

# Language development (0-6 years)

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## Language development

Language development begins from the moment your child is born. It is how your child understands, communicates, thinks and solves problems. Language also helps your child express and understand her feelings and develop and maintain relationships. Learning to understand, use and enjoy language is the first step in literacy, and the basis for learning to read and write.

## Why is it important to understand your child's language development?

Understanding your child's language development will help you provide lots of opportunities for her to learn by talking and responding to her sounds, words and gestures, and reading to her.

## Tips on what to expect

Here's how your child's language might develop between three months and six years.

**3-12 months.** Your baby will most likely coo and laugh, play with sounds and begin to communicate with gestures. Babbling is an important developmental stage during the first year. It is often followed by the 'jargon phase' where your child will produce unintelligible strings of sounds, often with a conversation-like tone. First words begin by around 12 months.

**12-18 months.** Your baby will continue to add more words to her vocabulary. She can understand more than she can say. She will be able to follow simple instructions like 'Give Mummy the ball'.

**18 months to 2 years.** Your toddler will start to put two words together into short 'sentences'.

**2-3 years.** Your child will be able to speak in longer, more complex sentences, and use a greater variety of speech sounds. She might play and talk at the same time.

**3-5 years.** Your child will probably have more abstract and complex conversations about a wide range of topics. She might show that she understands the basic rules of grammar. And you can look forward to some entertaining stories.

**5-6 years.** Your child will start to understand how the sounds within language work together. She will also become a better storyteller, as she learns to put words together in a variety of ways and build different types of sentences.

## Concerns about language development

In each area of development, things happen in a fairly predictable order, but children grow and develop at different rates. These milestones are meant as a guide only. If you

have any concerns, for example if your baby is not babbling by 12 months or does not have some words by 18 months, do see your doctor.

### Tips to help your child's language development

The best way to encourage your child's speech and language development is to **talk together often and naturally**. Here are some other ideas:

- Talk to your baby and treat her as a talker, you can begin in her first year.
- When your baby starts babbling, babble back with similar sounds and wait for her to respond. She will probably babble back to you. This keeps the talking going and gives her lots of opportunity to practise making sounds.
- Respond when your baby attempts to communicate with gestures and words.
- Repeat and build on what your child says. For example, if she points or says, 'Apple,' you can say, 'You want an apple. You want a red apple. I want a red apple too. Let's have a red apple together'.
- Talk about what is happening. Tell her the things that you are doing and talk about the things that she is doing. Even if she does not understand, she soon will. Use lots of different words.
- Start reading with your baby from birth and keep reading. Use more complex books as she grows. Books with interesting pictures are a great focus for talking. You can also link what is in the book to what is happening in your child's life.
- When your child starts telling stories, encourage her to talk about things in the past and in the future. For example, when you come home from a shared outing, talk about it. And talk about plans for the next day – for example, what to take on a visit to grandma.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

For some suggestions on rhymes, click [here](#) to download a booklet on rhymes!

### Recommended Reads

- [Understanding child language acquisition](#)
- [Raising multilingual children](#)
- [Raising a bilingual child](#)