

# Look What I Can Do!

*A Guide for Teachers*



**ERINOAK**KIDS  
Centre for Treatment and Development

**Preschool Speech and Language Services**

CL0001382020V1

## **Teachers have a significant impact on a child's language and literacy development and are critical in the early identification of speech and language difficulties.**

*Look What I Can Do Teacher Guide* tells you how most children will learn to communicate from ages one to five and provides ideas to support language and literacy development for all children in the classroom. This booklet is meant as a guide only. Please remember that children develop at different rates, and not all children will be able to do what is listed in this booklet at each age. It is important to speak with parents if you have concerns that a child is not meeting the milestones.

Speak with parents to determine if a child is meeting the milestones in her or his home language.

ErinoakKids Preschool Speech and Language Services are free to all preschool children from birth through Junior Kindergarten age in Halton and Peel. A referral from a family doctor is not required. Parents can refer their child directly by calling ErinoakKids intake.

Speech and Language Services  
ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development  
905-855-2690 or 1-877-374-6625



For more speech and language resources please go to  
[www.erinoakkids.ca](http://www.erinoakkids.ca)

**Classroom Tip:**

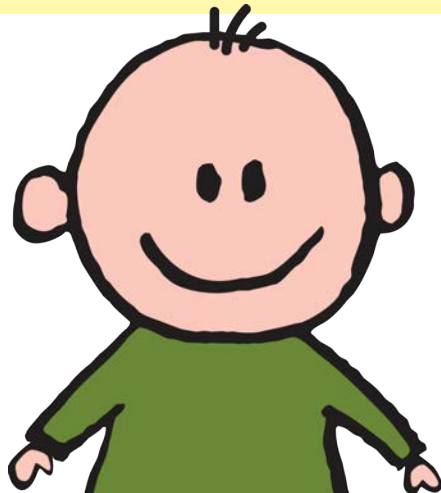
*Children's interest, understanding and attention levels vary. To help children engage during book reading, choose books that are colorful and interactive (books with flaps, sound buttons, touch and feel). When reading, try using different voices, sound effects, and animated facial expressions.*

**When I'm one I can:**

- Wave "bye" when you say "bye bye."
- Follow simple directions when used with gestures, like "come here," "sit down" or "don't touch."
- Answer simple questions like "Where's the doggie?" by looking, pointing or moving toward the object or person.
- Understand words like "up" or "all gone," especially when you use actions or gestures.
- Point to simple body parts, like the nose or ears.
- Get your attention by looking, pointing or bringing objects to you.
- Say my first words, like "dada" for daddy, "baba" for bottle, "du" for juice or "at" for hat.

**Talk to my parents if:**

- I am not making sounds or babbling.
- I am not showing interest in you or others.
- I do not show you things by reaching or looking.



## Here is what you can do:

- Sit on the floor or at my level so I can watch your face as you sing and talk to me.
- Sing simple songs with actions like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” or “If You’re Happy and You Know It.” Sing them slowly and add the actions so I can learn them too.
- Sing songs to match classroom routines. Make them up or use real songs (e.g. a clean-up song or a song for washing our hands). Sing these songs every day so I will know what’s coming next.
- Copy the sounds I make and then wait for me to try.
- Interpret my gestures and sounds with one or two words (e.g. If I put my hands up, you say “up”).
- Give me words for things I’m interested in and words that go with routines (e.g. “wash your hands,” “It’s a big car”).
- Use just one or two words at a time, and please, speak slowly.
- Repeat new words over and over for me.
- Add actions or gestures to the words you are using so they are easier for me to understand.
- Make sure there are enough toys for all of us to play with, but not so many that it’s distracting. It’s a good idea to have two or more of the same toy, so we can learn to copy each other.



**Classroom Tip:**

*Singing songs is a great way to teach language. Sing them slowly and add actions. Wait before key words and actions to see if the children can fill in the action or the word. Children learn best through repetition; sing the same song many times every day.*

**When I'm one and a half I can:**

- Understand the names of familiar things, people and events.
- Imitate words I hear.
- Use 20 to 30 words for familiar objects, people or events.
- Communicate using a combination of gestures, sounds, facial expressions and words.
- Be understood about 25 per cent of the time.
- Pretend during play (e.g. pretend to give a teddy bear a drink, pretend to eat a cookie, pretend that a block is a car).
- Listen to simple stories.
- Recognize pictures of familiar objects in books.
- Point to pictures in a book when you ask (e.g. "Where's the bird?") or when you make a comment about a picture (e.g. "That's the fire truck").

**Talk to my parents if:**

- I use fewer than 10 words.
- I do not use gestures.
- I stop using words I used to know.
- I do not imitate sounds or words.



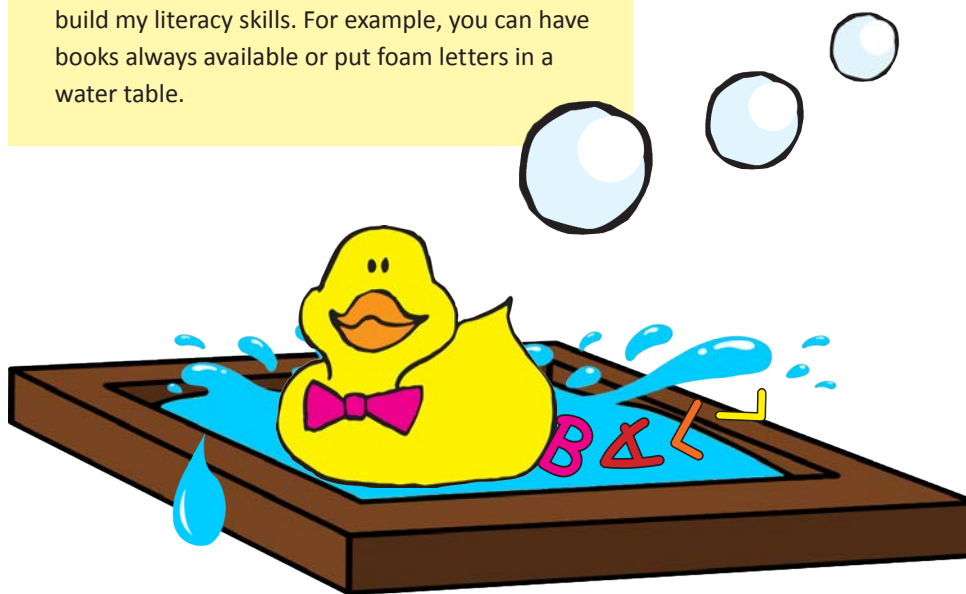
## Here is what you can do:

- Take turns when playing with me by copying me. This is very helpful if I prefer to play on my own.
- Use classroom routines to teach me new words (e.g. at snack time talk about the food and drink and what you are doing with them).
- Add words to what I'm showing you and use words in different ways ("roll the ball," "throw the ball," "kick the ball.")
- Read picture books to me or make up the words in the story to help me understand. Choose books that are colourful and are about what I'm interested in. I really like when you use different voices and funny sounds.
- If you don't understand me, get me to show you what I mean.
- Talk about what my friends and I are doing.
- Have lots of print around the room to help me build my literacy skills. For example, you can have books always available or put foam letters in a water table.



### **Classroom Tip:**

*Encourage children to play together by having more than one of the same toy and enough room for several children to join in. For example, at a water table have enough toys for all children and encourage them to be face to face. Join in on the fun, grab a toy and play too!*



**Classroom Tip:**

*Daily routines are an easy way to encourage language. During routines, add a variety of words (i.e. actions, descriptions, location). At lunch time use words like pour, eat, spill, hot, cold, yummy, slimy, in, and on. You can offer choices and give children a reason to communicate (e.g. wait for them to ask for more or offer a choice such as water or milk).*

**When I'm two I can:**

- Understand directions that have two steps (e.g. "Pick up the ball and roll it to me").
- Understand words that describe location, like in, on, off or under.
- Use 200 to 300 words and combine two to four words at a time (e.g. "more juice," "mommy go work," "where doggie go?").
- Communicate using mostly words.
- Use "no" or "not" in combination with another word (e.g. "no juice").
- Use words that describe objects or people like big, little, hot, hungry, or all gone.
- Use words that describe actions, like sleep, wash, sit, jump, sing.
- Ask simple questions that start with what, why and who (e.g. "where bus go?").
- Refer to real life past events (e.g. what happened at daycare).
- Hold books right side up and turn pages, with help.
- Have 50 per cent of my words understood most of the time.

**Talk to my parents if:**

- You understand fewer than half of my words.
- I use very few words.
- I do not put two words together.



## Here is what you can do:

- Use simple, clear language and speak slowly to me.
- Look at me when talking to me and be at my level.
- Respond to what I have said or shown you.
- Expand on what I say by adding a few words (If I say “juice,” you could say, “juice is yummy.”)
- Ask me to choose between two items, e.g. “do you want a book or blocks?”
- Give me objects or pictures to go with songs or books so I can participate too (e.g. spiders for “Eensy Weensy Spider”). Remember to sing the same songs often.
- Help me play with my friends by giving me an activity we can do together.
- Give me enough help to be successful, but not too much that I don’t have a chance to do it myself. For example, if you see me struggling to put my boots on, you can wait and let me ask for help.
- Help me play with my friends by having more than one of the same toy and having room for us to play together.
- Have lots of opportunities for me to see letters and words in the classroom (e.g. menus in the kitchen).
- Comment on what you see rather than asking me questions. When you ask a question, ask one that you don’t know the answer to.



**Classroom Tip:**  
*You can make books and songs more engaging by having props. For example, when you are reading the Three Little Pigs, have pictures or finger puppets of the wolf, pigs, and three houses. The children can take turns putting the pigs in and blowing the houses down.*



**Classroom Tip:**

*Make print a part of your classroom. Try posting signs around the room at the children's eye level. Use words and pictures to label the centers in the room or to identify the rules.*

*Provide opportunities for the children to practice writing. For example, have a table with pens, markers and stickers.*

*Children can make postcards and pretend to mail them. You could have a whiteboard near your kitchen and write a menu for a pretend restaurant.*

**When I'm three I can:**

- Use 800 to 1,500 words.
- Identify objects by what they do ("What do you wear on your feet?")
- Combine three to five words in simple sentences.
- Use words that describe location, like in, on, under.
- Talk about feelings (e.g. happy, sad, tired).
- Refer to myself using "I."
- Use the pronouns you, he, she.
- Use word endings like *-ing* (e.g. playing), plurals (e.g. shoes), possessives (e.g. Mommy's) as well as my, mine, your and yours.
- Show an interest in words that rhyme.
- Recognize my printed name.
- Use early developing speech sounds correctly in words (p, b, m, n, w, h).
- Be understood by my family 75 per cent of the time.

**Talk to my parents if:**

- I am frustrated when I try to talk.
- You have a hard time understanding me.
- I do not put three or more words together.
- I do not listen well.
- I repeat words but do not seem to understand them.



## Here is what you can do:

- Describe what is happening in the classroom using sentences.
- Explain what new words mean (e.g. “angry means being very mad.”)
- Repeat what I say using correct sounds and sentences. If I say “him riding a bike,” you could say, “yes, he is *riding* a bike.” I will learn from your example and don’t need to be asked to repeat.
- Read stories and point out the words as you read them. I learn through repetition so read the same stories often. You can pause to let me fill in key words in familiar stories.
- Encourage me to play in small groups with my friends by giving us an activity we need to do together. For example, you might give me glue and my friends the pieces of a craft project.
- Read books that rhyme and talk about real and silly words that rhyme. We can make up rhymes together!
- Encourage me to direct my requests and questions to my peers. For example, if I ask you where the tissues are, you can say, “Ask Emily to help you find the tissues.”
- Arrange the classroom in a way that encourages me to interact with others and gives me a quiet space if I need a break. For example, use bookshelves to create separate spaces for quiet activities like reading from noisier activities like block building or pretend play.

### **Classroom Tip:**

*Questions can be a great way to get information, but they can also limit the response you will get from a child. Try to use questions as a way to gather more information or to make children think. Ask open-ended questions like, “I wonder what will happen if...?” or “What would you do if...?” Avoid closed questions that you already know the answer to (e.g. “What colour is this?”)*



**Classroom Tip:**

*Classroom setup can have a direct impact on behaviour and interaction. Open spaces may lead to running and wandering, and make it more difficult for children to interact or engage in quiet activities. Creating smaller spaces that have a specific purpose will help facilitate interaction. Use book and toy shelves to create separate areas like a kitchen area, a quiet book reading space, or a building area.*

**When I'm four I can:**

- Use sentences of four to six words.
- Ask many questions using words like who, what, where, when, why and how.
- Use the past tense ending, *-ed*, (e.g. jumped) and use words like *can't*, *don't*, and *won't*.
- Connect ideas using *because* and *and*.
- Remember the details of a story and tell simple stories.
- Talk and listen in small groups.
- Recognize familiar print in the environment (e.g. street signs, restaurant signs, and names on packages).
- Be understood most of the time by everyone.

**Talk to my parents if:**

- I stutter (repeat sounds or words).
- Other people have a hard time understanding me.
- I use words in an unusual way.
- I do not use complete sentences.
- I do not like communicating with other children.
- I have trouble following directions.



## Here is what you can do:

- Encourage me to tell stories using books and pictures.
- Let me help you with a job and talk about what we are doing (e.g. sweeping up the sand after sand play).
- Talk to me about feelings and concepts like how I would feel if I fell off my bike or how things are the same or different.
- If I use a word or sound incorrectly, repeat it back to me and emphasize the correct sound or word (e.g. “I need thoap” – “Soap. You need soap”).
- Talk to me about letters, the sounds they make and how sounds can go together to form words (e.g. D-O-G, dog).
- Help me spot items around the room that start with a certain letter (e.g. ball, blocks, baby, and bean bag all start with B).
- Develop opportunities for pretend play. For example, you could bring in a box and we can pretend it’s a space ship or a tree house. We can even decorate it together!
- Have a table set up with a variety of writing materials (e.g. pens, markers, paper, and whiteboards).
- Follow what I am interested in and help to build on my ideas and language. For example, if I see that it is snowing outside, we can talk about why it snows, what we can do in the snow, or how snow makes us feel.

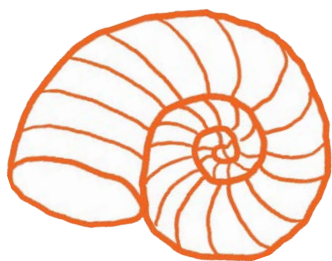
### **Classroom Tip:**

*Create a problem for the children to solve. At snack time “forget” to put the cups on the table. At craft time, set out only a few paint brushes, but not enough for everyone. Encourage children to problem solve together!*



**Classroom Tip:**

*Bring something new into the classroom to spark a conversation and the children's imagination. For example, bring in a sea shell and encourage children to talk about what it is, where it comes from and if they have been to the beach before. You can expand on the topic by making a beach craft or by reading stories about the ocean. You can even take a pretend trip to the beach!*

**When I'm five I can:**

- Follow directions with three steps (e.g. "get your crayons, draw a picture, and put it in your cubby").
- Answer questions involving *when* and *why*.
- Use correct grammar most of the time.
- Talk about past, future and imaginary events.
- Accurately sequence events in a story.
- Pronounce most speech sounds correctly (with the exception of sounds like *r*, *th* and *v*).
- Recognize the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make.

**Talk to my parents if:**

- I stutter (repeat sounds or words).
- Other people have a hard time understanding me.
- I use words in an unusual way.
- I do not use complete sentences.
- I do not like communicating with other children.

## Here is what you can do:

- Read longer stories to me and ask me to predict what is going to happen next.
- Encourage me to act out stories.
- Ask me questions like *why*, *how* and *what if*.
- Ask me about today, yesterday or tomorrow.
- Help me think about how things go together. For example, during sand play we can talk about other places where we might see sand (e.g. the beach) and we can talk about our experiences.
- During circle time, you can have us share something exciting that happened at home or something that is going to happen, such as a vacation.
- Create an activity to help us pretend together. For example, we can set up chairs and pretend to be riding a bus. Let's talk about what we would see, where we would go and what might happen.
- Help me print my name and talk about the letters that are in my name.
- Send me on a scavenger hunt to find objects around the room that start with a certain letter.



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