## Developmental Milestones in Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of acquisition</th>
<th>Child’s receptive skills</th>
<th>Child’s expressive skills</th>
<th>Abnormal findings or “red flags” for full assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Birth to 2 mos.** | - Responds to sound and voice  
- Shows social interest in faces and people  
- Awakens or stirs at loud sounds  
- Startles at loud noises | - Cries  
- Varies crying by state | - Lack of response to sound at any age  
- Lack of interest in interaction with people at any age |
| **2 to 4 mos.** | - Alternates vocalizing and listening in face to face interaction  
- Calms at the sound of a familiar voice  
- Responds to voice (smiles or coos)  
- Notices rattle or other sound making toys | - Differentiates crying for pain, hunger, and so on.  
- Coos (musical sounds)  
- Reciprocal cooing and turn-taking | - Lack of any drive to communicate after 4 mos. of age |
| **4 to 9 mos.** | - Deliberately turns head toward sound  
- Responds appropriately to tone of voice  
- Responds to name | - 4-6 months - Explores vocal tract (squeals, growls, raspberries, mostly vowels)  
- Uses 1 or 2 consonants and sometimes strings consonant/vowel sequences together by 9 months (babble) | - Poor sound localization or lack of responsiveness to sound  
- Limited amount of vocalization  
- Limited or no use of babble; limited variety in sounds produced |
| **9 to 12 mos.** | - Comprehends verbal routines, such as “wave bye-bye”  
- Responds appropriately to “no”  
- Understands pointing  
- Smiles and laughs responsively and looks to see if parent is watching them play | - Points for needs and for interesting objects or actions  
- Lets family know he/she needs help or wants object out of reach with gestures and vocalizations  
- Creates complicated babbling called jargon which sounds like sentences  
- By 12 mos: Uses 6 conventional gestures (i.e., wave, nod, point, reach, lift arms)  
- Uses voice to get help and attention | - Poor comprehension of verbal routines, such as wave bye-bye by 12 mos.  
- Reaching or pointing for wants or needs but no pointing at interesting objects or actions |
# A Sound Foundation in the Medical Home

## Child's receptive skills

### 10 to 16 mos.
- Points to body parts or objects to show comprehension
- Understands more words than produces
- Follows single step command
- Responds to name
- Understands familiar words and phrases like, “Where’s mama?” and “Get your bottle.”

### 18 to 24 mos.
- Comprehends simple sentences
- Points to pictures in response to words
- Identifies objects when named
- Listens to stories, songs and rhymes

### 24 to 30 mos.
- Understands personal pronouns
- Understands negatives
- Understands some prepositions such as in and on
- Listens to 5-10 minute story

### 30 to 36 mos.
- Follows 2-step commands
- Identifies objects by use
- Understands concepts like big/little, high/low

## Child's expressive skills

### 10 to 16 mos.
- Produces at least 3 consonant sounds (by 12 mos)
- Produces single words
- Has vocabulary that grows gradually to 30-50 words
- Communicates needs or interests by giving, showing and pointing
- Plays social games
- Makes known what they want and do not want (remove spaces)

### 18 to 24 mos.
- Experiences vocabulary spurt
- Makes 6 or more different consonant sounds, like p, m, n, b, d, and g
- Imitates words spoken by others
- Requests information (i.e., asks “what’s that?”)
- Begins to provide information about things in the past

### 24 to 30 mos.
- Uses two word utterances
- Produces simple sentences like “Mommy go outside,” and “What’s that?”
- Shows good intelligibility for familiar people such as family members
- Greater mastery of nouns and verbs than grammatical words or markers
- Comments increasingly relevant to the remarks of others
- Can express emotion verbally

### 30 to 36 mos.
- Converses through asking and answering questions
- Use pronouns I, you, mine, my, this, that
- Can express emotion verbally

## Abnormal findings or “red flags” for full assessment

### 10 to 16 mos.
- Failure to use words, add new words, or loss of most words previously learned
- Slow progress in learning words receptively & expressively
- Failure to point to body parts or follow single step commands
- Limit variety of sounds and/or limited vocalizations

### 18 to 24 mos.
- Minimal comprehension and limited symbolic play, such as doll or truck play
- Less than 50 words in expressive vocabulary at 24 mos.
- Limited sound repertoire and limited imitation

### 24 to 30 mos.
- Less than 100 words at 30 mos.
- No two-word utterances when vocabulary is >50 words
- > Half of the utterances are unintelligible to family after age 2 years

### 30 to 36 mos.
- Frequent immediate or delayed repetition of what others say (“echolalia”)
- Rote memorization with failure to generate novel sentences

---

2 / Copyright © 2003 American Academy of Pediatrics. All rights reserved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of acquisition</th>
<th>Child's receptive skills</th>
<th>Child's expressive skills</th>
<th>Abnormal findings or “red flags” for full assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36 to 48 mos.</td>
<td>- Knows colors</td>
<td>- Shows good intelligibility for unfamiliar adults</td>
<td>- 1/4 utterances are unintelligible to strangers after age 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Knows what to do if hungry, tired, thirsty</td>
<td>- Full, well-formed sentences</td>
<td>- Consistent use of only short, simple sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Answers yes/no, which, and what questions</td>
<td>- Shows some developmental dysfluency</td>
<td>- Repetition of individual sounds of words or other signs of stuttering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>- Understands same/different</td>
<td>- Tells stories</td>
<td>- Persistent stuttering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Follows 3-step command</td>
<td>- Knows colors and numbers</td>
<td>- Inability to express thoughts and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Answers how much, how long, what if?</td>
<td>- Enjoys rhyming</td>
<td>- Poor comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Reasons with why and because</td>
<td>- Difficulty understanding or asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Talks about the imaginary</td>
<td>- Speech intelligibility &lt; 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Asks what, where, who, why and yes/no?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>- Comprehends most of what is said, limited only by conceptual development</td>
<td>- Pronounces all basic consonants correctly</td>
<td>- Errors in consonants such as b, p, d, t, p, k, m, n, l, r, w, s, by 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Comprehends “what happens if”</td>
<td>- Produces more logical personal stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Adept at expressing ideas, wants, feelings and beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>- Participates in lengthy conversations</td>
<td>- Pronounces all speech sounds correctly</td>
<td>- Immature production blends such as st, sh, sp at 7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Begins to develop figurative language and slang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Knows some double meaning words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Content adapted and used with permission from HM Feldman, from *Comprehensive Pediatrics*, in press.