

Sequence of Expected Language Development

Adapted from: Project ELIPSS (1996) and Kleine, M.D. (1996). *Early childhood curriculum for children in inclusive settings*.
Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Approximate Age	Letters/Sounds	Sentence Structure	Vocabulary
12 to 18 months (1 to 1 1/2 years)	Imitates noises and speech sounds	Some children begin to use two-word sentences.	Recognizes and points to many familiar objects; learns new words almost daily
18 to 24 months (1 1/2 to 2 years)	Uses /p/, /b/, /m/, /h/, /t/, and vowels	Two to three word sentences, but omits “a,” “an,” “the.”	Says 10 to 20 words at 18 months, but some say as many as 200 words by 24 months. Understands many more. Knows names and pictures of most common objects; understands @500 words. Begins to use “I,” “me,” “my.”
24 to 36 months (2 to 3 years)	70% of speech can be understood; although speech errors are still common. Many begin to use consonants /f/, /k/, /d/, /w/, /g/, but /r/, /s/, /ch/, /j/, /v/, /l/, and /x/ are often incorrectly spoken. All vowels (a, e, i, o, u sounds) are correct.	Short sentences (3 to 4 words) are common.	By age 2 1/2 children begin to use words with “ing,” “s,” “es,” “ed,” “a,” “an,” “the,” “my,” and “s” (i.e. Dad’s key). Children have a vocabulary of as many as 1000 words.
36 to 48 months (3 to 4 years)	All vowels correct. Most consonants correct, but speech errors on the following still considered normal; /l/, /r/, /s/, /z/, /sh/, /ch/, /j/, and /th/.	Children begin to use longer and more complex sentences. Children begin to use “and,” “because,” “when,” and “then.”	Vocabulary grows rapidly; children actively seek to learn new words. The child likes to experiment, makes many cute speech errors, knows between 900 and 1000 words, can whisper, tells name, explains what happened, and asks questions.
48 to 60 months (4 to 5 years)	Speech errors still common but not as plentiful as earlier.	Compares size of 2 or more people, experiences, places, and things. Uses all types of sentences: statements, questions, and exclamations.	Many children know 2000 or more words; seek information and often ask “why.”