



## Stages of Listening, Language & Speech Development

A child can be an expert communicator at an early age. Long before the first word, from a baby's coo of delight to a toddler's eager response to a request, a child's brain is constantly developing. The many aspects of communication occur in sequential stages. Each stage increases a child's readiness to acquire more complex skills. This progression of learning is the same for children with hearing loss or typical hearing. When parents understand the stages of listening, language and speech they can guide their child in learning through abundant, full interactions.

By carefully watching a child communicate parents can identify his current abilities.. When a child uses a hearing aid or cochlear implant, his progress might be measured by his chronological age and his hearing age (the length of time he has benefitted from a device.) While a child usually learns these in order, some skills might overlap, occur out of sequence or not be achieved. The examples on a developmental chart are used for documenting growth and discussing goals with service providers. Early listening, language and speech are learned best through daily routines and enjoyable activities. With increased communication comes increased success!



### From birth to twelve months these initial skills can occur

Listening	Language	Speech <sup>†</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reacts to loud sounds</li> <li>• Responds to voice</li> <li>• Calms when spoken to</li> <li>• Reacts to speech by vocalizing</li> <li>• Notices toys that make noise</li> <li>• Listens to music</li> <li>• Looks to locate sounds</li> <li>• Responds to name</li> <li>• Recognizes words for common objects</li> <li>• Enjoys games like Peek-a-Boo, Patty-cake</li> </ul>	<p>Receptive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attends to facial expressions</li> <li>• Realizes words have meaning</li> <li>• Recognizes family members' names</li> <li>• Comprehends simple phrases</li> <li>• Understands specific words with gestures</li> </ul> <p>Expressive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laughs</li> <li>• Smiles in recognition</li> <li>• Vocalizes to express pleasure and anger</li> <li>• Points and gestures</li> <li>• Has vocabulary 1-3 words</li> <li>• Uses single word sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes sucking sounds</li> <li>• Cries with varying pitch, loudness, duration</li> <li>• Coos</li> <li>• Uses many different vocalizations</li> <li>• Says vowels ee, i, ah, oo, u</li> <li>• Babbles in response to voice</li> <li>• Imitates some speech sounds/ intonations</li> <li>• Babbles with definite inflection</li> <li>• Uses non crying sounds to interact</li> <li>• Says mama and dada meaningfully</li> </ul> <p>May begin using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• /p/,/m/,/h/,/n/,/w/ (from 6 months – 2 years)</li> <li>• /b/ (from 6 months – 3 years)</li> </ul>

From 1 to 2 years these skills may occur and increase

Listening	Language	Speech <sup>†</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Imitates two–word phrases</li> <li>· Listens to short stories</li> <li>· Enjoys simple songs</li> <li>· Actively participates in hearing tests (visual reinforcement audiometry)</li> </ul>	<p>Receptive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Knows body part names</li> <li>· Points to pictures when asked</li> <li>· Follows simple requests</li> </ul> <p>Expressive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Vocalizes his demands</li> <li>· Says “no” meaningfully</li> <li>· Adds words regularly to vocabulary</li> <li>· Names needed items</li> <li>· Uses own name in reference to himself</li> <li>· Labels pictures</li> <li>· Jargons with words to describe experiences</li> <li>· Uses nouns and verbs</li> <li>· Says three–word utterances</li> <li>· Asks some one-two word questions (go?)</li> <li>· Uses simple descriptors (big, pretty)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Jabbers with rhythm during play</li> <li>· Uses more words than jargon</li> <li>· Begins singing words in songs</li> <li>· Speech is mostly intelligible to family</li> </ul> <p>May begin using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· /k/,/g/, /d/, /f/, /y/ (from 18 months to 3 years)</li> <li>· /t/, /ng/ (from 18 months to 5 years)</li> </ul> <p>Continues to learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· /p/,/m/,/h/,/n/,/w/ (from 6 months – 2 years)</li> <li>· /b/ (from 6 months – 3 years)</li> </ul>

From 2 to 3 years these skills may occur and continue to expand

Listening	Language	Speech <sup>†</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Attends to sounds in noisy settings</li> <li>· Enjoys books with sounds</li> <li>· Notices environmental sounds</li> <li>· Mimics sounds of objects and animals</li> <li>· Notices word changes in familiar stories</li> <li>· Imitates adult speech patterns correctly</li> </ul>	<p>Receptive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Follows two–step directions</li> <li>· Understands names for common object</li> <li>· Enjoys being read to</li> <li>· Responds to “yes” and “no” questions</li> <li>· Understands 500-900 words</li> </ul> <p>Expressive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Uses plurals</li> <li>· Refers to self with pronoun</li> <li>· States full name</li> <li>· Participates in storytelling</li> <li>· Begins to use five–word sentences</li> <li>· Begins to ask who, what, why questions</li> <li>· Describes experiences in multiple short sentences</li> <li>· Names basic colors, shapes, sizes</li> <li>· Uses 50-250 words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Usually communicates with words</li> <li>· Uses initial and medial consonants</li> <li>· Expresses ½ - ¾ speech understandably</li> <li>· Sings short songs</li> </ul> <p>May begin using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· /r/, /l/(from 2-5 years)</li> <li>· /s/ (from 2-8 years)</li> <li>· /sh/ and /ch/ (from 2.5 -5.5 years)</li> <li>· /z/(from 2.5 -8 years)</li> </ul> <p>Continues to learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· /k/,/g/, /d/, /f/, /y/ (from 18 months to 3 years)</li> <li>· /b/ (from 6 months – 3 years)</li> </ul>

<sup>†</sup>The speech examples in this chart are based on American English. There are vowels and consonants listed here that do not occur in other languages. For example, Spanish does not have a short /a/, /i/, /u/ or a /j/, /v/, /z/. The production of some sounds may also vary in certain geographic areas and in different languages. Families can ask speech language therapists for lists of phonemes for their home language and ages they are typically acquired.

From 3 to 4 years these skills may occur and be used in many situations

Listening	Language	Speech <sup>†</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiates singing familiar songs</li> <li>• Participates in group story time</li> <li>• Includes actions in songs</li> <li>• Easily locates sound sources</li> <li>• Talks about sounds heard</li> </ul>	<p>Receptive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can follow three-step directions</li> <li>• Recognizes object functions</li> <li>• Understands 1000-2000 words</li> </ul> <p>Expressive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begins to use multi phrase sentences</li> <li>• Starts using numbers</li> <li>• Names letters of the alphabet</li> <li>• Uses words for feelings</li> <li>• Includes prepositions (on, under)</li> <li>• Uses verbs is, are, am correctly</li> <li>• Takes turns in conversations</li> <li>• Uses 800-1500 words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tries different voices during play</li> </ul> <p>May begin to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• /j/ (from 3 – 7 years)</li> <li>• /v/ (from 3 – 8 years)</li> <li>• /th/ (from 3.5 – 7 years)</li> </ul> <p>Continues to learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• /r/, /l/ (from 2 – 5 years)</li> <li>• /a/ (from 2 - 8 years)</li> <li>• /sh/ and /ch/ (from 2.5 - 5.5 years)</li> <li>• /z/ (from 2.5 years - 8 years)</li> <li>• /t/, /ng/ (from 18 months to 5 years)</li> </ul>

From 4 to 5 years these skills may occur and become more complex

Listening	Language	Speech <sup>†</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentrates in small school groups</li> <li>• Watches media and discusses it</li> <li>• Names environmental sounds</li> <li>• Knows he is expected to listen</li> <li>• Enjoys playing with words and word sounds</li> </ul>	<p>Receptive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands same and different</li> <li>• Recognizes how objects are related</li> <li>• Comprehends most of what is said at home and in school</li> </ul> <p>Expressive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaks in four to eight –word simple sentences</li> <li>• Includes verbs and adjectives</li> <li>• Sustains a topic in conversation</li> <li>• Applies possessives (mine, yours)</li> <li>• Uses pronouns correctly</li> <li>• Exchanges information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes rhyming words</li> <li>• Speaks differently to adults than children</li> <li>• Speech is generally understandable</li> </ul> <p>Continues to learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• /t/, /ng/ (from 18 months to 5 years)</li> <li>• /j/ (from 3 – 7 years)</li> <li>• /v/ (from 3 – 8 years)</li> <li>• /th/ (from 3.5 – 7 years)</li> <li>• /s/ (from 2 - 8 years)</li> <li>• /sh/ and /ch/ (from 2.5 - 5.5 years)</li> <li>• /z/ (from 2.5 years - 8 years)</li> <li>• /r/, /l/ (from 2 – 5 years)</li> </ul>

From 5 to 6 years these skills may occur and be seen in school tasks

Listening	Language	Speech <sup>†</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sounds out words in print</li> <li>• Attends to longer stories and activities</li> </ul>	<p>Receptive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follows multi-step directions</li> <li>• Understand some idioms</li> <li>• Recognizes synonyms and specialized vocabulary</li> </ul> <p>Expressive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiates conversations and stays on topic</li> <li>• Speaks in complex sentences</li> <li>• Uses “if” statements</li> <li>• Applies past and future tenses</li> <li>• Accurately tells a story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses different voice levels</li> <li>• Pronunciation is generally correct</li> </ul> <p>Continues to learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• /j/ (from 3 – 7 years)</li> <li>• /v/ (from 3 – 8 years)</li> <li>• /th/ (from 3.5 – 7 years)</li> <li>• /s/ (from 2 - 8 years)</li> <li>• /sh/ and /ch/ (from 2.5 - 5.5 years)</li> <li>• /z/ (from 2.5 years - 8 years)</li> </ul>