

Early Language Development

Language is different from speech.

Speech is the process of producing or articulating individual sounds.

What is Receptive Language?

Receptive language involves an individual's understanding (or comprehension) of words with and without the use of gestures. Receptive language includes understanding vocabulary and following directions.

What is Expressive Language?

Expressive language involves an individual's use of nonverbal and verbal skills to communicate.

- Nonverbal: gesturing, pointing, eye gaze, facial expressions, pictures, signs
- Verbal: cries, coos, babbling, spoken words and sentences

Basic Developmental Guidelines

In typical development:

- By 1 year of age, children are typically:
 - Following 1 step directions
 - Using 1 word sentences
- By 2 years of age, children are typically:
 - Following 2 step directions
 - Using 2 word sentences
- By 3 years of age, children are typically:
 - Following 3 step directions
 - Using 3 word sentences

When a child has trouble understanding others, or sharing thoughts, ideas, and

feelings, then he or she may have a **language delay**.

What are some causes of Language Delays?

A child may have a language delay with *no known cause*

Other causes may include:

- Pregnancy or birth complications
- Developmental disorders
- Medical conditions or syndromes
- A history of chronic ear infections

When Should I be Concerned?

- If your child has difficulty expressing his or her wants and needs
- If your child has difficulty following directions
- If your child displays frustration when speaking
- When your child demonstrated inappropriate play or social interactions
- If you have a family history of speech and/or language difficulties
- If your child has a high risk diagnosis (e.g., Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome)

For more information about developmental milestones for your child's language development, refer to the Saskatchewan Health Publications:

- Will I Grow Out of It?
- How to Talk with Your Baby
- How to Talk with Your Toddler
- How to Talk with Your Preschooler



Here's how you can help promote your child's language development:

Talk with your child about:

What you do every day ...
"We need to put on our socks"



What he or she sees...
"oh! That's a big dog!"



What he or she feels...
"your finger hurts"



What he or she is doing...
"you are painting a nice picture!"



What you see in books...
"The cat is hiding!"



Other Ideas:

Show interest in what your child is doing by:

- Playing with them
- Making fun sounds and actions while you play

Get your child's attention by getting down to their level so they can see your mouth when you talk

Sing songs and rhymes with actions and repetition

- "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"
- "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"
- "Old MacDonal Had a Farm"
- "Head and Shoulders..."