

# Look What I Can Do!

A Guide to Communication Development  
THE FIRST FIVE YEARS



**ERINOAKiDS**  
Centre for Treatment and Development

Preschool Speech & Language Services

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# **How is your child's speech and language developing? It's never too early to ask!**

This booklet tells how most young children will learn to communicate at different ages.

***Look What I can Do! tells you what many children do at each age . 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. This booklet is meant as a guide only.***

If you have concerns that your child's speech and language is not developing at the expected rate please call the Preschool Speech and Language Services at ErinoakKids for an assessment by a speech-language pathologist.

An assessment by a speech-language pathologist will help you better understand what you can expect from your child in terms of speech and language growth.

Our program is free to all preschool children from birth through Junior Kindergarten age who live in Halton and Peel. You do not need a doctor's referral.

## **CALL US DIRECTLY**

### **Preschool Speech and Language Services**

ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development

Client Services Intake Centre

**905-855-2690**

or

**1-877-374-6625**

# Hearing your baby's first words is an exciting event.



Those first words are followed by many more words and then sentences. But communication begins even before the first words. It begins with a baby's cry and with gestures, looks, smiles and sounds.

Language development is rapid between the ages of 12-36 months; this is a critical age for speech and language development. By the time children are ready to go to school they should be able to listen and communicate well, as these are the building blocks for reading and writing.

As parents, you play the major role in helping your child build speech, language and listening skills. We have added ideas of what you can do to encourage your child's communication development.

*The information in this book applies to all children no matter what language is spoken at home. If you do not use English at home, then use these ideas in the language you use at home.*

Keep in mind that each child is different and will develop at different rates. If you feel your child is not learning to communicate at the expected level, call **ErinoakKids Preschool Speech and Language Services** for help.

# How is Your Child's Speech and Language Developing?

*Learning to talk, listen and communicate begins from birth. It all starts with baby's first looks, laughs, cries and gestures. Parents quickly learn the difference between hunger cries and cries of tiredness or a wet diaper.*

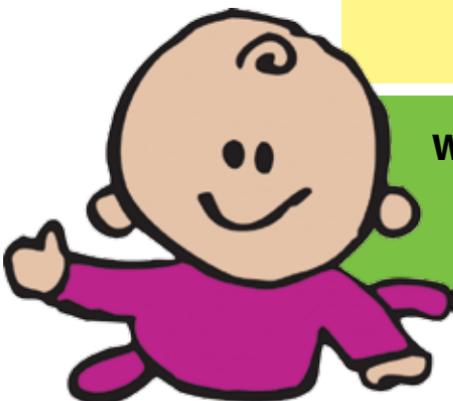
## Look What I Can Do Before I'm One!

### By 6 months

- I can watch your face when you talk
- I can turn or look in the direction of a sound
- I can cry in different ways for different needs (e.g. tired, hungry, need comfort)
- I can make noises or look at you to get your attention
- I can make babbling sounds like "buh", "da" or "muh"
- I can laugh
- I can make sounds when you smile or talk to me

### By 9 months

- I can begin to imitate some of the sounds you make
- I can reach and look at you to be picked up
- I can respond to my name
- I can babble by repeating sounds, like "buh-buh-buh" or "na-na-na" when with you or when alone
- I can imitate simple actions, like clapping hands, banging or patting
- I can play social games, with your help, like "peek-a-boo" or "pat-a-cake"



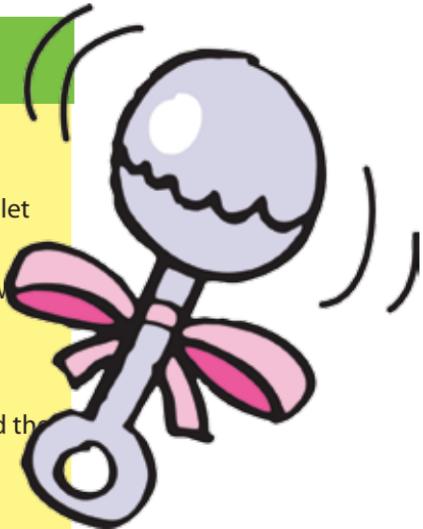
### When to call for help:

- Your baby does not react to your voice or other sound

## It's Never Too Early to Ask!

### Look What You Can Do!

- You can talk to me during dressing, feeding or washing times
- You can tune in to what I'm interested in (I will let you know by looking and reaching)
- You can wait to give me time to let you know what I'm interested in
- You can go out of your way to meet my gaze
- You can exaggerate your facial expressions and the tone of your voice
- You can talk to me as we follow daily routines
- You can sing songs and nursery rhymes
- You can show me picture books and talk about what we see
- You can tell me the names of objects that I see
- I won't always play with toys the way you think I will. Sometimes, I just want to bang and shake objects, open and shut doors and empty containers and fill them up again.  
Wait to see what interests me
- Don't just watch me play. I really like it when you get down on the floor, get some toys and play with me
- Make fun sounds, like "shhh", "uh oh", "boom!" or "pop!"
- Use gestures or actions along with your words. When you put your hands up and say "up", it helps me understand and learn the word



### Activity Tip

Play "Peek-a-Boo".  
Play "All-Gone".

*Imitate your child's sounds. Babies love to hear adults copy their sounds.*

*You can shake a rattle and then stop so your child can ask for more by reaching or looking at you.*

- Your baby does not smile or make sounds
- Your baby does not look at you or try to get your attention
- Your baby does not seem to understand or enjoy interacting with you

# How is Your Child's Speech and Language Developing?

Your baby is quickly gaining an understanding of the world around him. Your baby is interacting with you and beginning to ask for things by gestures and sounds. First words are beginning to appear.

## Look What I Can Do When I'm One!

- I can wave "bye" when you say "bye bye"
- I can follow simple directions when used with gestures, like "come here", "sit down" or "don't touch"
- I can answer simple questions like "Where's the doggie?" by looking, pointing or moving toward the object or person
- I can understand words like "up" or "all gone", especially when you use actions or gestures
- I can point to simple body parts, like "nose" and "ear"
- I can get your attention by looking, pointing or bringing objects to you
- I can say my first words, like "dada" for "daddy", "baba" for "bottle", "du" for "juice" or "at" for "hat"

## Which language should I use with my child?

Many children grow up in homes where languages other than English are spoken. Parents often wonder which language they should use with their child. If you want your child to learn more than one language, here are some things to think about:

- Talk with your child in a language that you feel comfortable using. This will give your child a good beginning in one language
- Decide that one person will speak one language with your child and another person will speak another language. It can be confusing to hear one person switching back and forth between languages
- Your child can learn one language at home and another language in another setting, like preschool or daycare

## When to call for help:

- Your baby does not make sounds or babble



## It's Never Too Early to Ask!

### Look What You Can Do!

- You can sing simple songs with actions, like "Row, Row , Row Your Boat"
- You can interpret my gestures and sounds with one or two words (e.g. if I put my hands up, say "up!")
- You can hold things close to your face , if possible, so it's easier for me to look at you and the object
- You can give me words for things that I'm interested in and words that go with everyday routines ("sock on", "throw the ball")
- You can use one or two words at a time and please, speak slowly
- You can repeat new words over and over for me
- You can add actions or gestures to your words so they are easier to understand
- You can talk about new situations before we go, while we're there, and again when we're back home



### Activity Tip

*Sit face to face, grasp your child's hands and lean forward and backward together.*

*You can row a boat!*

*"Row, Row, Row Your Boat. Gently Down the Stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, Life is but a dream."*

*Hint:  
Sing children's songs in the language you use at home.*

- Your baby does not show interest in you or other people or objects
- Your baby does not try to show you things by reaching or looking



# How is Your Child's Speech and Language Developing?

*Children learn many new words between the ages of 18-24 months. This is an important time for language development. If you have concerns about your child's speech and language development at this age, you should get the advice of a speech-language pathologist.*

## Look What I Can Do When I'm One and a Half!

- I can understand the names of many familiar things, people and events
- I can imitate words that I hear
- I can use 20 to 30 words for familiar objects, people or events
- I can communicate using a combination of gestures, sounds, facial expressions and words
- You can understand my words about 25% of the time.
- I can 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)
- I can listen to simple stories
- I can recognize pictures of familiar objects in books
- I can 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.")



## When to call for help:

- Your child uses less than 10 words

## Look What You Can Do!

- You can take turns when playing with me
- Play like a child - do what I do
- You can use daily routines to teach me new words (e.g. when dressing use words for clothes and body parts) and words like "on" and "off"
- You can use the same words in different ways ("roll the ball", "throw the ball", "kick the ball")
- You can read picture books to me. You can even make up your own story so I can understand
- If you don't understand me, get me to show you what I mean
- You can take me places like the grocery store, the zoo, the park or the toy store and use these trips to teach me new words

## Hearing and Speech Go Together

Ear infections can cause pain and temporary hearing loss in your child. Repeated ear infections may delay speech and language development. See your family doctor or an audiologist if you suspect an ear infection or hearing loss.

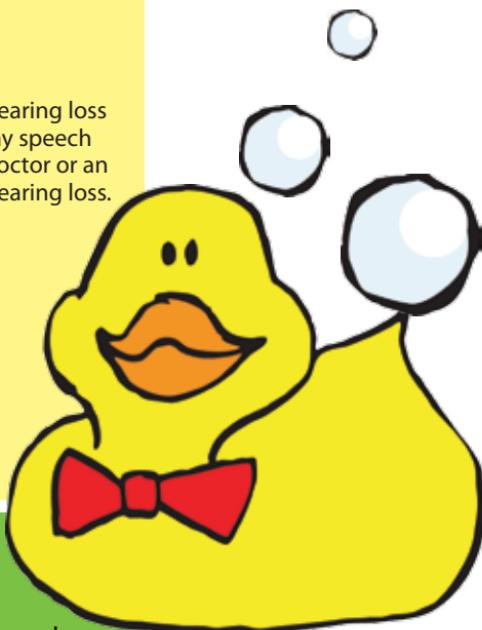
What to look for in your child:

- Ear pulling
  - Draining ears
  - A lot of colds and ear infections
  - Does not respond to you
- 
- Your child does not use gestures
  - Your child started to use words but stopped
  - Your child does not imitate sounds or words

## Activity Tip

Bath time is a great time for language learning - use words like "soap", "water", "splash", "boat", "swim", "wash" and "wet".

Read to your child. Remember you can make up the words to the story so your child can understand - you can read to her in the language you use at home.



# How is Your Child's Speech and Language Developing?

Your child's vocabulary is increasing; he is able to say more and more every month and is able to put two words together to make short phrases.

Combining words together is an important step in language development for your child.

## Look What I Can Do When I'm Two!

- I can understand directions that have two steps (e.g. "Pick up the ball and roll it to me.")
- I can understand words that describe location, like "in", "on", "off" or "under"
- I can use 200 to 300 words
- I can combine 2 to 4 words together (e.g. "more juice", "mommy go work", "where doggie go?")
- I can use mostly words to communicate
- I can use "no" or "not" in combination with another word (e.g. "no juice")
- I can use words that describe objects or people, like "big", "little", "hot", "hungry", "all gone"
- I can use words that describe action, like "sleep", "wash", "sit", "jump", "sing"
- I can ask simple questions that start with "where", "what", "why", and "who" (e.g. "Where bus go?")
- I can refer to real life past events (e.g. what happened at daycare)
- I can hold books right side up and turn pages, with help
- You can understand 50% of my words most of the time



**When to call for help:**

## Look What You Can Do!

Take me to our local Ontario Early Years Centre - they have lots of free fun programs for children and information for parents.

- You can talk simply, clearly and slowly when talking to me
- You can look at me when talking to me
- You can praise my efforts to communicate
- You can talk about new places and experiences, before you go, while you are there, and when you get home
- You can expand on what I say by adding one or two words (If I say, "dog", you could say, "big dog")
- You can ask me to choose between 2 items like "want juice?" or "want milk?"
- You can play children's music and listen with me
- You can sing songs with actions like "Eensy, Weensy Spider" and do the actions with me



- You understand less than half of your child's words
- Your child uses very few words (less than 30)
- Your child does not put two words together



## Activity Tip

*Sing a song together and do the finger actions.*

*"Eensy Weensy Spider"*

*"Eensy weensy spider  
went up the water spout.  
Down came the rain and  
washed the spider out."*

*Remember to tell stories and rhymes from your home language and culture.*



# How is Your Child's Speech and Language Developing?

*Between the ages of 2 and 3 years, children learn a great deal. The number of words they can say increases quickly. Their use of language increases and they are able to have conversations with you. 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.*



## Look What I Can Do When I'm Three!

- I can use 800 to 1500 words
- I can identify objects by what they do ("What do you wear on your feet?")
- I can combine 3 to 5 words together in simple sentences
- I can use words that describe location, like "in", "on", "under"
- I can talk about emotion and feelings (e.g. happy, sad, tired)
- I can refer to myself using "I"
- I can use the pronouns "you", "he", "she"
- I can use word endings like -ing (e.g. playing), plurals -s(e.g. shoes), possessive's (e.g. Mommy's) as well as "my", "mine", "your", "yours"
- I can show interest in words that rhyme
- I may recognize my printed name
- I can use early developing speech sounds correctly in words (p, b, m, n, w, h)
- I am understood by family members 75% of the time

## When to call for help:

- Your child acts frustrated when trying to talk
- You have a hard time understanding what your child says

## It's Never Too Early to Ask!

### Look What You Can Do!

- You can take me to programs where there are other children of my age: the library, parks and rec. programs and our local Ontario Early Years Centre
- You can describe things that are happening using sentences
- You can count things around you like "1,2,3 apples!"
- You can repeat what I say using correct sounds and sentences. If I say "Him widing a bike", you could say ("Yes, he is riding a bike.") Don't ask me to repeat what you say. I will learn from your example
- You can play games with me
- You can take turns when playing games and telling stories about pictures
- You can play pretend games like dress-up
- You can sort pieces of clothing with me by colour, ("Here are all the red socks")
- You can let me play with other children or enroll me in a preschool or drop-in program



### Activity Tip

*Pretend play with your child! Play dress up, make forts, pretend.*

*Don't forget to keep reading to your child - this is how he learns to enjoy books. "Let's visit the library!"*

- Your child does not put 3 or more words together
- Your child does not listen well
- Your child repeats words but does not seem to understand

# How is Your Child's Speech and Language Developing?

You can expect a 4 and 5 year old to have difficulty with speech sounds as many sounds continue to develop until age 6.

4 and 5 year olds may still have some errors with sounds like s, r, l, ch, sh, j, v and th. This is not a cause for concern unless you are having difficulty understanding your child.



## Look What I Can Do When I'm Four!

- I can use sentences of 4 to 6 words
- I can ask many questions using words like "who", "what", "where", "when", "why" and "how"
- I can use the past tense ending -ed (e.g. jumped)
- I can use words like "can't", "don't", and "won't"
- I can connect ideas using the words "because" and "and"
- I can understand and remember details about a story
- I can talk and listen in small groups
- I can tell a simple story
- I can recognize familiar print in the environment (e.g. street signs, restaurant signs, names on packages)
- I can be understood most of the time by everyone

## Look What You Can Do!

- You can answer when I ask a question (I do ask a lot of questions!)
- You can let me play with other children
- You can talk about how things are the same and how they are different
- You can help me talk about feelings and ideas
- If I use a word or sound incorrectly, repeat it back to me and emphasize the correct sound or word (e.g. If I say "I need thoap" You could say "Soap - You need soap.")
- You can read longer stories to me now and ask me to guess what happens next
- You can talk about what we are doing together while we do it
- You can encourage me to tell stories using books and pictures
- You can play story and song CD's in the car

## When to call for help:

- Your child stutters
- Other people have a hard time understanding what your child says
- Your child uses words in an unusual way

## It's Never Too Early to Ask!

### Look What I Can Do When I'm Five!

- I can follow directions with three steps (e.g. "get your crayons, draw a picture, and put it on the fridge")
- I can answer questions involving "when" and "why"
- I can use correct grammar most of the time
- I can explain how a familiar object is used
- I can describe objects and events
- I can talk about past, present, future and imaginary events
- I can accurately sequence events in a story
- I can try to "read" a story
- I can use later developing speech sounds in words (e.g. r, l, s, ch, sh, z)
- I can pronounce most speech sounds correctly (with the exception of sounds like "r", "th" and "v")
- I can recognize the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make



### Activity Tip

Reading in a two-language household!

### Look What You Can Do!

- You can play simple board games with me like "Checkers" and "Snakes and Ladders"
- You can talk about what happened "yesterday", "today" and what's happening "tomorrow"
- You can act out stories with me
- You can ask me about my day  
You can ask me thinking questions like "why?", "how", "what if?"
- You can read longer stories and talk about why things happened and predict what will happen next
- You can let me help with a job and talk about all the steps while you are doing it

*Share stories, songs and rhymes in both languages.*

- 

*Use books in one language and translate them as you go.*

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*Play "point and say" in both languages.*

- 

*Use books in both languages.*

### When to call for help:

- Your child does not use complete sentences
- Your child does not like communicating with other children
- Your child has trouble following directions



## Preschool Speech & Language Services

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