AS THEY GROW, children develop new skills. Use this milestone chart to check your child's speech development.

6 months: Makes different, playful sounds (babbles); laughs, gurgles, and coos with familiar people; reacts to voices; babbles for attention.

8 months: Produces 4 or more sounds; uses syllables such as "ba" and "da"; listens to own and others' vocalizations; tries to imitate sounds.

10 months: May say "mama" and "dada"; shouts for attention; babbles as if speaking; repeats syllables or sequences of sound.

12 months: Says 2-3 words besides "mama" or "dada"; imitates familiar words/sounds; connects objects with sound (dog says "woof"); vocalizes for enjoyment; practices words; discriminates between sounds.

18 months: Uses 10-20 words; combines words to form concepts ("all gone"); uses words to vocalize wants ("more"); imitates words/sounds more accurately; practices words and combinations.

2 years: Has "conversations" with self or toys; sentence length is 2-3 words; uses negative phrases ("no want"); forms plurals of object by adding "s"; has around 200 words in vocabulary.

2½ years: Has a vocabulary of about 450 words; is able to give his/her first name; uses past tense and plurals; uses short sentences to announce his or her actions ("Me do it" or "Me want it"); refers to self as "me"; talks to children and adults.

3 years: Knows words "night" and "day"; uses contractions; practices new words by talking to self; uses 3-4 word sentences; has a vocabulary of about 1,000 words; repeats sounds, words, and phrases; asks "what" questions.

4 years: Identifies shapes and colors; can speak of imaginary concepts or conditions ("I hope" or "what if"); uses 4-5 word sentences; combines sentences with "and"; uses past tense.

5 years: Defines objects by purpose ("drink with glass" or "eat with fork"); understands spatial relation words such as "top," "under," "new," or "far"; can say his or her address; uses most speech sounds of the alphabet correctly; can tell a story with a simple plot; asks questions to obtain information; understands common opposites ("same"/"different" or "big"/"little").

You can stimulate your child's speech and language by listening attentively; describing your actions; using words he or she has trouble with; waiting patiently for your child to respond; and reading longer stories to your child as he or she develops.

If you are concerned with your child's progress, contact the Hearing and Speech Agency to set up an appointment.

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