

Language & Communication Developmental Milestones: Birth to 8-Years-Old

A child birth to 3-months-old typically can:

- Cry
- Respond to sound

A child 3- to 6-months-old typically can:

- Coo and make open ended vowel sounds
- Calm when she hears a familiar voice

A child 6- to 9-months-old typically can:

- Responds to sounds by making sounds
- Strings vowels together when babbling (“ah,” “eh,” “oh”) and takes turns while making sounds
- Responds to own name
- Makes sounds to show joy and displeasure
- Begins to say consonant sounds (jabbering with “m,” “b”)

A child 12- to 18-months-old typically can:

- Responds to simple spoken requests
- Uses simple gestures like shaking head “no” or waving “bye-bye”
- Makes sounds with changes in tone (sounds more like speech)
- Says “mama” and “dada” and exclamations like “uh-oh!”
- Tries to say words you say

A child 18-months to 2-years-old typically can:

- Says several single words
- Says and shakes head “no”
- Points to show someone what she wants

A child 2- to 3-years-old a child typically can:

- Points to things or pictures when they are named
- Knows names of familiar people and body parts
- Says sentences with 2 to 4 words
- Follows simple instructions
- Repeats words overheard in conversation
- Points to things in a book

A 3-year-old child can typically:

- Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps
- Can name most familiar things
- Understands words like “in,” “on,” and “under”
- Says first name, age, and sex
- Names a friend
- Talks well enough for strangers to understand most of the time
- Says words like, “I,” “me,” “we,” and “you” and some plurals (cars, dogs, cats)
- Carries on a conversation using 2 to 3 sentences

A 4-year-old child typically can:

- Tells stories
- Sings a song or says a poem from memory, such as “Itsy Bitsy Spider” or “Wheels on the Bus”
- Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as correctly using “he” and “she”
- Can say first and last name
- Asks questions and provides explanations

A 5-year-old child typically can:

- Speaks very clearly
- Tells a simple story using full sentences
- Uses future tense; for example, “Grandma will be here.”
- Says name and address
- Knows and may misapply rules of grammar (i.e., says “goed” instead of “went”)
- Begins using “private speech”; you might hear the child’s inner monologue
- Can define common items by use (i.e., a fork is a thing you eat with)

A child in Kindergarten typically can:

- Listening
 - Follow one or two simple directions in a sequence
 - Listen to and understand age-appropriate stories read aloud
 - Follow a simple conversation
- Speaking
 - Be understood by most people
 - Answer simple yes or no questions
 - Answer open-ended questions (what did you learn at school today?)
 - Retell a story or talk about an event
 - Participate appropriately in conversations
 - Show interest in and start conversations
- Reading
 - Know how book works (read left to right and top to bottom)
 - Understand that spoken words are made up of sounds
 - Identify words that rhyme
 - Compare and match words based on their sounds
 - Understand that letters represent speech sounds and match sounds to letters Identify upper- and lower-case letters Recognize some words by sight
 - “Read” a few picture books from memory
 - Imitate reading by talking about pictures in a book
- Writing
 - Print own first and last name
 - Draw a picture that tells a story and label and write about the picture
 - Write upper- and lower-case letters (may not be clearly written)

A child in 1st grade typically can:

- Listening
 - Remember information
 - Respond to instructions
 - Follow two-or three-step directions in a sequence

- Speaking
 - Be easily understood
 - Answer more complex yes or no questions
 - Tell and retell stories and events in a logical order
 - Express ideas with a variety of complete sentences
 - Use most parts of speech (grammar) correctly
 - Ask and respond to "w" questions (who, what, where, when, why)
 - Stay on topic and take turns in conversation
 - Give directions
 - Start conversations
- Reading
 - Create rhyming words
 - Identify all sounds in short words
 - Blend separate sounds to form words
 - Match spoken words with print Know how a book works (e.g., read from left to right and top to bottom in English)
 - Identify letters, words, and sentences
 - Sound out words when reading
 - Have a sight vocabulary of 100 common words
 - Read grade-level material fluently
 - Understand what is read
- Writing
 - Express ideas through writing
 - Print clearly
 - Spell frequently used words correctly
 - Begin each sentence with capital letters and use ending punctuation
 - Write a variety of stories, journal entries, or letters and notes

A 7-year-old child in 2nd grade typically can:

- Listening
 - Follow three or four oral directions in a sequence
 - Understand direction words (e.g., location, space, and time words)
 - Correctly answer questions about a grade-level story
- Speaking
 - Answer more complex yes or no questions
 - Ask and answer "w" questions (who, what, where, when, why)
 - Use increasingly complex sentence structures
 - Clarify and explain words and ideas
 - Give directions with three or four steps
 - Use oral language to inform, to persuade, and to entertain
 - Stay on topic, take turns, and use appropriate eye contact during conversation
 - Open and close conversation appropriately
- Reading
 - Have fully mastered phonics and sound awareness; associate speech sounds, syllables, words, and phrases with their written forms
 - Recognize many words by sight
 - Use meaning clues when reading (e.g., pictures, titles and headings, information in the story)
 - Reread and self-correct when necessary

Language & Communication Milestones

Birth to 8-years-olds

- Locate information to answer questions
- Explain key elements of a story (e.g., main idea, main characters, plot)
- Use own experience to predict and justify what will happen in grade-level stories
- Read, paraphrase or retell a story in a sequence
- Read grade-level stories, poetry, or dramatic text silently and aloud with fluency
- Read spontaneously
- Identify and use spelling patterns in words when reading
- Writing
 - Write legibly
 - Use a variety of sentence types in writing essays, poetry, or short stories (fiction and nonfiction)
 - Use basic punctuation and capitalization appropriately
 - Organize writing to include beginning, middle, and end
 - Spell frequently used words correctly
 - Progress from inventive spelling (i.e., spelling by sound) to more accurate spelling

Adapted from:

- <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/infants-toddlers/comm-lang-development/lesson-2?module=8806>
- <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/preschool/comm-lang-development/lesson-2?module=8811>
- https://static.virtuallabschool.org/atmt/communication/SA.COM_2.SAChildren_L1.Benchmarks.pdf