

Language Milestones: 1 to 2 Years

Written by Dr. Anna Kaplan on June 12, 2018



Language milestones are successes that mark various stages of language development. They are both receptive (hearing and understanding) and expressive (speech). This means that in addition to being able to make sounds and words, your baby also needs to be able to hear and understand.

Most children speak their first word between 10 to 14 months of age.

By the time your baby is a year old, he or she is probably saying between one to three words. They will be simple, and not complete words, but you will know what they mean. They may say “ma-ma,” or “da-da,” or try a name for a sibling, pet, or toy. If they aren’t doing this at 12 months, you should not be worried, as long as they are producing lots of sounds, seem like they are trying to speak, and seem to understand you. They should be using gestures,

responding to their name, and stopping activity when they hear “no.” They probably enjoy playing peek-a-boo.

While nothing quite matches the thrill of hearing the first word, or seeing the first step, the language development during this year can be a lot of fun. There are lots of games to be played as your baby learns words. You also will increasingly be able to understand your child, and this makes many things easier; they will also understand you better. Children are very proud of what they are learning during this time and enjoy announcing new words. Talking to your child often and reading to them starting no later than 6 months will go a long way towards helping with language development.

Significant Language Milestones

- The first word – If your child hasn’t already spoken their first word, they will soon. Most children speak their first word between 10 to 14 months of age. More true words will follow the first one.
- Gestures – Your child may use a lot of gestures with words to try and get the meaning across to you. As time goes on, there will be more words than gestures.
- Parts of the body – By around 15 months, your child will be able to point to some parts of the body when you name them.
- Naming familiar objects – They will begin to be able to name some familiar objects between 12 and 18 months.
- Listening – During this time, they will enjoy being read to and listening to songs and rhymes. They will begin to be able to name familiar objects that you point to in a book.
- Vocabulary – By 18 months of age, most children have at least ten words. After 18 months, word acquisition increases dramatically. There may be a “word spurt” after a child has a vocabulary of 50 words. Some

children then learn new words at a very rapid pace. Your child will be able to use and understand many words by 24 months of age.

- Name – By 24 months, your child should be referring to themselves by name.
- Directions – Your child will understand and follow simple directions between 12 and 15 months of age. By the age of two, they should be able to understand more complicated sentences.
- Two word “sentences” – By 24 months, they will also be putting two words together. This could be their name and a request, or your name and a request, or a question, like “mama car?”

Children master different language skills at different ages.

Words will still not be perfect. Your child will start using some of the harder consonants, first the d, n, and t, which are produced between the tongue and the roof of the mouth.

That will be followed by g, k, and ng, which are made farther back inside the mouth.

During this year, your child will use more consonants, although they may be mixed up, and they may drop the syllables at the end of words

Causes for Concern

- Understanding simple words – You should be concerned if your child does not understand the words no, bye-bye, and bottle (if appropriate) by the age 15 months.
- Vocabulary – Your child should use single words by 15 to 16 months of age at the latest. They should have a 10-word vocabulary by 18 months of age.

- Following directions – They should be able to follow simple directions by the time they are 21 months old. An example would be “Come here.”
- Excessive jargon or babbling – A two year old should not be mainly babbling. They should be using more real words.
- Body parts – At two, your child should be able to point to a number of body parts.
- Two word phrases – A two-year-old should be putting two words together.

You will still have many visits to the pediatrician during this year. The doctor will still be evaluating your child’s development, including language development. You should share any concerns you have.

It is still important to remember that every child is different and may master different language skills at different ages. You should be looking for evidence of increasing mastery of language and growth of vocabulary. Your child should be increasingly able to understand you. This should be easy for you to recognize as you read to and play with them.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/baby/toddler-language-milestones#Causes-for-Concern>