

Oral Language Skills- Developmental Stages of Children (UK)

The following sets out the likely development of children from the ages of 3-8 years.

Children's development rates vary, but a typical child should demonstrate the following abilities at 3-4 years.

- You should be able to understand nearly all of what they say.
- They should be able to put together short sentences.
- They should be able to answer simple questions.
- They should be able to distinguish simple adjectives such as big and little.
- They should be able to use the past and future tenses.
- They should like having stories read to them.
- They will still find it difficult to listen to something and do something else at the same time.
- They should be able to talk about activities they have done today.
- They should be able to argue using words when they disagree with something.
- They are likely to have difficulty pronouncing some of the more complex sounds such as th, ch, th, r and j.

Children's development rates vary, but a typical child should demonstrate the following abilities at 4-5 years.

- They should be able to effectively communicate with those around them.
- A stranger should be able to understand what they are saying.
- They should be able to use conjunctions to make longer sentences.
- They should be able to answer questions about a story they have heard.
- They should be able to take turns in a conversation.
- They should understand most things said to them.
- They should be able to use more complex sentences.
- They should understand simple jokes.
- They should be able to pronounce most of the sounds correctly, with occasional mistakes in complex sounds or long words.
- They should be able to name some letters and numbers.
- They should be able to follow more complex sets of instructions.
- They should understand the sounds that start words and be able to make alliterative phrases like smelly stripy socks.
- They should be able to identify rhyming words.
- They should be able to use adult grammar.
- They should be able to use their language skills to discover information, give their opinion, discuss feelings and negotiate.

Children's development rates vary, but a typical child should demonstrate the following abilities at 5-8 years.

- Clear milestones are difficult to give beyond this point as communication skills development may be linked to other factors such as schooling.
- They should master the final few most difficult speech sounds.
- They should continue to increase their vocabularies of both understanding and use.
- They should start to develop an understanding of the sounds that accompany letters, the beginning of the skills they need to read independently.

By age 6:

- They should be able to read simple stories and write some letters.
- They should understand complex plurals, such as mice.
- They should understand non-literal phrases.

By age 8:

- They should be able to read independently and write a simple story.
- They should be able to use comparatives.
- They should be able to compose more complex stories.
- They should be able to use a range of conjunctions in sentences in the correct ways.
- They should understand pronouns (e.g. he and she) and use them correctly.

Expected mastery ages

- /p,b,m,h,w, vowels/ are expected to be mastered by 2.5 to 3 years of age.
- /d,t,k,g,f,n,ng,y/ are expected to be mastered by 4 years of age.
- /s,z,l,v,sh/ are expected to be mastered by 6 years of age.
- /j,ch,th/ are expected to be mastered by 7 years of age.
- /r,zh/ are expected to be mastered by 8 years of age.

Reference sources:

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/ages-and-stages>

Talking point; Stages of Speech and Language Development poster <https://icancharity.org.uk/resources/stages-development-poster>

Raising Children Network; Language development; http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/language_development.html

National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD); Speech and Language Developmental Milestones; <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/speech-and-language>