

Speech & Language Development

As a caregiver of a preschool child, you may have many questions about their development. This checklist provides typical milestones for communication from 3 to 6 years. Keep in mind, that if your child has not developed one of the skills in the age range, it does not necessarily mean there is a problem!

3 years

Speech Skills

- Able to say the following sounds: p, m, n, h, w, b, d
- Can say all vowels
- Can be understood by family, friends and new people 75% of the time
- Says consonants at the end of words

Language Skills

- Follows 2 to 3 step instructions
- Identifies main body parts (e.g. eyes, nose, mouth)
- Asks simple what, where and who questions (e.g. "where is daddy? what's that?")
- Understands concepts such as in, on, big, little, behind, first
- Knows basic colours (e.g. red, yellow, blue)
- Says sentences with 3 to 4 words

RED FLAGS

Contact MacPherson Communication Clinic if your child, at age 3:

- Has difficulty being understood by your family
- Cannot say vowels
- Does not use 50 words
- Does not use 2 word phrases
- Does not ask questions
- Does not respond to yes/no questions
- Has limited eye contact
- Becomes frustrated when not understood



4 years

Speech Skills

- Able to say the following sounds: p, m, n, h, w, b, d, t, k, g, f, v, ng, y
- Can say all vowels
- Able to combine two consonant sounds* (e.g. plane)
- Can be understood 100% of the time by strangers

Language Skills

- Follow 4 to 5 step instructions
- Understands most wh- questions (who, what, when ect.)
- Recognises rhyme e.g. knows that "star" and "car" rhyme
- Can name more colours and shapes
- Can count 5 or more objects
- Says sentences with 4 to 5 words

RED FLAGS

Contact MacPherson Communication Clinic if your child, at age 4:

- Has difficulty being understood by your family or unfamiliar people
- Does not use 3 to 4 word phrases
- Repeats or echoes everything that is heard
- Does not use plurals, past tense or continuing action word ending
- Has limited eye contact
- Becomes frustrated when not understood

5 to 6 years

Speech Skills

- Refer to age 4 years

Language Skills

- Correctly uses pronouns (e.g., I, she, they etc.)
- Knows about sounds, syllables, and letters
- Understands concepts such as before, after, yesterday, tomorrow, same and different
- Names a range of colours and shapes
- Can make up short, well-structured stories
- Talks in short sentences with correct grammar

RED FLAGS

Contact MacPherson Communication Clinic if your child, at age 5 to 6:

- Frequently deletes sounds in words (e.g., 'pane' for plane) or substitutes sounds (e.g., 'tar' for car)
- Does not ask many questions
- Has difficulty making sentences with 5-6 words
- Cannot retell a simple story
- Cannot talk about the past and future (e.g. what happened at childcare)
- Cannot follow 3-step instructions
- Has limited eye contact
- Becomes frustrated when not understood by others



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