

Communication—Stage by Stage

Children's language develops in predictable stages. These stages are outlined below.

Infants Newborn to 12-month-olds may:	Toddlers 1- to 2-year-olds may:	Preschoolers 3- to 4-year-olds may:	Kindergarten and Early Primary Grades 5- to 6-year-olds may:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › make eye contact and smile; babble or coo to communicate comfort or happiness; › use arms and legs to express joy, excitement, or anger; › repeat babbles (such as <i>da, da</i> or <i>ma, ma</i>), which sound like words; › understand language (by 8 to 12 months); for example, putting a hat on their head when told to do so; › say their first words; › express an entire sentence in one word; <i>up</i> can mean <i>Pick me up</i>, <i>There's a bird up there</i>, or <i>My car is up on the shelf</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › communicate using sounds and utterances with adult intonation; › engage in telegraphic speech (using one or two words) to communicate. "Daddy, come," "Oh, oh, I fall," or "All gone," are used instead of full sentences such as, "Daddy, come over here and help me"; › begin to combine words; › know between 20 and 50 words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › make dramatic gains in terms of language development, speaking in nearly complete sentences; › increase vocabulary to between 300 and 2,000 words; › use pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, articles, and possessives; › play with language, making up words and rhymes and repeating chants ("Nicey, dicey, all insidely, apple pie"); › talk as if practicing language, with monologues; › ask many <i>why</i> questions, as well as <i>how</i> and <i>when</i>; › adapt speech to listeners; › tell a simple story, but not in sequence; › talk about their actions as if trying to articulate what they are doing; › take turns in conversations, still interrupting to talk about themselves; › increase the length of their sentences; sentence structure may be more complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › continue to expand vocabulary, to about 5,000 to 8,000 words; › be extremely articulate, with adultlike speech; › be aware that a word can have more than one meaning; › begin to use language to control situations; › often misunderstand words and use them in humorous ways; › carry on conversations with others, yet still want to dominate.