

- Answer when your child asks you a question.
- Let your child play with other children.

By 3 - 4 years, most children will:

- use sentences of 4 to 6 words.
- give directions like “fix this for me.”
- ask many questions like what, where, why.
- tell you about things they have done.
- talk to themselves and their toys.
- tell a story or sing a song.
- tell you when they are tired.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- Your child repeats words but does not seem to understand.
- Your child stutters.
- Other people have a hard time understanding your child.
- Your child uses words in an unusual way.

How can you help your child learn at this age?

- Talk about how things are the same and how they are different.
- Help your child tell about feelings and ideas.
- Use words or sounds that are difficult for your child. Have your child look at your mouth as you say the sounds clearly.
- Play with sounds like “a cow says moooo.”
- Read longer stories and use lots of expression. Read often with your child and encourage him/her to tell stories using books and pictures.
- Ask questions that encourage your child to talk.
- When reading a book with your child, ask questions about the pictures like, “Where is the dog? What is the dog doing?”

- Play memory games. Ask your child to list the different things he or she saw at the store.

By 5 years, most children will:

- use sentences that sound almost like an adult.
- be able to say most speech sounds correctly.
- explain what familiar words mean.
- use sentences to describe objects and events.
- explain how to solve a simple problem.
 - follow related directions, like “get your crayons, make a picture, and put it here.”
- recognize familiar signs such as a stop sign.
- start to recognize letters and the sounds they make.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- Your child does not use complete sentences.
- Your child does not like talking to other children.
- Your child has trouble following directions.

How can you help your child learn at this age?

- Read to your child often and talk about what happened at the beginning, middle and end of the story.
- As you read, ask your child, “What do you think will happen next?”
- Clap to parts of words, such as tooth brush.

About this brochure. . .

This brochure tells you about how most children talk and act at different ages. But each child is different. You know your child best. If you think that your child is not learning to talk well, call:

Speech & Language Contacts

South Peace

South Peace Child Development Centre
250-782-1161

North Peace

Fort St. John Child Development Centre
250-785-3200

Will My Child Grow Out Of It

When to ask for help



www.northernhealth.ca

16-404-6027 (IND10/11)



How Babies Learn to Talk

A baby learns to talk by listening to voices & sounds. Soon your baby will begin making sounds to tell you how he/she feels or what he/she wants. Babies develop at their own rate. Some babies will do things at a young age and some will take a little longer. Here are some things that most babies do.

Very young babies (up to 3 months old) will:

- make noises. (e.g. coos, gurgles)
- turn towards a new sound.
- jump at a loud noise.
- be calmed when you speak in a gentle voice
- smile at you.

By 6 months, most babies will:

- watch your face when you talk.
- cry in a different way when hungry.
- make noises to get attention.
- make sounds back when you talk.
- smile at you and other family members.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- Your baby does not react to your voice or other sounds.
- Your baby does not smile or make sounds when awake.

What you can do to help a young baby learn

- Talk to your baby a lot when you are washing, dressing or feeding him/her.
- Sing songs or nursery rhymes.
- Play simple games like “peek-a-boo.”
- Show your child picture books and talk about what you see.

By 12 months, most children will:

- understand their own name.
- understand words like “bye-bye” or “up.”
- say sounds like “ba ba, na na, ga ga.”
- laugh and try to make sounds like you do.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- Your baby does not wave back at you when you say “bye bye” and wave.
- Your baby does not try to show you things by reaching or looking.

By 15 months, most children will:

- take turns making sounds.
- say 2 or 3 words but not clearly.
- understand “no” and shake their head.
- reach or point to something they want while making a sound.
- understand simple questions or directions like “where is your nose?”
- enjoy rhymes and try to join in.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- Your child does not try to say words, sounds and gestures to tell you what he or she wants.

By 18 months, most children will:

- understand words and point to parts of their body like “nose” and “ear.”
- will look for things when asked to, like “get your hat.”
- make new gestures and/or words like you do.
- make gestures or ask for “more” or “again.”

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- Your child does not make gestures and sounds like you do.
- Your child started to use words, but stopped.

By 21 months, most children will:

- point to a picture or sign when asked such as “Where’s Grandma’s house?”
- play with toys and pretend to do things like feeding a doll or going in a car.
- say about 10 or more words.
- follow directions such as “drink your milk” or “sit down please.”

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- Your baby can only say about five words.
- Your child does not pretend with toys.

By 24 months, most children will:

- understand more than they can say.
- say two words together like “more milk.”
- say “what’s that?” (may sound like “wha dat” or “whatssat.”)
- pick one thing out from a group of objects, such as a cup.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- You have a hard time understanding what your child says.
- Your child uses very few words or does not put words together.

How can you help your child learn at this age?

- Talk to your child simply, clearly and slowly.
- Look at your child when he or she talks to you. Praise his/her efforts to talk.
- Play children’s music and share stories with your child.
- Talk about new experiences before going, there, and when you get home.
- Expand what the child says. If she says “dog,” you say “big dog.”
- Use actions when doing nursery rhymes.

How a Child’s Speech and Language Develops

Between the ages of 2 and 5, most children learn a lot. The number of words they can say increases quickly. They talk more and they ask many questions. 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 the time your child is ready to go to school, he or she should be able to speak and listen well. Learning about sound is preparing your child for reading and writing later on.

By 2 - 3 years, most children will:

- use short sentences, like “me do it,” “daddy going car.”
- follow simple directions, like “put the teddy bear to bed.”
- place something in the right spot if you say to put it “in” or “under.”
- have a conversation with family members or other familiar people.
- enjoy listening to short stories, songs and rhymes.
- point to pictures in a book when asked to, like “show me the duck.”
- begin to add endings to words, such as running, toys.

WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

- Your child acts frustrated trying to talk. or you have trouble understanding him.
- Your child does not put more than 2 words together.
- Your child does not listen well.

How can you help your child learn at this age?

- Listen as your child talks. Nod your head or smile to show you understand.