

Communication Milestone Checklist

Able Beginnings

Communication Milestone Checklist



A lot can happen in your child's first five years! The brain of a baby is like a sponge, growing and developing quickly. Being aware of communication milestones can help you support your child's speech and language development as they grow.

What are communication milestones?

Communication milestones are defined as the ages and stages children learn specific communication skills. By understanding the milestones, you can keep track of your child's speech and language development and seek help if you're worried your child is missing important milestones.

What is Receptive Language: Refers to how your child understands and comprehends language.

What is Expressive Language: Refers to your child's ability to express themselves through nonverbal and verbal communication.

Use this checklist to see where your child currently stands with their speech and language development.

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Communication Milestone Checklist



3-6 months

Receptive Communication

- ☐ Moves in the direction of sounds
- ☐ Watches a person's eyes or mouth while talking
- ☐ Shows interest in people more than objects
- ☐ Maintains eye contact
- ☐ Pays attention to music

Expressive Communication

- ☐ Blows raspberries
- ☐ Vocalizes in response to being spoken to
- ☐ Quiets or smiles in response to a smile or voice
- ☐ Coos or babbles when playing alone or with you
- ☐ Chuckles and laughs
- ☐ Vocalizes excitement and displeasure
- ☐ Whines with a purpose
- ☐ Attempts to imitate sounds or facial expressions

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6-9 months

Receptive Communication

- ☐ Understands some gestures
- ☐ Looks at familiar objects and family members or pictures when named
- ☐ Recognizes own name (looks toward person and/or may vocalize)
- ☐ Responds to "no" most of the time
- ☐ Attends to music or singing
- ☐ Searches for hidden objects
- ☐ Enjoys games like Peek-a-boo and Pat-a-cake

Expressive Communication

- ☐ Vocal play
- ☐ Begins to imitate babbling when modeled by an adults (ma-ma-ma, da-da-da)
- ☐ Varies sounds in loudness, pitch, and rhythm
- ☐ Adds more consonant sounds to babbling (p, b, m, n, t, d, y)
- ☐ Uses gestures and vocalizations to protest (turns head or turns away while whining)
- ☐ Shouts or vocalizes to gain attention

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9-12 months

Receptive Communication

- ☐ Understands simple directions with gestures ("Come here")
- ☐ Understands 25+ words
- ☐ Gives 1 object when requested with outstretched arm
- ☐ Follows simple request ("wave," "bye-bye," "clap," "give me a kiss")
- ☐ Performs routine activities in response to verbal request (tries to comb hair while dressing)
- ☐ Understands simple questions (e.g., "Where's daddy?" "Where's the ball?")
- ☐ Participates and performs part in social games like Peek-a-boo
- ☐ Looks at familiar objects and people when named

Expressive Communication

- ☐ Says a few words such as "mama" or "dada" meaningfully
- ☐ Tries to repeat speech sounds or words after your model
- ☐ Consistently uses gestures to communicate (shakes head no, lifts arms to be picked up, points, shows)
- ☐ Says one to two words spontaneously (e.g., "hi" "dog" "mama," etc.)
- ☐ Points/reaches to what they want
- ☐ Waves hi/bye

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12-18 months

Receptive Communication

- ☐ Understands 50+ words
- ☐ Consistently follows simple 1-step commands ("Give me" command, "go get the ball")
- ☐ Understands some prepositions (in, off, on)
- ☐ Points to familiar people and objects in pictures
- ☐ Demonstrates functional play with a few toys (using toys how they are intended)
- ☐ Points to 6 body parts or clothing items
- ☐ Hands a toy to an adult for assistance (early problem solving)
- ☐ Imitates simple pretend play (feed the baby)

Expressive Communication

- ☐ Protests by shaking head "no"
- ☐ Imitates new words frequently
- ☐ Uses jargon (sounds/babbles with adult speech-like rhythm)
- ☐ Produces a few animal sounds
- ☐ Names 5-7 familiar objects on request
- ☐ Continues to use gestures purposefully (with vocalizations, sounds, or words) to influence the behavior of others (pointing, showing, claps, blows kiss)
- ☐ Uses between 10-50 words (minimum of 10 by 18 months)

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18-24 months

Receptive Communication

- ☐ Understands 300+ words
- ☐ Consistently follows two-step related directions ("Go get the ball and put it in the bucket")
- ☐ Puts away toys on request
- ☐ Understands the meaning of actions words (eat, sleep, jump, throw)
- ☐ Understands the command "sit down"
- ☐ Points to pictures in book when named
- ☐ Uses two toys together in pretend play (like putting a character in a toy car)

Expressive Communication

- ☐ Uses single words
- ☐ Says between 50-300 words (minimum of 50 by 24 months)
- ☐ Uses two-word phrases ("more milk," "bye mama")
- ☐ Imitates two- and three-word phrases
- ☐ Names familiar objects
- ☐ Refers to self by name
- ☐ Asks, "What's that?"

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24-30 months

Receptive Communication

- ☐ Follows a 2-step related command ("Get the cup and put it on the table")
- ☐ Can identify at least 4 actions words in pictures (who is sleeping?)
- ☐ Understands the concept of *one*
- ☐ Understands size concepts (*big, small*)
- ☐ Understands more location phrases (in, on, off, under)
- ☐ Listens to simple short stories

Expressive Communication

- ☐ Uses some action words/verbs
- ☐ Consistently refers to self using pronoun (*I* and *my* instead of their name)
- ☐ Combines 2-3 words together
- ☐ Starts using plurals

Communication Milestone Checklist



30-36 months

Receptive Communication

- ☐ Understands yes/no questions (consistently answers accurately)
- ☐ Understands big/little
- ☐ Understands more location words (*in, on, off, under*)
- ☐ Identifies parts of objects (*Show me the wheels on the car*)
- ☐ Understands wh- questions (*who, what, where*)
- ☐ Understands the concept of *all*
- ☐ Follows 2-3 step commands
- ☐ Can identify objects by function (*Which one do you eat with?*)

Expressive Communication

- ☐ Uses between 250-1000 words (minimum of 250 by 36 months)
- ☐ Uses 3+ word sentences consistently with correct word order
- ☐ Uses a variety of pronouns (*I, my, he, she, him, her*)
- ☐ Uses prepositions (*in, on, out, off, up, down*)
- ☐ Uses negation (*NOT eating, NOT sleeping*)
- ☐ Uses -ing endings (*eating, jumping*)
- ☐ Effective conversational skills including asking and answering questions (*who, what, where, how, & why*)
- ☐ Talks about objects and events not immediately present

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Not sure if your child has enough checks?

We're here to help! Click below to schedule a parent training session.

You will learn effective strategies to help your little one start communicating.

[Sign Up Here!](#)

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