

LOOK WHAT I CAN DO!

Preschool Speech and
Language Services



A GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT
FROM BIRTH TO FIVE YEARS

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INTRODUCTION

How is your child's speech and language developing? It's never too early to ask.

“Look What I Can Do” tells you what many children do at each age as they learn to communicate. Please remember that children develop at different rates and not all children will be able to do what is described in this booklet at each age. This booklet is meant as a **guide only**.

If you have concerns that your child's speech and language is not developing at the expected rate please call **ErinoakKids Speech and Language Services** or visit our **website (erinoakkids.ca/communicationcheckup)** for an assessment by a speech-language pathologist.

An assessment will help you better understand what you can expect from your child in terms of speech and language growth.

Our program is free to all preschool children in Halton and Peel from birth until school entry of the year they are eligible for Junior Kindergarten. You do not need a doctor's referral.

Speech and Language Services

ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development
905-855-2690 or 1-877-374-6625

For more information, or to complete the Checkup, follow the QR or visit:

erinoakkids.ca/communicationcheckup



Hearing your baby's first words is an exciting event.

Those first words will be followed by many more words and then sentences. But communication begins even before the first words. It begins with a baby's cry and with gestures, looks, smiles and sounds. Social interaction with parents and other caregivers in everyday activities is key to help your child learn to interact, play and communicate.

Language development is rapid between the ages of **12 and 36** months. This is a critical age for speech and language development. By the time children are ready to go to school they should be able to listen and communicate well – these skills are the basis for reading and writing.

As parents, you play a major role in helping your child build speech, language and listening skills. In this booklet you will also find ideas about what you can do to encourage your child's communication development.

The information in this booklet applies to all children no matter what languages are spoken at home. Use the language that you are most comfortable using.



For more speech and language resources please visit:

www.erinoakkids.ca/pslresources

Or follow the QR code!



Look what I can do before I'm one!

Learning to talk, listen and communicate begins from birth. It all starts with baby's first looks, laughs, cries and gestures.

Parents quickly learn the difference between hunger cries and cries of tiredness or a wet diaper.



Before I'm

1

By 6 months

- I can watch your face when you talk.
- I can turn or look in the direction of a sound.
- I can cry in different ways for different needs (e.g. when I'm tired, hungry or need comfort).
- I can make noises or look at you to get your attention.
- I can make babbling sounds like "buh", "da" or "muh".
- I can make sounds or smile/laugh when you smile or talk to me.
- I am surprised by loud noises.

By 9 months

- I enjoy making sounds back and forth with you.
- I can tell you what I want through sounds, looking and gestures (e.g. reach and look at you to be picked up).
- I can respond to my name.
- I can babble by repeating sounds, like "buh- buhbuh" or "na-na-na" when I'm with you or when I'm alone.
- I can play social games with your help, like "peek-a-boo" or "pat-a-cake".

Look what you can do!

- Talk to me while dressing, feeding or washing me.
- Tune in to what I'm interested in (I will let you know by looking and reaching).
- Wait to give me time to let you know what I'm interested in.
- Go out of your way to meet my gaze.
- Exaggerate your facial expression and the tone of your voice.
- Talk to me as we follow daily routines.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes to me.
- Show me picture books and talk about what we see. Tell me the names of objects that I see.
- I won't always play with toys the way you expect. Sometimes I want to bang and shake objects, open and shut doors, empty containers and fill them up again.
- Watch and see what interests me.
- Don't just watch me play. I like it when you get down on the floor, get some toys and play with me.
- Make fun sounds, like "shhhh", "uh oh" or "boom!"
- Use gestures or actions along with your words. When you put your hands up and say "up", it helps me understand and learn the word.

Activity Tips

- Play "Peek-a-Boo."
- Play "All-Gone."
- Imitate your child's sounds. Babies love to hear adults copy their sounds.
- You can shake a rattle and then stop so I can ask for more by reaching or looking at you.



Call ErinoakKids for help if:

- Your baby does not react to your voice or other sounds.
- Your baby does not smile or make sounds.
- Your baby does not look at you or try to get your attention.
- Your baby does not seem to understand or enjoy interacting with you.

Look what I can do by the time I'm one!

Your baby is quickly gaining an understanding of the world around him or her, interacting with you and beginning to ask for things by gestures and sounds.

First words are also beginning to appear!



By the time I'm

1

By one year

- I can wave “bye” when you say “bye bye”.
- I can follow simple directions used with gestures, like “come here”, “sit down” or “don’t touch”.
- I am starting to understand the names of common things (e.g. points to the ball when I hear you say “ball”).

What language should I use with my child?

- Talk with your child in the language(s) that you feel most comfortable using.
- Speaking more than one language does not cause delays in language development. In fact there are many known benefits.
- Give your child as many chances to hear, speak, and play in your home languages. Share books and songs and play games and have conversation with others who speak the same language.

Look what you can do!

- Sing simple songs with actions, like Row, Row, Row Your Boat.
- Interpret my gestures and sounds with one or two words (e.g. if I put my hands up, say “up!”).
- Hold things close to your face, if possible, so it’s easier for me to look at you and the object.
- Give me words for things I’m interested in and words that go with everyday routines (“your sock goes on”, “go fast car”).
- Use simple sentences and please speak slowly.
- Repeat new words over and over for me
- Add actions or gestures to your words so they are easier to understand.
- Talk about new situations before we go, while we’re there, and again when we’re home.

Let’s read a book!



Activity Tips

- Sit face to face, grasp your child’s hands and lean forward and backward together. You can row a boat!
- Sing children’s songs in the language you use at home.



Call ErinoakKids for help if:

- Your baby does not make sounds or babble.
- Your baby does not show interest in you or other people or objects.
- Your baby does not try to show you things by reaching or looking.

Look what I can do by the time I'm one and a half!

Using gestures helps children to see and hear the words. Gestures play an important role in communication development.

Having 16 gestures by 16 months is an important milestone. The gestures that a child learns varies based on their family, culture and environment.



By the time I'm

1

and a half

By 18 months

- I can understand the names of many familiar things, people and events.
- I can imitate words I hear and gestures that I see.
- I can use 20 to 30 words for familiar objects, people or events, even if they are not clear.
- I can communicate using a combination of gestures, sounds, facial expressions and words.
- You can understand my words about 25 per cent of the time.
- I can pretend during play (e.g. pretend to give a teddy bear a drink, pretend to eat a cookie, pretend that a block is a car).
- I can listen to simple stories.
- I can recognize pictures of familiar objects in books.
- I can point to body parts, like nose and ear.
- Respond with words or gestures to simple questions (e.g. "Where's Teddy?")
- I can use a variety of gestures (e.g. point, clap, blow kisses, give high five).

Look what you can do!

- Take turns when playing with me.
- Play like a child – do what I do.
- Use daily routines to teach me new words (e.g. when dressing use words for clothes and body parts).
- Use the same words in different ways (“roll the ball”, “throw the ball”, “kick the ball”).
- Read picture books to me. You can even make up your own story so I can understand.
- If you don’t understand me, get me to show you what I mean.
- Take me places like the grocery store, the library, the park or the toy store and use these trips to teach me new words.

Hearing and Speech Go Together

Ear infections can cause pain and temporary hearing loss in your child. Repeated ear infections may delay speech and language development.

See your family doctor or an audiologist if you suspect an ear infection or hearing loss.

What to look for in your child:

- Earpulling.
- Draining ears.
- A lot of colds and ear infections.
- Your child does not respond to you when you talk.

Activity Tips

Bath time is a great time for language learning – use words like “soap”, “water”, “splash”, “boat”, “swim” and “wet”.

Read to me in the language we use at home.

Remember you can make up the words to the story so I can understand.



Call ErinoakKids for help if:

- Your child uses fewer than 16 gestures.
- Your child uses fewer than 20 words.
- Your child started to use words but stopped.
- Your child does not imitate sounds or words.

Look what I can do by the time I'm two!

Your child's vocabulary is increasing. Your child is able to say more and more every month and is able to put two words together to make short phrases.

If your child uses more than one language, they may mix languages within the same sentence (e.g. the truck rouge).

Combining words is an important step in language development for your child.

By 24 months

- I can understand directions that have two steps (e.g. "Pick up the ball and roll it to me").
- I can understand words that describe location, like "in", "on", "off" or "out."
- I can use over 200 to 300 words.
- I can combine two to four words (e.g. "more juice", "mommy go work", "where doggie go?").
- I can use mostly words to communicate. I can use "no" or "not" in combination with another word (e.g. "no juice").
- I can use words that describe objects or people, like "big", "little", "hot", "hungry", "all gone".
- I can use words that describe action, like "sleep", "wash", "sit", "jump", "sing".
- I can ask simple questions that start with "where" "what", and "who" (e.g. "Where bus go?").
- I can refer to real life past events (e.g. what happened at daycare).
- I can hold books right side up and turn pages, with help.
- I can combine actions when playing (e.g. feed the doll and put it to bed.)
- You can understand 50 per cent of my words most of the time.



By the
time I'm

2

Look what you can do!

- Take me to our local Early Years Centre – they have lots of free fun programs for children and information for parents.
- Speak simply, clearly and slowly when talking to me.
- Look at me when talking to me.
- Praise my efforts to communicate.
- Talk about new places and experiences, before we go, while we are there, and when we get home.
- Expand on what I say by adding , words (If I say, “dog”, you could say, “It’s a big dog”).
- Ask me to choose between two items like “Do you want juice or do you want milk?”
- Play children’s music and listen with me.
- Sing songs with actions like “Wheels on the Bus” and do the actions with me.



Activity Tips

Sing a song together and do the finger actions:

“The Eensy Weensy Spider went up the water spout.

Down came the rain and washed the spider out.”



Remember to tell stories and rhymes from your home language and culture.



Call ErinoakKids for help if:

- You understand less than half of your child’s words.
- Your child uses fewer than 40 words.
- Your child does not put two words together.

Look what I can do by the time I'm three!

Between the ages of two and three years, children learn a great deal.

The number of words they can say increases quickly. Their use of language increases and they are able to have conversations with you.

They enjoy listening to stories and music. Often they will ask you to read the same story over and over again. Sometimes they will remember the words so well it will seem like they can almost read.

By 36 months

- I can use 800 to 1500 words including action words and words that describe object, people or location (e.g. in, on, off and under).
- I can identify objects by what they do (“What do you wear on your feet?”).
- I can understand “who, what, where” questions.
- I can combine three to five words in simple sentences.
- I can talk about emotions and feelings (e.g. happy, sad, tired).
- I can use a variety of pronouns (e.g. I, you, me, my).
- I can use word endings like -“ing” (e.g. playing), plural-s (e.g. shoes), possessive 's (e.g. Mommy's).
- I can show interest in words that rhyme.
- I can follow directions with 2-3 steps.
- I can tell simple stories.
- I can use early developing speech sounds correctly in words (p, b, m, n, w, h).
- I am understood by family members 75 per cent of the time.
- I can take short turns with others using words and toys.
- I can pretend play with many steps (e.g. cooking a meal, grocery shopping).
- I can join in play with a group of two or more children.



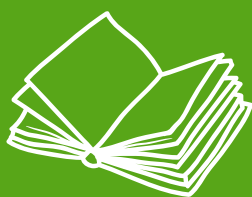
By the
time I'm

3

Look what you can do!

- Take me to programs where there are other children my age: the library, Parks and Recreation programs and your local Early On Centre.
- Describe things that are happening using sentences.
- Count things around you like “1-2-3 apples!”
- Repeat what I say using correct sounds and sentences. If I say “Him use pork” you could say (“Yes, he is using a fork”) Don’t ask me to repeat what you say. I will learn from your example.
- Take turns when playing games and telling stories about pictures.
- Play pretend games like dress-up.
- Sort pieces of clothing with me by size or colour.
- Use a variety of different kinds of words when talking to me such as action words, describing words and words for feelings.

Let’s visit the library!



Activity Tips

Pretend play with me. Play dress up, make forts, pretend.

Don’t forget to keep reading to me – this is how I learn to enjoy books.



Call ErinoakKids for help if:

- Your child acts frustrated when trying to talk.
- You have a hard time understanding what your child says.
- Your child does not put three or more words together.
- Your child does not listen well.
- Your child repeats words but does not seem to understand.
- Your child has an unusual voice quality (nasal, hoarse, scratchy, breathy).
- Your child stutters.

Look what I can do by the time I'm four!

You can expect a 4 year old to have difficulty with some speech sounds as many sounds continue to develop until age 6.

These later sounds include like *s*, *r*, *l*, *ch*, *sh*, *j*, *v* and *th*.

This is not a cause for concern unless you are having difficulty understanding your child.

By 48 months

- I can use sentences using 4 to 6 words.
- I can ask many questions using words like “who”, “what”, “where”, “when”, “why” and “how”.
- I can use the past tense ending -ed (e.g. jumped).
- I can use adult type grammar when speaking.
- I can use words like can't, don't, and won't.
- I can connect ideas using “because” and “and.”
- I can understand and remember story details.
- I can talk and listen in small groups.
- I can tell stories with a clear beginning, middle and end.
- I can recognize familiar print in the environment (e.g. street signs, restaurant signs, names).
- I can be understood most of the time by everyone.
- I can use a lot of imagination when playing.



Look what you can do!

- Respond when I ask a question (even if I ask a lot).
- Let me play with other children.
- Talk about the use of items (“a spoon is for eating”).
- Help me talk about feelings and ideas.
- If I use a word or sound incorrectly, repeat it back to me and emphasize the correct sound or word (e.g. If I say “I need *thoap*” you could say “Soap - you need soap”).
- Read longer stories to me and ask me to guess what happens next.
- Talk about what we are doing together while we do it.
- Encourage me to tell stories using books and pictures.
- Play stories and songs in the car.

Let's make a grocery list!



Activity Tips

- Act out favourite stories or shows.
- Go for a walk and point out letters, words, and numbers that you see!



Call ErinoakKids for help if:

- Your child stutters.
- Other people have a hard time understanding what your child says.
- Your child uses words in an unusual way.

Look what I can do by the time I'm five!



By the time I'm **5**

By five years

- I can follow directions with four steps (e.g. “get your crayons, get paper, draw a picture, put it on the fridge”).
- I can answer questions involving when and why.
- I can use complex sentences with correct grammar most of the time.
- I can explain how a familiar object is used.
- I can describe objects and events.
- I can talk about past, future and imaginary events.
- I can accurately sequence events in a story.
- I can try to read a story.
- I can use later developing speech sounds in words (e.g. *v, l, s, ch, sh, j, z*).
- I can pronounce most speech sounds correctly (with the exception of sounds like *r, th*).
- I can recognize the sounds of letters of the alphabet.



Look what you can do!

- Play simple board games with me like Checkers and Snakes and Ladders.
- Talk about what happened yesterday, today and what's happening tomorrow.
- Act out stories with me.
- Ask me about my day.
- Ask thinking questions like why, how, or what if.
- Read longer stories and talk about why things happened and predict what will happen next.
- Let me help with a job and talk about the steps.

Let's make a recipe together!



Activity Tips

- When sharing books, point out new or more challenging words. Talk about what they mean.
- Have your child retell their favorite stories using the pictures to help.
- Dress up and re-enact what happens in the story.
- Continue to use your home language regularly when sharing books and in daily activities.



Call ErinoakKids for help if:

- Your child does not use complete sentences.
- Your child does not like to communicate with other children.
- Your child has trouble following directions.

ERINOAK **KIDS**

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