



WHAT IS NORMAL?



Parents often wonder if their child is developing normally. There is a general pattern to childhood development, however there is also much variation. The following is a guide to the sorts of communication abilities children develop at certain ages. It is important to remember that all children develop differently and that if your child does not show some of these skills by the stated ages it is not necessarily reason for concern.

By the age of one year, your baby:

- Understands simple commands, such as “no”, “come here”, “wave bye-bye”
- Understands the names of familiar people and objects, such as family and pets, car, ball
- Takes turns in making sounds
- Attempts sounds such as ‘p’, ‘b’, ‘g’, ‘m’ and ‘w’ in cooing and babbling, e.g. “ba ba ba”
- Uses their face and gestures to communicate, e.g. smiling, frowning, pointing
- Recognises their own name
- Says a few words, such as “mum”, “dad”, “more”
- Makes sound errors in their attempts at words, such as omitting sounds (e.g. “da” for “dad”)
- Shows ‘yes’ and ‘no’ by nodding or shaking their head
- Makes up words for particular objects
- Tries to make familiar sounds, such as a car and animal sounds
- Enjoys songs, books, and music
- Responds to familiar sounds, e.g. the telephone ringing, a car, or dog barking

By the age of two years, your toddler:

- Recognises and says the names of some simple body parts, such as “eye”, “nose”, “tummy”
- Enjoys listening to stories and saying the names of pictures
- Understands simple sentences, such as “What’s that?”, “Where’s the doggie?”, “Get your shoes”
- Uses more than fifty words, such as names of familiar objects, as well as words such as “mine”, “gone”, “he”, “it”, “more”
- Continues to make sound errors, such as leaving out sounds (e.g. says “poon” for “spoon”), and substituting one sound for another (e.g. says “goggie” for “doggie” or “tar” for “car”)
- Talks to themselves or their toys when playing
- Attempts to put two and three words together in simple sentences, such as “more juice”, “milk all gone”, “daddy car”
- Follows simple instructions with two key words, such as “give the *ball* to *daddy*”, “get your *shoes* and *jacket*”

By the age of three years, your child:

- Has favourite books and television shows
- Asks simple questions, such as “Where’s cat?”, “What’s that?”
- Follows directions with up to three key words, such as “give the *big ball* to *daddy*”, “point to your *nose, eyes* and *ears*”
- Understands how familiar objects are used, e.g. a pencil is something to draw with
- Enjoys looking at books and is able to point to pictures when asked
- Recognises their own needs, such as hunger and toilet needs
- Uses three to four word sentences
- Can clearly say the sounds p, b, m, w, t, d, n, k, g, h and y
- Is understood most of the time by familiar adults
- Is constantly learning new words

By the age of four years, you child:

- Asks “who”, “what”, “where” and “why” questions
- Uses many words (about 900), usually in four to five word sentences, such as “I want biscuit mummy” and “I want to go park daddy”
- Can use words like “and” to link up sentences, such as “I go shops and get icecream”
- Uses four to five words in sentences
- Understands shape and colour names
- Understands some ‘time words’, such as “lunch time”, “summer”, “today”
- Use correct grammar, with some mistakes, such as “I breaked it”
- Can be understood most of the time by most people, but their speech may be less clear if they are tired, unwell, or excited.
- Will attempt the sounds s, z, sh, ch, l, j, f

By the age of five years, your child:

- Understands opposites, such as, “big, little”, “high, low”, “wet, dry”
- Can explain the function of some objects, for example, “The knife cuts the bread”
- Counts to ten by rote
- Talks about experiences at kinder, friends’ homes, etc.
- Explains why something happened, for example, “Mum went to the shops because the milk ran out”
- Tells you how they feel and shares their ideas
- Enjoys rhyming and rhythms
- Uses about 6 words in sentences, with mostly correct grammar
- Talks about events in the past, present, and future
- Is becoming interested in writing and reading things
- Speaks clearly enough to be understood by strangers
- Is becoming more accurate with sounds such as s, z, sh, ch, l, j, f, but continues to make some errors

By the age of six years, your child:

- Continues to understand and use more and more words
- Accurately retells a story
- Sings songs and recites nursery rhymes
- Communicates easily with both adults and other children
- Uses correct grammar most of the time
- Counts to thirty by rote
- Names the days of the week
- Says most sounds clearly, and attempts sounds v, th, and r but may still make some errors

It is not until about the age of nine that children can say all the sounds accurately. Sounds th and r are the last sounds to develop.