

Learning to Talk

6 months



By 6 months most babies will:

- ▶ React to sounds around them
- ▶ Look at the person talking to them
- ▶ Smile at people and laugh
- ▶ Make sounds such as “eeee” and “ah” and begin to make sounds such as “ma” or “ba”
- ▶ Respond to changes in the tone of your voice

12 months



By 12 months most babies will:

- ▶ Enjoy playing games with people such as “peek-a-boo”
- ▶ Seek out familiar people and enjoy being around others
- ▶ Babble using groups of sounds e.g. “ababa” or “bibibi”
- ▶ Try to copy sounds when you say them
- ▶ Respond when you call their name
- ▶ Understand simple questions e.g. “Where’s teddy?”
- ▶ Follow simple directions e.g. “come here”, “wave bye bye”
- ▶ Most babies will say their first words between 12 and 18 months

18 months



By 18 months most toddlers will:

- ▶ Have at least 15-20 words
- ▶ Start to join two words together e.g. “more milk”
- ▶ Copy words you say and sounds they hear
- ▶ Enjoy showing you things by pointing and using words e.g. “car” or “all gone”
- ▶ Enjoy music and begin to sing some of the words and make actions

2 years



By 2 years most toddlers will:

- ▶ Use at least 50 words
- ▶ Learn new words regularly
- ▶ Use two-word sentences e.g. “no juice”, “teddy eat”
- ▶ Begin to ask simple questions e.g. “where doggy?” using intonation
- ▶ Nod and shake their head for “yes” and “no”
- ▶ Use the sounds p, b, t, d, m and n
- ▶ Follow simple directions e.g. “Where’s your shoe?”

3 years



By 3 years most children will:

- ▶ Have a word for almost everything in their world
- ▶ Use lots of 3-4 word sentences and begin to use some 4-5 word sentences
- ▶ Use the sounds p, b, t, d, m, n, g, and k
- ▶ Be understood by familiar adults most of the time
- ▶ Enjoy telling you things and asking questions
- ▶ Follow 2-step directions such as “Wash your hands and sit at the table”

4 years



By 4 years most children will:

- ▶ Answer simple questions starting with “who”, “what”, “where” and “why”
- ▶ Use all speech sounds except possibly the sounds ‘j’ (as in ‘jaw’), ‘ch’, ‘s’, ‘z’, ‘r’, ‘th’ and ‘v’
- ▶ Be understood by others almost all of the time
- ▶ Use correct grammar with occasional mistakes e.g. “I runned fast”
- ▶ Use “and”, “but” and “because” to join sentences
- ▶ Retell stories and describe things
- ▶ Enjoy playing with other children

5 years



By 5 years most children will:

- ▶ Use longer and more complex sentences
- ▶ Use correct grammar with occasional mistakes
- ▶ Talk about things that have happened, or are going to happen in the future
- ▶ Use time words e.g. “today”, “tomorrow”, “next week”
- ▶ Ask lots of questions including questions beginning with “why”
- ▶ Follow three-step directions e.g. “Put your hat on, put on some sunscreen and line up”
- ▶ Say all speech sounds correctly except possibly ‘th’ or ‘v’
- ▶ Be understood by others almost all of the time

If your child is not yet doing what is expected for their age, or you have concerns about their communication development, speak with a speech pathologist.

The KU Speech Pathology team can be contacted at speech.pathology@ku.com.au