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Communication Checklist

Why We Created This Checklist

Communication is a big part of how children learn, connect, and explore the world around them. But with so much information out there, and every child developing at their own pace, it can be hard to know what's expected, and when to seek support.

This checklist is designed to:



Provide a simple overview of key communication milestones



Help you notice your child's strengths and any areas where support may be helpful



Start conversations with health professionals, educators or early childhood staff



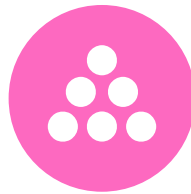
Reassure you that it's okay to ask questions — you're not alone, and we're here to help

What Are Developmental Milestones?

Every child develops in their own time, but there are certain skills we typically expect to see at different ages. These are known as developmental milestones, and they help parents, educators, and health professionals understand how a child is progressing in key areas of early development, such as:



Communication
and language



Motor skills
and self-care



Play, social, and
emotional development

You can think of milestones as helpful signposts — not rigid rules. Every child's journey is different, but keeping track of how things are going can offer clarity and peace of mind.

Why Milestones Matter

Milestones provide a simple way to:



Understand what's
typical at different ages



Celebrate your child's
strengths and
achievements



Spot any delays or
challenges early on



Start helpful
conversations with your
GP, educator, or a
therapist



Access early
support if needed

How to Use the Checklist

1

Choose your child's age range and read through the skills typically seen at that stage.

2

Tick off the things your child is doing — celebrate those wins!

3

Highlight any skills they're not yet showing or that feel tricky for them.

4

Use this as a conversation starter with your GP, educator or one of our speech pathologists.

You don't need to tick everything for your child to be doing well, but if several things are missing, you're ticking off some of the concerning behaviours, or something just feels "off," it may be worth reaching out for support.

This checklist is not a test or diagnosis — it's just a helpful tool to guide your thinking and give you clarity.

A Gentle Reminder

All children grow and learn in their own time. Some are quiet observers. Some talk before they walk. Some need a little extra support — and that's okay.

If you have questions or concerns, don't wait.
Early support can make a big difference.



**By 12 months
of age**

By 12 months of age

Speech

- ☐ Make different consonant (e.g. p, m, b) and vowel (e.g. oo, ahh) sounds
- ☐ Combine words to form a syllable (e.g. du, ma)

Language

- ☐ Respond when you call their name
- ☐ Respond when you say 'no'
- ☐ Anticipate what will happen next (e.g. giggle before you take your hands away for peek-a-boo)
- ☐ Look at objects or people that you call attention to
- ☐ Take your hands when you say "Let's go"
- ☐ Respond to a speaker by smiling
- ☐ Uses gestures or pushing/pulling to communicate without using words
- ☐ Copy actions and sounds
- ☐ Use gestures or sounds to protest
- ☐ Start using their first words
- ☐ Seek attention from others
- ☐ Play a simple game and take turns (e.g. peek-a-boo)
- ☐ Point to request for things they want

Your child may benefit from additional support to develop their communication skills if you notice they:

- ☐ Have difficulty looking at faces/objects
- ☐ Do not smile or interact with people
- ☐ Do not respond to familiar words or their name
- ☐ Do not have a variety of ways to communicate (e.g. facial expressions, eye-gaze, gestures)
- ☐ Do not coo or babble
- ☐ Have a regression of skills at any-time



**By 24 months
of age**

By 24 months of age

Speech

- ☐ Start to use a variety of early sounds (b, p, t, d, h, w, m, n)
- ☐ Be understood around 50% of the time (by 2 years of age)

Language

- ☐ Follow familiar instructions with gestures
- ☐ Play with toys/use objects appropriately in play
- ☐ Give you the right object when you put down 3-4 options (e.g. "Give me the ball/cup/shoe")
- ☐ Understand words like "wait, stop, my turn"
- ☐ Point to simple body parts
- ☐ Understand action words (e.g. "Give dolly a drink") and place words (e.g. in/out, on/off)
- ☐ Understand 'what' questions (e.g. "What's that? What is the boy doing?")
- ☐ Start turn-taking games with you (e.g. peek-a-boo)
- ☐ Copy words
- ☐ Use 200-300 words
- ☐ Combine 2 or more words together (e.g. "car go", "dog eat")
- ☐ Label photos of objects
- ☐ Use words more than gestures to communicate

Your child may benefit from additional support to develop their communication skills if you notice they:

- ☐ Have difficulty looking at faces/objects
- ☐ Do not smile or interact with people
- ☐ Do not respond to familiar words or their name
- ☐ Use a small number of words
- ☐ Do not imitate actions or sounds
- ☐ Regression of skills at any time



**By 3 years
of age**

By 3 years of age

Speech

- ☐ Produce the sounds /t, d, p, b, k, g, w, h/ in single words by their 3rd birthday
- ☐ Be understood 75% of the time by 3 years (despite sound errors)

Language

- ☐ Point to clothes they are wearing (e.g. "Show me your hat/shoes")
- ☐ Recognise actions in pictures (e.g. "Show me the person who is eating")
- ☐ Understand ownership words (e.g. my, your, mine, me)
- ☐ Understand how things are used (e.g. "You cut with scissors")
- ☐ Understand describing words (e.g. open/close, big/little, wet/dry, hot/cold, hard/soft, same/different)
- ☐ Understand 2-step instructions (e.g. "Open the box and give me the cup")
- ☐ Understand place words (e.g. in/out, under/over, up/down, top/bottom)
- ☐ Understand boy/girl
- ☐ Understand questions (e.g. what, what doing, where, who)
- ☐ Ask questions ("What's this?" "Where is it?")
- ☐ Use plurals (e.g. socks, shoes, blocks)
- ☐ Answer yes/no questions
- ☐ Use little words like 'the' and 'a'
- ☐ Have a vocabulary of 300-500 words
- ☐ Use 3-4 words in a sentence when talking
- ☐ Use -ing at the end of action words (e.g. sitting, eating)

Your child may benefit from additional support to develop their communication skills if you notice they:

- ☐ Are difficult to understand or unknown people can't understand them
- ☐ Have difficulty answering questions
- ☐ Speak in single words or short sentences
- ☐ Use a small range of words



**By 4 years
of age**

By 4 years of age

Speech

- ☐ Produce /p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, w, h f/ and /'sh'/ by 3 ½ years
- ☐ Produce /p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, w, h f, 'sh', 'ch', j, s/ and /l/ by 4 years
- ☐ Be understood by adults most of the time

Language

- ☐ Understand and use place words (e.g. top/bottom, front/back, next to, behind)
- ☐ Follow more complex 2-part instructions
- ☐ Understand and use describing words (e.g. big/small, tall/short, hot/cold, fast/slow, same/different)
- ☐ Make longer sentences when talking (e.g. "I went to the shops and mum got me a treat")
- ☐ Understand and use amount words (e.g. empty/full, one/some/rest, most/-most)
- ☐ Use combining words like 'and', 'so', 'because' and 'then' when joining sentences
- ☐ Understand and use time words (e.g. and, then)
- ☐ Describe how things are done (e.g. "How do you make a sandwich?")
- ☐ Understand and ask 'why' questions
- ☐ Use tenses when talking (e.g. running, jumped)
- ☐ Know group names (e.g. clothes, animals, food)
- ☐ Use pronouns (e.g. he, she, they)

Your child may benefit from additional support to develop their communication skills if you notice they:

- ☐ Have trouble following two-step instructions
- ☐ Sound 'young' when they talk (e.g. 'car go' or 'give ball')
- ☐ Are not understood by unfamiliar people
- ☐ Use short sentences



**By 5 years
of age**

By 5 years of age

Speech

- ☐ Produce all sounds except a 'th' sound

Language

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Understand and use more complex amount words (e.g. alone, whole/half)<hr/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Use joining words to form long sentences (e.g. before/after, but, if)<hr/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Understand and use more complex place words (e.g. closest/furthest, above/below)<hr/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Retell stories that others understand<hr/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Understand and use more complex inclusion/exclusion words (e.g. all except, either/or, both)<hr/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Retell events in correct, sequential order<hr/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Understand and use more complex time words (e.g. first/second/third/last, beginning/end)<hr/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Most grammar is correct<hr/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Understand and answer 'when' questions (e.g. "When do you brush your teeth?") | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Answer questions from stories after reading them<hr/> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Understand 3-part instructions |

Your child may benefit from additional support to develop their communication skills if you notice they:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Have a range of speech sound errors<hr/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Are unable to retell stories, or their stories don't make sense<hr/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Don't use grammar when speaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Speak in single sentences |

Please refer to our School Readiness Checklist for additional skills expected of a 5 year old who is about to start Kindergarten.

What to Do Now

Here are a few helpful next steps:

Talk it through



Have a chat with your GP, early childhood educator, or one of our speech pathologists. You can bring the completed checklist to help guide the conversation.

Book a speech pathology assessment



A comprehensive communication assessment can provide more clarity and give you personalised support for your child.

Keep an eye on things



If your child is just missing one or two skills and you're not too concerned, you might decide to check back in a few months and monitor their progress.

Build communication into everyday moments



Read together, play, talk about your day, and give your child time to express themselves. These small things make a big difference.

Where to Get Help

If you're looking for more support or have questions about your child's communication:

Contact Chatterbox

Our friendly team of speech pathologists are here to help guide you through the next steps. We'll work with you to understand your child's needs and support their development in a fun, play-based and neurodiversity-affirming way.



Penrith

- 🕒 9am - 5:30pm (Mon - Fri)
- 📍 680 High St, Penrith NSW 2750
- ☎️ (02) 4731 2432



Kingswood

- 🕒 9am - 5:30pm (Mon - Fri)
- 📍 Western Sydney University, Building BB, Kingswood, NSW, 2747
- ☎️ (02) 9623 6362



Bella Vista

- 🕒 9am - 5:30pm (Mon - Fri)
- 📍 T1 Building, Level 3, Suite 306, 14-16 Lexington Drive
- ☎️ (02) 4647 6777



Parramatta

- 🕒 9am - 5:30pm (Mon - Fri)
- 📍 60 Prospect Street, Rosehill, NSW, 2142
- ☎️ (02) 8814 1821



Oran Park

- 🕒 9am - 5:30pm (Mon, Thurs, Fri)
- 🕒 10:00am - 6:30pm (Tue & Wed)
- 📍 Oran Park Dr, Oran Park NSW 2570
- ☎️ (02) 881 41821

Remember:

You're doing a great job. Reaching out for support isn't a sign of failure — it's a sign that you're tuned in and doing what's best for your child. And we're here to help.



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