

Speech and language development

30 to 36 months

What can I expect as my child's speech improves?

While children learn at different rates, you can look for certain patterns at certain ages.

1. Child understands more of what you say and ask. For example, your child may follow a three-step request such as "Bring me your socks, shoes, and coat."
2. Child uses 3- and 4-words sentences consistently and describes things in more detail (color, size, shape). Child can be understood about 80% of the time.
3. When reading an action-picture book with you, child often can tell you the story. Child will also listen to 20-minute stories.
4. Child speaks in simple sentences with some words missing, and may confuse words: "Me do it" instead of "I'll do it."
5. Children may hurry to say so much that they seem to stutter. This is usually normal. But if your child's voice trembles consistently, or if child avoids speech, seeming tense or embarrassed, an evaluation may be necessary.

What can I do to help my child?

Avoid interrupting; give children time to think and speak. Talk about how and why things are used. Teach opposites such as come/go, dark/light, hard/soft, wet/dry, clean/dirty, full/empty.

Toys and activities provide stimulation and something to talk about. Ideas include:

Purchased toys

- books
- clay-like materials for shaping: Play-doh®, Goop®, Slime®
- farm and zoo animal figures
- flash cards
- games: Concentration®, Memory®, Mr. Potato Head®
- musical instruments
- play scenes such as Sesame Street House®
- pretend play items: cash register, kitchen, tools, camera
- riding toys

Homemade toys and household items

- flashlight
- memory game played with regular playing cards
- old clothes for dress-up
- "play dough" that is made at home

Favorite activities

- playing house, cleaning house, cooking
- reading books together, singing
- running, jumping, hide-and-seek
- 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.

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