



NEWCASTLE

Speech
Pathology



THE ULTIMATE PRESCHOOLER SPEECH AND COMMUNICATION GUIDE AGES 3-5 YEARS

**+ BONUS TIPS TO HELP YOUR
CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT**

@newcastlespeechpathology

COMMUNICATION CHANGES

Between the ages of 3 and 5, children are increasingly developing their vocabulary and learning to formulate sentences that are more and more complex.

Speech and language development ensure that we are able to critically think about the world around us, understand various situations, communicate basic needs, thoughts and feelings, establish strong relationships, solve problems, and so much more.

These oral language skills also support other areas of a child's development, such as cognitive development, social development and are a foundation for future literacy development.



Let's take a look at what we can expect from our preschoolers and find out if your child's communication skills are on track.

This checklist will put your mind at rest and help you recognise when that special small person in your life may need some extra support from a speech pathologist.

We will consider typical milestones across the following elements of communication:

Speech: the sounds your child is making and how they are putting them together to make words

Vocabulary: the words your child understands and uses, and how they store them

Receptive Language or Comprehension: how your child understands and responds to language

Expressive Language: the way your child expresses themselves through words and sentences. It includes how they use language and gestures to think and convey their thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Phonological Awareness: how they understand and interpret sounds which leads to literacy

Play and Cognitive Skills: which provide communication opportunities and help your child to develop language for thinking, reasoning and problem-solving

WHAT CAN MY 3-YEAR-OLD DO?

1. SPEECH

- ☐ Speaking relatively clearly with a small number of persistent speech error patterns.
- ☐ Easily understood 50% - 75% of the time.
- ☐ Sometimes 'bumpy' talking can develop. If this period of stuttering doesn't resolve within a few weeks, please prioritise a chat with a speech pathologist.

2. VOCABULARY

- ☐ Rapidly expanding their vocabulary to around 1,000 words
- ☐ Learning new words every week
- ☐ Using a variety of words for names, actions, locations, descriptions



3. RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE OR COMPREHENSION

- ☐ Following more complex 2-3 -step instructions
- ☐ Answering 'wh' questions like where, when, who, what, why
- ☐ Identifying parts of objects, e.g. wheels, steering wheel, door, engine or tail, legs, ears, snout etc
- ☐ Answering questions about the function of objects e.g. What is a knife for? Why do we need shoes?
- ☐ Understanding the concept of 'same' and 'different'
- ☐ Answering simple questions about their day
- ☐ Sorting objects into groups when asked to, e.g. toys, food, cars
- ☐ Recognising basic colours



4. EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

The way your child expresses themselves through words and sentences. It includes how they use language and gestures to think and convey their thoughts, feelings and ideas.

- ☐ Talking in sentences up to 5 words in length
- ☐ Using words like 'and' or 'because'
- ☐ Using pronouns they, us, hers, his, them, her
- ☐ Using -ing on the end of words
- ☐ Talking about something in the past
- ☐ Asking questions like what, who, where
- ☐ Describing what just happened
- ☐ Reciting some nursery rhymes
- ☐ Counting to at least 5
- ☐ Naming colours
- ☐ Expresses feelings and ideas
- ☐ Having conversations with adults, but not necessarily staying on topic



5. PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

How they understand and interpret sounds, which is a foundation for later literacy

- ☐ Show an awareness of the concept of 'reading' and 'writing'
- ☐ Pretend to write
- ☐ Pretend to read books
- ☐ Recognise specific books by their covers
- ☐ Listen to stories for longer periods
- ☐ Hold a book correctly

6. PLAY AND COGNITIVE SKILLS

These provide communication opportunities and help your child to develop language for thinking, reasoning and problem-solving

- ☐ Playing house
- ☐ Beginning acting out whole scenes in dramatic play
- ☐ Sorting objects by colour
- ☐ Playing with other children
- ☐ Taking turns
- ☐ Sharing
- ☐ Practising conversations
- ☐ Shows signs of frustration if not understood



WHAT CAN MY 4-YEAR-OLD DO?

1. SPEECH

- ☐ Understood by at least 80% of people outside the family.

2. VOCABULARY

- ☐ Have a vocabulary of 1,500 to 1,600 words.

3. RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

- ☐ Follows 3-step directions without any cues
- ☐ Listen to a short story and can answer questions about it
- ☐ Understanding most of what is said at home and preschool
- ☐ Following simple instructions involving things that are not present
- ☐ Answering 'when' questions
- ☐ Answering 'how many' questions (up to 4 items)
- ☐ Understanding describing words such as big, bigger, biggest
- ☐ Understanding the concept of time with words such as yesterday, today, tomorrow, first, then, next, last week etc
- ☐ Identifying positional concepts such as first, middle, last

4. EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

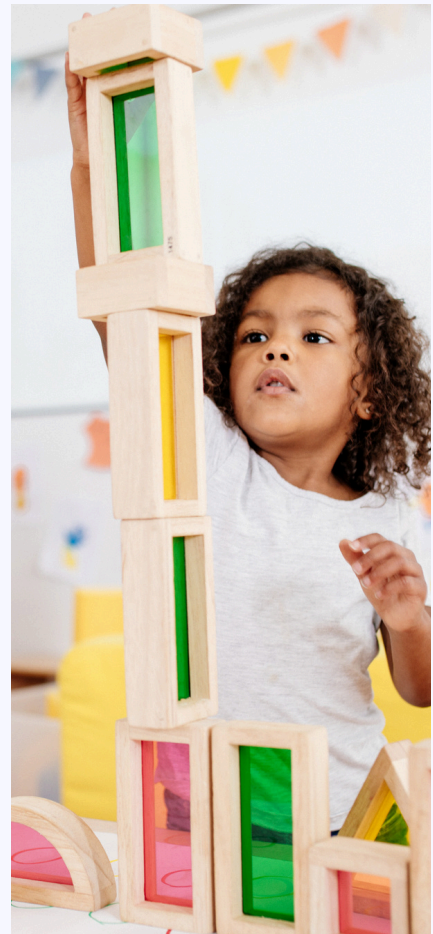
- ☐ Speak in full sentences with correct grammar
- ☐ Use all pronouns correctly (they, us, he, she, him, her, his, hers, theirs, myself, ourselves etc)
- ☐ Ask questions using correct grammar
- ☐ Uses direct language with justification e.g. 'stop that, you're hurting me'

5. PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

- ☐ Singing songs
- ☐ Making up rhymes
- ☐ Aware of print in books, on signs etc
- ☐ Understands the sequence of a story
- ☐ Knowing lots of letter names
- ☐ Understanding the function and purpose of print

6. PLAY AND COGNITIVE SKILLS

- ☐ Able to negotiate in play
- ☐ Using language to reason and solve problems
- ☐ Using words to invite others to play
- ☐ Playing competitive games
- ☐ Talks about imaginative ideas e.g. 'what if...'



WHAT CAN MY 5-YEAR-OLD DO?

1. SPEECH

- ☐ Understood by everyone
- ☐ Use most speech sounds correctly, but may still have some difficulty with 's, r and th'

2. VOCABULARY

- ☐ Understanding and using between 2,200 and 2,500 words
- ☐ Thinking about the meaning when hearing new words
- ☐ Asks the meaning of new words

3. RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

- ☐ Understanding instructions without having to stop and listen
- ☐ Following 3-part instructions such as 'put on your shoes, get your backpack and get in the car'
- ☐ Understanding all time-related words e.g. before, now, later, after, yesterday, tomorrow
- ☐ Answering questions about simple stories they've heard
- ☐ Understanding left and right
- ☐ Understanding number concepts of up to 20
- ☐ Repeating sentences up to nine words long

4. EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

- ☐ Taking turns in increasingly longer conversations
- ☐ Telling simple stories with a clear beginning, middle and end
- ☐ Using past and future tense verbs correctly e.g. 'went' and 'will go', 'had' and 'will have', 'was', 'has'
- ☐ Using words like 'when, so, because, if'
- ☐ Asking a variety of questions for information
- ☐ Using the contractible form of auxiliary verbs e.g. the boy's running, she's talking
- ☐ Using describing words
- ☐ Using adverbs such as backwards and forwards
- ☐ Making comparisons such as loud and louder
- ☐ Using location words such as through, nearest, corner, middle

5. PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

- ☐ Recognising letters, sounds and numbers
- ☐ Able to clap out the syllables they hear in a word
- ☐ Confidently making rhymes
- ☐ Able to identify the first sounds in words and tell if another word starts with the same sound
- ☐ Beginning to use wordplay
- ☐ Beginning to try writing and writing their own name

6. PLAY AND COGNITIVE SKILLS

- ☐ Using threats and promises
- ☐ Adjusting their communication to meet the needs of unfamiliar people
- ☐ Engaging in cooperative play such as making group decisions, assigning roles, playing fairly
- ☐ Announcing a change of topic



TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD'S SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

1. Help your child learn new words. Say a new word, and tell them or show them what it means. For example, you can use the word "vehicle" instead of "car." You can say, "There are lots of vehicles driving on the road. Our vehicle is blue!".
2. Talk about where things are, using words like "first," "middle," and "last" or "right" and "left." Use opposite words like "up" and "down" or "on" and "off."
3. Teach your child groups of items, or categories. This is a great one for the grocery shop. For example, "A shoe does not go with an apple and an orange because you can't eat it. It is not round. It is not a fruit."
4. Help your child follow two- and three-step directions. Use words like, "Go to your room, and bring me your book." or "Go to your room, get your socks and come and put your shoes on".
5. Play pretend games with your child such as "house". Swap roles of the parent and the child in the game. Model sharing and turn-taking.
6. Watch movies together. Talk about what your child is watching. Have them guess what might happen next. Talk about the characters. Ask them to tell you what happened in the story. Act out a scene together, or make up a different ending.
7. If your child pronounces a word wrong, make sure to repeat them back with the correct pronunciation. E.g. If your child says "Look Mum, I see a bish!", you can say "Yes. I see it. A fish!"

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

If your child is not meeting these early communication milestones, now is the right time to see a speech pathologist. It is always best to seek help early and never take a 'wait and see' approach.

At Newcastle Speech Pathology, we're on a mission to support parents to help their children unlock their full potential.

We're passionate about getting kids communicating early because we know that clear communication unlocks opportunities in life.

Whether it's in school, at work, or in the community, everyone deserves to be heard and understood.

We provide a full range of speech pathology services to our clients and their families. Based in Newcastle, New South Wales, we offer in-clinic and online appointments.

Contact us today to discuss your child's communication skills and find out how we can support you in unlocking their potential!

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