

My Child is a Chatterbox! My Child isn't! – When should I worry?

Children start to talk around their first birthday and for most children there is a very rapid expansion in vocabulary. Children usually start to use small sentences by two years of age and are capable of carrying on a conversation by three years of age.

Children of this age are also quite egocentric little beings. They will demand that you listen to them and talk to them, often at very inconvenient times, like when you have just answered the telephone or gone to the bathroom.

Children who like to talk and who talk a lot are receiving vital practice of their language skills. This will ensure that their vocabulary continues to increase and that they learn to fix mistakes in their grammar. As children grow older and are approaching Prep, they should be speaking in adult-like sentences, making very few errors.

One of the great things about language development is that it is well researched, so we know what age children should be speaking by and how much they should be saying. This makes it easier as parents, to know if your child is 'just shy' or has an actual language delay or disorder. Please consult the box below to check how your child is doing.

BY 4 YEARS OF AGE	
1. Does the child use adult-like grammar? (e.g. ran, mummy's, <u>are</u> they standing, <u>a</u> dog, walked, sleeps).	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does the child use 'who', 'what', 'whose', 'where', 'why', 'how' and 'how many' questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Does the child use the words 'not', 'can't' and 'don't' in sentences? (e.g. "I'm not having any").	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does the child use pronouns (including 'I', 'he', 'she', 'we', 'they') and location words correctly? (including 'over', 'behind', 'in front of', 'outside', 'inside', 'next to', 'under', 'between').	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Is the child able to retell a story using 'and' to join sentences together?	<input type="checkbox"/>
BY 5 YEARS OF AGE	
1. Can the child talk about what has happened and what might happen? (e.g. "It rained yesterday – it might rain tomorrow").	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Can the child say sentences using correct grammar with only a few errors? (e.g. 'I caught the ball when you <u>throwed</u> it to me')?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Can the child produce all sounds accurately <u>except</u> the /v/ and /th/ sounds?	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Can the child speak in complex sentences using words like 'because', 'if', 'so', 'while', 'but', 'then', 'when'?	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Can the child make up rhymes? (e.g. Mum says: 'cat', 'fat' - Child adds: 'mat').	<input type="checkbox"/>

If your child is not keeping up with typical development then it would be wise to seek an assessment with a speech pathologist. If it is found that your child's



language is delayed, the speech pathologist would recommend that the child come for treatment sessions. In most cases, speech pathology treatment for language delay is very effective.

To promote language development:

1. Turn off the TV/DVD. Most TV shows are a one way medium that does not encourage a two way conversation.
2. Take every opportunity to talk to your child. Engage your child in conversation. Talk about things that you see as you drive in the car or walk to the park.
3. Don't ask too many questions. Questions are good but not if that is all you are doing. Commenting on what you see or feel is also very important.
4. Give your child a chance to talk. Sometimes we are so keen for conversation that we don't wait long enough for a response from our child. This often results in a situation where the adult asks the question and then answers it as well. Be patient and wait for your child to say something. Your child is only going to get better at talking by being given the opportunity to practise language through speaking.

Good Luck!

Louise Tyquin
Principal Speech Pathologist
Tyquin Group Speech Pathology & Reading Clinic