

BACK TO BASICS

Language development

Successful communication relies on the ability to use verbal and nonverbal cues to understand and express thoughts, ideas, and emotions.

There are two kinds of language skills: receptive (hearing and perceiving) and expressive (talking and gesturing). In typically developing children, these skills grow through opportunities to listen, respond, and interact with adults and other children. Consider these typical skills as you plan for the children in your care.

Infants

- Imitate some sounds (first vowel sounds and later some consonants) and vocal tone.
- Need the attention of adults who can interpret their signals—cries, coos, smiles, and babbles.
- Coordinate looking, vocalizing, and moving when interacting with a familiar adult. This coordination mimics the give-and-take of conversation.
- Respond to the tone of a speaker's voice; respond when their names are called by looking for the speaker.
- Enjoy songs, rhymes, and music; vocalize and dance to musical stimulation.

Toddlers

- Follow simple, spoken directions like "bring me the ball" or "get your shoes."
- Respond to simple questions with "yes" or "no" accompanied by head movement.
- Speak 50 to 300 different words by age 2. Vocabulary includes some descriptive words for feelings, thoughts, and desires.
- Enjoy and follow stories with simple concepts and clear, realistic pictures that they can point to and describe.

Preschoolers

- Speak in complex sentences.
- Enjoy stories with elements of humor, fantasy, and exotic places and animals.

- Can follow three-part directions.
- Understand more than 1,000 words and speak between 800 and 900.
- Talk of happenings in the past and future but often confuse the meanings of *tomorrow* and *yesterday*.
- Reproduce the forms of some letters and associate the related sounds.
- Recognize several printed words.

School-agers

- Can pronounce and use most sounds. Some children have difficulty pronouncing *sh*, *l*, *th*, and *r* until age 6 or later.
- Share elaborate stories—real and fantasy in complex sentences of up to 10 words.
- Sometimes use unacceptable vocabulary—exploring powerful words that guarantee a swift adult response.
- Use speech that is almost 100-percent intelligible.
- Use past tense accurately.
- Use visual (what they see) and auditory (what they hear) symbols to begin learning to read.
- Often err when trying to integrate word sounds with printed letters and words. Letter and word reversals are common.
- Continue to expand vocabulary, explore complex sentence constructions, and formulate questions about the natural world and relationships among people.
- Creatively explore and devise word play and games with rhymes, definitions, sequences, and puzzles.



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This is the ninth of several pages of development information. Look for each one, printed on cardstock for durability, in our upcoming newsletters; we encourage you to collect each one for your files.

Activities to Promote Language Development

Infants

Try these rhyming activities with baby before starting your diaper change or any time.

“Round about sat little bear (Gently draw a circle on baby’s tummy.)



One step, two steps (Walk fingers up baby’s chest toward armpit!)
Tickle, there. (Gently tickle under baby’s arm.)

Cross to the left (Bring both of baby’s arms to the left side of his body.)

Cross to the right (Cross both arms over to the right side of his body.)

Lift your arms up out of sight (Raise baby’s arms above his head.)

Cross them up (Cross right arm over left and bring them up.)

Cross them down (Cross left over right and bring them down.)

Cutest baby in the town! (Gently bring babies hands down to his tummy for a tickle.)

Toddlers

Try sitting the toddler on your lap while you do these bouncy lap games.

Ride a little horsie, go to town,

(Hold the toddler’s hands securely while bouncing him on your knee.

Be very careful, so you don’t fall down!

(Move your knees apart and let him gently fall between them a little bit.)

Grand Old Duke of York

The grand old Duke of York, he had ten thousand men. (Bounce baby on your knees.)

He marched them up to the top of the hill, (Lift baby by drawing your knees up).

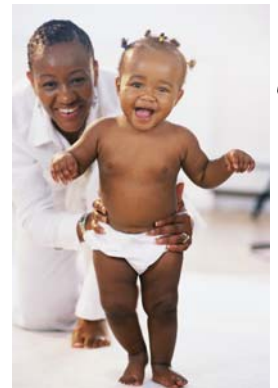
And he marched them down again. (Lower baby by dropping your knees back down.)

And when you’re up, you’re up. (Lift up again.)

And when you’re down, you’re down. (Lower again.)

And when you’re only part-way up, you’re neither up nor down.

(Raise your knees halfway and sway them side to side, then raise and lower them quickly.)



Preschoolers

Silly Name Game - Use your children’s names with this chant.

Sally, Sally, is your name. With an M, it’s Mally!

Jeffrey, Jeffrey is your name with an M, it’s Meffrey!

Rhyme Fun - Make up rhymes for the children to finish for you.

Sally had a cat, her cat wore a _____ (hat).

Jeffrey had a car, he drove it very _____ (far).

Bill had a mouse, it lived in his _____ (house).

Schoolagers

Try saying these Tongue Twisters quickly:

Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry.

Toy boat. Toy boat. Toy boat.

Lovely lemon liniment. Lovely lemon liniment. Lovely lemon liniment.

Greek grapes. Greek grapes. Greek grapes.

Three free throws. Three free throws. Three free throws.

There was a young fisher named Fischer

Who fished for a fish in a fissure.

The fish with a grin, pulled the fisherman in;

Now they’re fishing the fissure for Fischer.

