

LOOK WHAT I CAN DO!

Preschool Speech and
Language Services



AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION
DEVELOPMENT THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

INTRODUCTION

How are children in your classroom’s speech and language developing? It’s never too early to ask.

“Look What I Can Do Educator’s Guide” 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. **The booklet is meant as a guide only.**

Speak with parents to determine if a child is meeting the milestones in their home language.

It is important to speak with parents if you have concerns that a child is not developing at the expected rate. Parents can call **ErinoakKids Speech and Language Services** or visit our website (erinoakkids.ca/communicationcheckup) for an assessment by a speech-language pathologist.

The **Communication Checkup** is an online tool created for parents and caregivers. The tool can also be used by educators to monitor children in their care. Families do not need a doctor’s referral and do not need to pay for services. Speech and language services are publicly funded for all preschool children in Halton and Peel from birth to school entry of the year a child is eligible Junior Kindergarten.

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



Early Childhood Educators have a significant impact on a child's language and literacy development and are critical in the early identification of speech and language difficulties.

Language development is rapid between 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 educators, you have a major role in helping children build speech, language and communication skills. Your back-and-forth interactions with children throughout the day are key to helping them learn to interact, play and communicate.

In this booklet you will find ideas about what you can do to encourage the communication skills of all children in your classroom.

For more information and resources about Speech and Language, scan the QR or visit:

www.erinoakkids.ca/psl



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

I am quickly gaining an understanding of the world around me, 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. point to the ball when I hear you say “ball”).

When children speak more than one language:

- Encourage families to speak to their children in the language they are most comfortable using.
- Speaking more than one language does not cause delays in language development. In fact, there are many known benefits.
- Having a strong home language helps a child learn another language.

Look what you can do!

- Sit face to face to connect with me. It lets me know you are excited to interact with me and let's me see how your mouth makes sounds and words as you sing and talk to me.
- Copy the sounds and actions I make and then wait for me to try again.
- Interpret my gestures and sounds with one or two words (e.g. if I put my hands up, say "up").
- Give me words for things I'm interested in that moment and during my daily routines. Don't forget to speak slowly and add a gesture to the word! This makes it easier for me to understand (e.g. "wash your hands," "It's a big car").
- Use simple sentences to help me understand.

Classroom Tips

- Sing simple songs with actions like "Row, Row, Row, Your Boat" and "Wheels on the Bus". Sing them slowly and add the actions so I can learn them too.
- Use fun sounds and sound effects like boom, pop, wow, and animal sounds.
- Sing real or make up songs to match classroom routines (e.g. clean up song or song for washing hands).



Talk to my parents if:

- I am not making sounds or babbling.
- I am not showing interest in you or other people or objects.
- I do not 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 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 use a variety of gestures (e.g. point, clap, blow kisses, give high 5).
- I can communicate using a combination of gestures, sounds, facial expressions and words.
- I can understand the names of many familiar things, people and events.
- I can point to body parts, like nose and ear.
- I can respond with words or gestures to simple questions (e.g. Where's Teddy?).
- You can understand my words about 25 percent 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.

Look what you can do!

- Take turns when playing with me.
- Join in my play and do what I do. Copying my actions in play is especially helpful if I prefer to play alone.
- Add words to what I am showing you and use words in different ways (“roll the ball”, “kick the ball”, “throw the ball”).
- It is easier for me to learn new words when you use a comment voice “bubbles!” rather than a question voice “bubbles?”.
- If you do not understand me, get me to show you what I mean.

Hearing and Speech Go Together

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

Talk to parents if you suspect an ear infection or hearing loss.

What to look for:

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

Classroom Tips

- Snack time is a wonderful time for language! Use words like “yummy,” “hot,” “pour,” “messy,” “more,” “wash.”
- Encourage my friends and I to play together by having more than one of the same toys and enough room for several of us to join in. Join in on the fun, grab a toy and play too. Do not forget to talk to me about what my friends and I are doing.
- Make book reading more fun! Choose books that are colourful and about my favourite topics. Change the words and use different voices, sound effects and gestures for me to understand.



Talk to my parents if:

- I am using fewer than 16 gestures.
- I am using fewer than 20 words.
- I started to use words but stopped.
- I am not imitating sounds or words.

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

Children's vocabulary is increasing. They can say more and more every month and can put two words together to make short phrases. If children are using 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.



By the time I'm

2

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 a real-life past event (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 percent of my words most of the time.

Look what you can do!

- Speak simply and clearly using words and short grammatically correct sentences.
- Speak a little slower to give me lots of time to understand and respond to your turn.
- Respond to me by saying or doing something related to what I have said or have shown you.
- Expand on what I say by adding a few new words (If I say “bubbles”, you could say “blow the bubbles”).
- Ask me to choose between two items like “Do you want blocks or a book?”
- Provide print all around. Let me see letters and words in the classroom (e.g. menus in the kitchen, labels on toy bins).

By the
time I'm

2

Classroom Tips

- During routines, add a variety of words (e.g. actions, descriptions, location). During hand washing use words like “on”, “off”, “water”, “dirty”, “clean”, “wash”, “rub”. You can also model words for my feelings.
- You can make books and songs more engaging by having props. (e.g. when singing “Old MacDonald Had a Farm”, have farm animal figures to show or for the children to hold.



Talk to my parents if:

- You understand less than half of my words.
- I use fewer than 40 words.
- I do 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 can 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 objects, people or locations (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 3 to 5 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% 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!

- Describe what is happening in the classroom using sentences.
- Introduce novel words and explain what they mean (“angry” means “mad”, “gigantic” means “big”).
- Repeat what I say using correct sounds and sentences. If I say “*him widing a bike*”, you could say, “yes, *he is riding a bike.*” I will learn from your example, don’t ask me to repeat what you say.
- Read stories and bring my attention to big-long words, short words and words in speech bubbles.
- Read books that rhyme and talk about real and silly words that rhyme. Make up rhymes together.
- Make print a part of our classroom and activities by posting signs and labelling centres around the room. Place them at eye level so I can see the picture and words.



By the time I'm

3

Classroom Tips

- Questions can spark my curiosity and thinking. Avoid closed ended questions (e.g. What colour is this?), instead ask open ended questions like “I wonder what will happen if...?” or “What would you do if...?”
- Grab your own toy and join in playing with me and my friends. When you join in, you can model language that I can learn and use when I am ready.
- Arrange the classroom in a way that encourages me to interact with others and gives me a quiet space if I need a break.
- Encourage me to direct my comments, request and questions to my peers (e.g. If I show you my new dinosaur shirt, say something like “Arjun loves dinosaurs. Tell him about your shirt.”).

Talk to my parents if:

- I am frustrated when trying to talk.
- You have a hard time understanding me.
- I do not put three or more words together.
- I do not listen well.
- I repeat words but do not seem to understand them.
- I have an unusual voice (nasal, hoarse, scratchy, breathy).
- I stutter.

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

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

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

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

By 48 months

- I can use sentences of 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 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.



By the time I'm

4

Look what you can do!

- Notice what I am interested in and help build on my ideas (e.g. if I see it is snowing outside, we can talk about why it snows, what we can do in the snow or how snow makes us feel).
- Create opportunities for me and my friends to engage in pretend play (e.g. bring in a box and we could pretend it's a spaceship or tree house).
- Read me longer stories and ask me to guess what happens next. Don't forget to point to the words as you are reading.
- Encourage me to retell stories in my own words using books and pictures.
- If I say a word or sound incorrectly repeat it back to me and emphasize the correct sound/word (e.g. I say "I need thoap", you say "**S**oap, you need **s**oap.").
- Talk to me about letters and the sounds they make.

Classroom Tips

- Create opportunities for me to come up with solutions to a problem (e.g. snack time, "forget" to put out the cups on the table). Encourage children to problem solve together.
- Take pictures during classroom activities (e.g. planting seeds, making playdoh, washing hands) and create a story or small book with words under each picture. Use this book to help me sequence and describe what happened or to create a simple story.
- Have a table set up with a variety of writing materials (e.g. pens, markers, stickers, papers, whiteboards). I can pretend to make menus and write postcards and pretend to mail them.



Talk to my parents if:

- I stutter.
- You have a hard time understanding what I am trying to say.
- I use words in an unusual way.

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



By five years

- I can follow directions with four steps (e.g. "get your crayons, get some paper, draw a picture, put it in your cubby.").
- 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 in the alphabet.

Look what you can do!

- When reading stories or completing activities during our day, ask me “thinking” questions like “why”, “how” and “what if”.
- Talk about what happened yesterday, today and what’s happening tomorrow.
- Highlight words like “first”, “next”, “then”, “last”, “beginning”, “middle”, “end” when making up stories or when talking about a past event.
- Let me help with a job and talk about the steps.
- Help me print my name and talk about the letters.

Classroom Tips

- When my friends and I are engaging in pretend play, encourage us to act out stories.
- Give us cues about an item hidden in a bag and let us guess what it is (e.g. it lives on a farm, it gives us milk....). Give us a turn to describe items to others when we are ready.
- Send us on a scavenger hunt to find objects around the room that start with a certain letter.
- Play with words! Give us a category and let’s see how many words we can come up with (e.g. fruits, farm animals). Give us harder categories when we are ready (e.g. items that are round, items that you use in the kitchen).



Talk to my parents if:

- I do not use complete sentences.
- I have trouble following directions.
- I prefer to play alone and don’t communicate with other children often.

ERINOAK **KIDS**

Centre for Treatment and Development

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