

SB 210 Language Development Milestones

These Language Milestones were developed by the SB 210 committee for children who are Deaf or hard of hearing, birth to five years of age.

The First Year

During their 1st year, babies are watching, learning, and soaking up the language around them. Even though babies don't always speak or sign too much during this first year, babies are absorbing all those words you sign or say to them, so be sure to talk and sign to your baby all the time!

0 - 3 months

- Your baby looks around and is attentive to people's faces.
- Your baby smiles when they see you.
- Your baby shows awareness of the environment.
- Your baby recognizes and responds to a person's voice or to movement or light.

4 - 6 months

- Your baby begins to babble with hands and/or voice. Your baby may use babbling to get your attention.
- Your baby copies your movements involving arms, head, hands, and face.
- Your baby responds to changes in the tone of your voice and/or changes in your facial expressions.
- Your baby expresses feelings by cooing, gurgling, and crying when alone or when playing with you.
- Your baby looks at you or vocalizes when you sign or say their name.

7 - 12 months

- Your baby points to self and to things.
- Your baby imitates and expresses their first words or signs, such as mine, more, milk, mommy, daddy.
- Your baby makes onomatopoeia (sound) words such as choo choo, swish, and buzz.
- Your baby babbles with inflection/facial expressions similar to adults and tries to imitate turn-taking conversation.
- Your baby demonstrates joint attention (e.g., parent and child look at the same object).
- Your baby can tell what different facial expressions mean.
- Your baby uses gesture or vocalizations to protest and express emotions.
- Your baby responds to a request (e.g., come here).
- Your baby understands words for common items (e.g., cup, shoe, juice) and family names.
- Your baby responds to the word, "no" most of the time.
- Your baby looks at people's faces and at the environment attentively.
- Your baby turns their head and looks in response to sounds or attention-getting behaviors (e.g., hand waving, lights on/off, foot stomping).
- By 12 months of age, your baby has 1-3 signs and/or words.

One - Two Years

Between their 1st and 2nd birthdays, babies learn lots of words and start putting words together to make short sentences. Here are some things to watch for.

Expressive Language

- Your baby uses exclamatory expressions (e.g., uh-oh, no-no).
- Your baby repeats the last word used by an adult.
- Your baby communicates wants and needs through single words.
- Your baby uses signed or spoken names to refer to self and others.
- Your baby begins to use pronouns (e.g., me, my, mine).
- Your baby begins to use two word phrases (e.g., my milk, mommy shoe).
- Your baby asks to be read to.
- Your baby labels their own drawings/scribbles with 1-2 spoken words or signs.
- Your baby asks simple questions (e.g., What that?, Where mommy?).
- Your baby takes 1-2 turns in a conversation.

Receptive Language

- Your baby recognizes their own name when it is spoken or signed.
- Your baby recognizes the names of family members when they are signed or spoken.
- Your baby understands simple commands (e.g., Come here, Give it to me, Sit down).
- Your baby understands a few simple question forms (e.g. who, what, where, yes/no).
- Your baby points to at least 5 body parts on self or doll when asked.
- Your baby points to pictures named on a page.
- Your baby attends to and enjoys simple stories of rhymes.
- Your baby recognizes the first letter of their name.
- Your baby recognizes their favorite book by its cover.
- Your baby pretends to “read” books.
- Your baby begins to understand how books are used (e.g., turns several pages at a time, holds book right side up).

Vocabulary

- By the age of 2 years, your baby has a vocabulary of at least 50-100+ words, primarily labels for people, food, animals, toys, and action words.
- By the age of 2 years, your baby has begun to use simple two spoken or signed word phrases (e.g., baby cry, more milk, my cup, no juice).

Two - Three Years

During this year, your child will learn to say and sign so many words, you will have a hard time keeping track. Your child will also start to use longer and more complicated sentences. Tracking your child's language this year should be exciting!

Expressive Language

- Your child names objects/animals/people in pictures and in person when asked.
- Your child signs or says their full name on request.
- Your child counts to 5.
- Your child vocalizes or signs for all needs.
- Your child requests help when needed.
- Your child uses commands with two steps (e.g. sit down - eat).
- Your child relates experiences using short sentences with greater frequency over time.
- Your child recites a few spoken or signed nursery rhymes.
- Your child enjoys signed or spoken stories, and imitates the actions/facial expressions of characters in the story.
- Your child verbalizes or signs prepositions (e.g. on, under).
- Your child expresses emotions like happy, sad, mad with signs or spoken words.
- Your child speaks or signs in a way that is understood by family members and friends most of the time.
- Your child uses intelligible (clearly understood) words or signs about 80% of the time.
- Your child uses most basic sentence structures.
- Your child uses the sign or word "and."
- Your child uses singular/plural noun-verb agreement (e.g., boy walks, boys walk).
- Your child uses possessives (e.g., my, your).
- Your child uses past tense in sentences (e.g. Mommy cooked, Susie ran).
- Your child uses over generalized words (e.g., calls all animals "puppy").
- By 2 and ½ years of age, your child answers questions with yes or no.
- Your child asks two word questions.
- Your child begins the "why" question stage.
- Your child asks "who" questions.
- Your child uses pronouns (e.g., he, she, it), including personal pronouns (I, me, my, mine), and possessive pronouns (e.g., his, her).
- Your child uses number + noun (e.g., two doggie).
- Your child uses simple describing words (e.g., hot, cold, big, little).
- Your child names at least three colors.
- Your child uses negatives (e.g., no, none, not, don't like, don't know, not-yet).

Receptive Language

- Your child understands two stage commands (e.g., Sit down and read the book).
- Your child notices (e.g., points, gets excited) sights, sounds like the videophone or doorbell flashing/ringing.
- Your child responds appropriately to a location phrase (e.g., in, on).
- Your child begins to understand time phrases (e.g. yesterday, today).

Vocabulary

- By three years of age, your child has a vocabulary of 500+ words and/or signs.

Three - Four Years

By now, your child is able to communicate clearly, and is understood most of the time by familiar adults. Your child understands most of what is said or signed to him or her. Your child is using four to five words sentences, can repeat simple nursery rhymes, and is able to carry on simple conversations.

Expressive Language

- Your child communicates fluently, clearly, and is easily understood by family and familiar adults.
- Your child answers questions logically.
- Your child uses 4-5 word sentences.
- Your child carries on simple conversations staying on topic through 3-4 turns.
- Your child talks about things that have happened at school or with friends.
- Your child discusses storybooks that are read to him or her.
- Your child describes action in pictures.
- Your child uses possessives (e.g., mine, yours, his, hers).
- Your child is able to repeat a simple signed or spoken rhyme.
- Your child makes attempts to read and write.
- If using ASL, your child uses classifiers to describe manner, place, direction, size, shape, degree, and intensity.

Receptive Language

- Your child understands most of what is communicated to them.
- Your child understands "Who?", "What?", "Where?", "Why?", and "How?" questions.
- Your child carries out 2-4 simple unrelated successive commands (e.g., Sit down and eat your lunch).
- Your child gives you objects as you request them by name.
- Your child points to or places objects on top/bottom, up/down at your request.

Vocabulary

- By four years of age, your child uses 1,500-1,600 words or signs.

Four - Five Years of Age

By this age, your child should be able to use correct sentences to express thoughts about the past, present, and future. By the end of this year, your child should have several thousand words and/signs.

Expressive Language

- Your child signs and/or speaks clearly and fluently in an easy-to-understand manner.
- Your child uses long and detailed sentences.
- Your child can tell made-up stories that stay on topic. (For ASL users, your child can use space in storytelling.)
- For children using spoken language, most sounds are pronounced correctly, though he/she may have difficulty with “r”, “v”, and “th”.
- Your child uses rhyming with words and/or signs.
- Your child identifies some written letters and numbers.
- Your child uses 4-8 word/sign sentences.
- Your child uses “has,” “does,” “had.”
- Your child uses “because...,” “when...,” “if...,” and “so...,” in clauses.
- Your child uses “these” and “those.”
- Your child uses “before” and “after.”
- Your child answers “Why” and “How” questions.
- Your child speaks or signs with emotion and body language when describing an event or action.
- Your child ends conversations appropriately.
- Your child asks “What” questions.
- Your child asks “Who” questions.
- Your child asks “Where” questions.
- Your child asks “Why” questions.
- Your child asks “Why do” questions.
- Your child uses past tense.
- Your child uses future tense.
- Your child uses conditional sentences, as in these sentences:
 - English (If...then...).
 - ASL (topicalized sentence).
- If using ASL, your child uses the five ASL parameters of handshape, palm orientation, location, movement, and facial expression (e.g., button, cat, fox).
- In ASL, your child uses number distribution, e.g., talking about leaves falling -
 - FALL SINGULAR – One leaf falls;
 - FALL PLURAL- Many leaves fall;
 - FALL RANDOM – Leaves fall from time to time, here and there.
- In ASL, your child repeats Wh- word at beginning and end of question (e.g., WHERE GO WHERE?). This is called WH-bracketing.
- In ASL, your child uses the AGENT sign (e.g., FARM-ER; TEACH-ER).
- In ASL, your child uses topic continuation (holds a sign with one hand and continues signing with the other).
- In ASL, your child uses body shift and eye-gaze.

Four - Five Years of Age (continued)

Receptive Language

- Your child understands most of what is said or signed at home and in school.
- Your child pays attention to short stories.
- Your child enjoys stories and can understand simple questions.
- Your child carries out four simple related commands in order.
- Your child understands things that are similar (e.g., things that fly, things you eat, things you wear).
- Your child understands time concepts (e.g., day/night) and seasons of the year.
- Your child understands words that rhyme.
- Your child points to or places object before, after, above, below when asked.

Vocabulary

- Your child uses 2,500+ words and/or signs.
- Your child begins to ask the meanings of words and signs.
- Your child uses describing words (e.g., hard, soft, yucky).
- Your child puts sequencing concepts together (smallest to largest; longest to shortest).
- Your child names categories (e.g., pizza, hamburgers as food).

Language Development Milestones

This Parent Profile is designed to help you track your child's language growth. You and your Early Start or preschool teacher should discuss whether your child is meeting each of these milestones and is making age-appropriate language growth. Check off each milestone as your child meets it. Then, you can check off the milestones on the "road map" on the inside of this pamphlet and watch as your child moves down the road towards being language-ready for Kindergarten at age five. Any time your child is not making age-appropriate language growth, it is important that you and your child's teacher discuss what changes need to be made to your child's program and services to help ensure your child is making the progress necessary to be ready for Kindergarten. It is important to make sure those service changes get written into your child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Educational Program (IEP).

The Language Milestones are not meant to replace formal assessment of your child's development of language and literacy. Your observations of your child's skills may be different than the results of formal assessments presented at your child's IFSP or IEP, but your observations are very important. Please feel free to bring this Parent Profile to your child's IFSP or IEP meeting, in order to share your observations about your child's progress.

These Language Milestones are taken from the following norm referenced resources:

- "Literacy Milestones Birth to Age 6" – Reading is Fundamental
The Literacy Advisory Board and the Multicultural Advisory Board
- "My Smart Hands"
Laura Berg, Ph.D.
- "Language Development 0-5 Years"
Ages and Stages Summary
- "How Does Your Child Hear and Talk"
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
- "Speech and Language Development Milestones"
National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)
- Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP) Curriculum Based Checklist
- Language Development: An Introduction, by Stephen Stahl
Brookline Books, Brookline, MA
- "Language Development Timeline"
Bradley E. White, copyright
- "Visual Communication and Sign Language Checklist"
Simms, Baker, and Clark, copyright
- "SKI-HI Milestones 0-5 Years"
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