

Communication and Language

Birth to 3

- Turn towards familiar sounds. They are also startled by loud noises and accurately locate the source of a familiar person's voice, such as their key person or a parent.
- Gaze at faces, copying facial expressions and movements like sticking out their tongue. Make eye contact for longer periods.
- Watch someone's face as they talk.
- Copy what adults do, taking 'turns' in conversations (through babbling) and activities. Try to copy adult speech and lip movements.
- Enjoy singing, music and toys that make sounds.
- Recognise and are calmed by a familiar and friendly voice.
- Listen and respond to a simple instruction.
- Make sounds to get attention in different ways (for example, crying when hungry or unhappy, making gurgling sounds, laughing, cooing or babbling).
- Babble, using sounds like 'ba- ba', 'mamama'.
- Use gestures like waving and pointing to communicate.
- Reach or point to something they want while making sounds.
- Copy your gestures and words.
- Constantly babble and use single words during play.
- Use intonation, pitch and changing volume when 'talking'.
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- Use intonation, pitch and changing volume when 'talking'.
- Understand single words in context – 'cup', 'milk', 'daddy'.
- Understand frequently used words such as 'all gone', 'no' and 'bye-bye'.
- Understand simple instructions like "give to mummy" or "stop".
- Recognise and point to objects if asked about them.
- Generally, focus on an activity of their own choice and find it difficult to be directed by an adult.
- Listen to other people's talk with interest, but can easily be distracted by other things.
- Can become frustrated when they can't make themselves understood.
- Start to say how they are feeling, using words as well as actions.
- Start to develop conversation, often jumping from topic to topic.
- Develop pretend play: 'putting the baby to sleep' or 'driving the car to the shops'.
- Use the speech sounds p, b, m, w.
- Are usually still learning to pronounce: - l/r/w/y - s/sh/ch/dz/j - f/th - multi-syllabic words such as 'banana' and 'computer'
- Listen to simple stories and understand what is happening, with the help of the pictures.
- Identify familiar objects and properties for practitioners when they are described. For example: 'Katie's coat', 'blue car', 'shiny apple'.
- Understand and act on longer sentences like 'make teddy jump' or 'find your coat'.
- Understand simple questions about 'who', 'what' and 'where' (but generally not 'why').

3 to 4

- Enjoy listening to longer stories and can remember much of what happens.
- Can find it difficult to pay attention to more than one thing at a time.
- Use a wider range of vocabulary.
- Understand a question or instruction that has two parts, such as "Get your coat and wait at the door".
- Understand 'why' questions, like: "Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?"

- Sing a large repertoire of songs.
- Know many rhymes, be able to talk about familiar books, and be able to tell a long story.
- Develop their communication, but may continue to have problems with irregular tenses and plurals, such as 'runned' for 'ran', 'swimmed' for 'swam'.
- May have problems saying: - some sounds: r, j, th, ch, and sh - multisyllabic words such as 'pterodactyl', 'planetarium' or 'hippopotamus'
- Use longer sentences of four to six words.
- Be able to express a point of view and to debate when they disagree with an adult or a friend, using words as well as actions.
- Can start a conversation with an adult or a friend and continue it for many turns.
- Use talk to organise themselves and their play: "Let's go on a bus... you sit there... I'll be the driver."

Reception

- Understand how to listen carefully and why listening is important.
- Learn new vocabulary.
- Use new vocabulary through the day.
- Ask questions to find out more and to check they understand what has been said to them.
- Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences.
- Connect one idea or action to another using a range of connectives.
- Describe events in some detail.
- Use talk to help work out problems and organise thinking and activities explain how things work and why they might happen.
- Develop social phrases.
- Engage in story times.
- Listen to and talk about stories to build familiarity and understanding.
- Retell the story, once they have developed a deep familiarity with the text; some as exact repetition and some in their own words.
- Use new vocabulary in different contexts.
- Listen carefully to rhymes and songs, paying attention to how they sound.
- Learn rhymes, poems and songs.
- Engage in non-fiction books.
- Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary.

Listening, Attention and Understanding

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions.
- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding.
- Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

Speaking

- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary.
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, nonfiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate.
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.