

Speech and language development

24 to 30 months

What can I expect as my child learns to talk?

While children learn at different rates, you can look for typical patterns at certain ages. The skills listed here are in the order you may see them in your child.

1. Your child's vocabulary grows quickly (understands about 500 words and uses about 200 words).
2. Child understands and responds to simple questions. You ask, "Where is the ball?" and your child points; "What is this?" and child answers "Ball"; "Who is that?" and child answers "Grandma."
3. Child can follow simple directions. "Get your shoes and socks." "Put your cup on the table."
4. Child uses words to tell where things are, and to describe things, such as soft, hot, or wet.
5. Child learns by being read to. Child will recognize pictures and, with familiar books, may tell you the story. May listen to a 5- to 10-minute story.
6. Child uses the word "no" strongly. Speech may be self-centered: "me," "mine," "I want," and "gimme."
7. Child uses 2- to 3-word sentences consistently and is understandable about 70% of the time.
8. If your child asks a question at this age, give a simple answer. For example, your child says "What's dat?" and you answer, "That is a banana."

What can I do to help my child?

Talk with your child about what you are both doing. Repeat new words often. Your child may get frustrated if, for example, you don't understand "i-tee" as "ice cream." Ask your child to show you. Then repeat the word a few times, but don't make your child imitate you. Toys and activities provide stimulation and something to talk about. Some ideas:

Purchased toys

- books, tape recorder
- bubbles
- cause-and-effect type toys such as See and Say® game
- crayons, chalk, fingerpaints
- music-making toys (drum, xylophone)
- puppets

Homemade toys and household items

- measuring cups and spoons; kitchen utensils
- plastic soda bottles
- sponges

Favorite activities

- domestic play (playing house, dress-up)
- hide-and-seek, jumping, running
- singing, reading books together
- water play

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child, but provides general information. If you have any questions, please ask your child's doctor or nurse practitioner.