

# Communication Milestones

12  
Months

## Understanding

- Understand about 10 words
- Recognize greetings and gestures
- Identify familiar pictures, objects, and people
- Stop activity when their name is called
- Begins to respond to simple directions like "sit here"

## Speaking

- Begins to use handful of words consistently
- Varies cries and sounds depending on mood
- Copies animals sounds or environmental noises

## Social

- Responds to name and recognizes self in mirror
- Points to learn new vocabulary
- Uses actions and gestures to communicate
- Copies simple actions with body or toys

## Play

- Enjoys games like peek-a-boo that use anticipation
- Understands objects exist when not seen
- Will activate simple cause-effect toys

# Communication Milestones

18  
Months

## Understanding

- Understand up to 50 words
- Follows simple directions "put it in", "throw the ball"
- Points to familiar named objects and pictures
- Stop activity when their name is called
- Understands simple questions "where's Mommy?"

## Speaking

- using 5-20 words
- imitating noises and words
- uses rising intonation when "asking" questions
- names a few body parts

## Social

- waves bye-bye
- repeats actions that made someone laugh
- pairs gestures with words e.g. arms up "up"
- communicates for more functions: recurrence, rejection, label, greeting, initiation

## Play

- Begins to use symbolic play: pretending to sleep, pretending to drink from cup
- Uses toys as intended (stacks blocks, rolls cars)
- Looks for and finds hidden toys

# Communication Milestones

2 years

## Understanding

- Follows simple two part instructions "give me the ball and the car"
- responds to simple "what" and "where" questions
- points to body parts & pictures of people when named
- understands when something is "on" or "in"

## Speaking

- says more than 50 words
- begins to put two words together "bye mommy"
- start to use "me" and "my"
- may produce the following sounds: p, m, h, n, w, b
- speech is understood in 25-50% of opportunities
- will attempt to repair communication breakdowns when not understood

## Social

- Talks to self during play
- takes turn vocalizing/talking with others
- imitates adult behaviors in play
- watches other children and briefly joins in play
- begins to use language to joke, tease, and fantasize

## Play

- Begins to use symbolic play towards others- feeding baby doll, brushing others' hair
- combines two or more toys in play
- Will gather, fill, and dump toys or items

# Communication Milestones

3 years

## Understanding

- Follows more complex two-step directions "give me the doll and then throw the ball"
- Understands "who" "what" "where" questions
- Understands concepts of same/different
- Can sort items into groups (foods, clothes, toys)
- Recognizes colors and some shapes

## Speaking

- Says 4-5 words in a sentence
- Uses words for names, actions, locations
- Begins to ask "who" "what" and "where" questions
- talks about the past using -ed "jumped"
- produces the following sounds accurately:  
p, b, d, m, n, h, w

## Social

- Has a conversation but may not stay on topic
- Participates in simple group activities by watching others
- Helps put things away and looks for missing toys

## Play

- Begins cooperative play with others
- Play will have a sequence- mixes pretend cake, bakes it, eats it
- reenacts experiences with toys
- uses one object as another- e.g. block as phone

# Communication Milestones

4 years

## Understanding

- Answers questions about daily tasks
- understands most "wh" questions, including those about a story they recently heard or recent events
- Can follow directions that include empty/full, same/both, big/little concepts
- understands most prepositions: behind, in front, in, on, under

## Speaking

- Uses words like "and" "but" "because" to make sentences longer
- Describes recent events such as morning routine
- Uses personal pronouns (he/she/they/me/you)
- Is understood by others in 75-90% of opportunities
- Accurately makes the following sounds:  
p, b, d, m, n, h, w, t, k, g, ng, f, y

## Social

- Uses direct requests with justification "Stop that, you hurt me"
- Uses words to invite others to play
- Plays competitive games
- Uses imaginative language- "what if" or "I hope"

## Play

- Begins to problem solve events not experienced "what would happen if..."
- Uses dolls to act out scenes
- Build 3-D structures with items like blocks and recreates specific structures the child has seen

# Communication Milestones

5 years

## Understanding

- Follows 3-step directions: put your shoes on, get your backpack, go outside
- understands time related words (before, after, now, later)
- understands opposites (over/under, big/little)
- understands comparatives (big, bigger, biggest)

## Speaking

- Tells simple stories with a beginning, middle, end
- uses past and future verbs correctly (went vs will go)
- produces the following sounds accurately:  
p, b, d, m, n, h, w, t, k, g, ng, f, y, v, s, z, sh, l, ch, j
- may have trouble with /r/ or /th/ sound
- Is understood by others in 90-100% of opportunities

## Social

- Asks questions to gather information
- Engages in cooperative play, making group decisions, assigning roles, and playing fairly
- Chooses own friends, and takes more care in communication with unfamiliar people

## Play

- Plans a sequence of pretend events by organizing items needed and other people
- highly imaginative, sets a scene with realistic props
- fully cooperative play with others