Ontario's Preschool Speech and Language Program

Ontario's Preschool Speech and Language Program provides services to children from birth to when they start school. Assessment and a range of treatment services are provided to children and their families across the province in many different communities, as close to home as possible.

If you have concerns about your baby's speech and language skills you can get help from the Preschool Speech and Language Program. Program staff can teach you how to help your child's communication skills develop, to give him or her the best opportunity for healthy development.

Ontario's Preschool Speech and Language Program provides its services at no cost to you and does not require a doctor's referral.

It's never too early to help.

For more information contact your local Preschool Speech and Language Program.

To order by phone:
1-800-668-9938
TTY: 1-800-268-7095

Or visit: www.serviceontario.ca/publications
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Your baby's speech and language skills from birth to 30 months

Ontario

Preschool Speech and Language Program

From the time they are born, children start communicating. Very early in their lives, they learn to understand what you are saying and to make sounds of their own. They are beginning to develop speech and language skills that will help them make friends and learn to read, and later, to succeed at school and in life. Communication skills are critical to your child's future success.

About one in 10 children needs help developing normal speech and language skills. Without this help it's a struggle to listen and talk, it's difficult to learn to read, and it's hard to play with other children.

Developmental milestones

These developmental milestones show some of the skills that mark the progress of young children as they learn to communicate. There are also some tips on how you can help your child develop speech and language skills. If your child is not meeting one or more of these milestones, please contact your local Preschool Speech and Language Program.

By 6 months

- turns to source of sounds
- startles in response to sudden, loud noises
- makes different cries for different needs — I'm hungry, I'm tired
- watches your face as you talk
- smiles and laughs in response to your smiles and laughs
- imitates coughs or other sounds — *ah*, *eh*, *buh*

By 9 months

- responds to his/her name
- responds to the telephone ringing or a knock at the door
- understands being told "no"
- gets what he/she wants through sounds and gestures e.g., reaching to be picked up
- plays social games with you e.g., peek-a-boo
- enjoys being around people
- babbles and repeats sounds — *babababa*, *duhduhduh*

By 12 months

- follows simple one-step directions — "sit down"
- looks across the room to something you point to
- uses three or more words
- uses gestures to communicate — waves "bye bye", shakes head "no"
- gets your attention using sounds, gestures and pointing while looking at your eyes
- brings you toys to show you
- "performs" for attention and praise
- combines lots of sounds as though talking — *abada baduh abee*
- shows interest in simple picture books

Babies like it when you:

- Get down to their level so they can see your face. This tells them that you're interested in what they're doing and saying. It makes it easier to interact with you.
- Repeat the sounds they make. Babies enjoy making noises, and like it when you imitate them over and over.
- Sing and laugh, especially when you are feeding, bathing, and changing them. Remember to talk to your baby throughout the day about things you do and see — "Mommy's putting on her coat", "That's a big truck"
- Tell them the names of the objects they are looking at and playing with. Babies are interested in exploring and learning about new things, and like to hear what things are called.

By 18 months

- understands the concepts of "in and out", "off and on"
- points to several body parts when asked
- uses at least 20 words
- responds with words or gestures to simple questions — "Where's teddy?", "What's that?"
- demonstrates some pretend play with toys — gives teddy a drink
- makes at least four different consonant sounds — *b*, *n*, *d*, *g*, *w*, *h*
- enjoys being read to and looking at simple books with you
- points to pictures using one finger

By 24 months

- follows two-step directions — "Go find your teddy bear and show it to Grandma"
- uses 100 or more words
- uses at least two pronouns — "you", "me", "mine"
- consistently combines two or more words in short phrases — "daddy hat", "truck go down"
- enjoys being with other children
- begins to offer toys to peers and imitates other children's actions and words
- people can understand his/her words 50 to 60 per cent of the time
- forms words and sounds easily and effortlessly
- holds books the right way up and turns pages
- "reads" to stuffed animals or toys
- scribbles with crayons

By 30 months

- understands the concepts of size (big/little) and quantity (a little, a lot, more)
- uses some adult grammar — "two cookie*s*", "bird fly*ing*", "I jump*ed*"
- uses more than 350 words
- uses action words — run, spill, fall
- begins taking short turns with other children, using both toys and words
- shows concern when another child is hurt or sad
- combines several actions in play — feeds doll then puts her to sleep; puts blocks in train then drives train and drops blocks off
- puts sounds at the start of most words
- produces words with two or more syllables or beats — "ba-na-na", "com-pu-ter", "a-pple"
- recognizes familiar logos and signs — stop sign
- remembers and understands familiar stories

Toddlers like it when you:

- Let them touch and hold books while you point to and name the pictures.
- Use real words instead of baby talk — "give me" instead of *ta ta* or "water" instead of *wawa*.
- Take the time to listen to them — they want you to hear all of their new sounds, words and ideas.
- Give them simple directions to follow — "Go find your red boots".
- Use lots of different words when you talk to them — opposite words like up/down, in/out; action words like "running", "splashing", and descriptive words like "happy", "big", "little", "clean", "dirty".
- Encourage them to play with other children — at the library, play groups, park.