in play - likes to pretend and act out stories • Tells several attributes about an object | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irregular past tense - e.g. fell, broke, ate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time: yesterday, tomorrow, morning, afternoon, later | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses How and Where questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 following routines • 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 |
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| 6-7 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas are shared • Follows multi-step instructions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can classify objects according to more specific traits (e.g. form, colour, use or composition-what it is made of) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives short oral reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar is mature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position: left; right • Other: same; different; season; time of day • Can understand the difference between reality and fantasy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to make predictions, justify decisions, provide solutions and give explanations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
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| 7-8 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can listen for a sustained period of time (e.g. attend to a guest speaker at school) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific milestones | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can express their opinion • Can retell both imaginary and real events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses appropriate grammar in their speech and written work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can problem solve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will ask questions to clarify information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 **jumping**)

Uses **Pronouns 'you, I, me, mine'** - e.g. "What are **you** doing?"; "**I** am happy";

Adult: "Who wants a lolly? Child: **Me!**; "That's **mine**"

Regular Past Tense - learns to put **-ed** 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 **runned**" 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 **is** 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 **is** eating a banana" vs "The monkeys **are** eating the bananas")

Past Tense "to be" - e.g. "I **was** running" and "They **were** 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,

ate)

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)

