

# Communication and The Early Years: An Overview of Sensory Development Script

## The Early Years Project

- Communication and the Early Years: An Overview. This video is an introduction to communication development.
- This video contains the following sections: What is communication?– A definition of communication and its importance in the lives of all individuals, including children. Key Developmental Milestones–some important communication milestones. Signs of Delay– these signs may be an indication of communication delays. Fostering Development– with some simple methods to help a child in their communication development.
- What is Communication?
- Communication is the process by which we transfer a message from one person to another.
- Communication can happen through many forms. Communication can be verbal, or in other words, spoken words, vocalizations, or verbalizations. Communication can be non-verbal through the use of a communication device, gestures, or facial expressions. Communication can be manual through the use of American Sign Language, hand signs, or Cued Speech. Communication can happen through written forms such as texts, letters in the mail, or Braille. And Finally, communication can be visual through charts, graphs, or pictures.
- Why is Communication Important? Communication gives humans the ability to express their thoughts, wants, and needs. Communication skills such as eye contact and joint attention are foundational to learning a language. Because we need to communicate our wants/needs, it is important that infants are exposed to communication skills very early in order to help them learn language throughout their lives.
- Key Developmental Milestones
- Milestone expectations vary among medical professionals, school systems, and early education providers. The following list compiles guidelines from multiple national organizations and is used throughout The Early Years Project. Continue to utilize the milestone expectations most relevant to you and your organization.
- Milestones serve as significant markers in individual development, offering insight into the progression of skills and abilities across various domains. They allow us to monitor growth and identify potential areas of concern or intervention.
- Here are some key milestones in the 0–9 month age range. 0–2 Months: Looks at your face, Reacts to loud sounds. 3–4 Months: Smiles to get your attention, Looks, moves, or makes sounds to get or keep your attention, Turns head towards the sound of your voice.
- 5–6 Months: Takes turns making sounds with you. 7–9 Months: Shows several facial expressions like happy, sad, angry, and surprised, Smiles or laughs when you play peek-a-boo, Lifts arms to be picked up.

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- 10-12 Months: Waves bye-bye, Points to ask for something or to get help, 6-18 Months: Points to show you something of interest, Follows direction of gaze, head turn, and/or pointing gesture of another person. 31-36 Months: Talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges.
- American Speech-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Communication milestones: Age Ranges.
- Retrieved from: [https://www.asha.org/public/developmental-milestones/communication-milestones/?srsltid=AfmBOorkPSCtmWlZLcXiZDrf3BBihJVQot\\_hHSHX-yBjJHf8V4uUWUZc](https://www.asha.org/public/developmental-milestones/communication-milestones/?srsltid=AfmBOorkPSCtmWlZLcXiZDrf3BBihJVQot_hHSHX-yBjJHf8V4uUWUZc).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Developmental milestones checklist for wic-english. Children and Young People's Health Services. (n.d.). Early communication. Retrieved from: [https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/FULL-LIST-CDC\\_LTSAE-Checklists2021\\_Eng\\_FNL2\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/FULL-LIST-CDC_LTSAE-Checklists2021_Eng_FNL2_508.pdf). Retrieved from: <https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/speech-language/early-communication/#:~:text=Before%20children%20learn%20to%20talk,develop%20before%20first%20words%20appear>.
- Fostering development in babies and toddlers is crucial because this early period is a critical stage of growth and learning that significantly influences a child's future well-being.
- Fostering Communication Development- Any Age: Talk: during your daily activities, TALK about what you are doing. Ask and answer questions! Model good speech using clear and correct sounds. .Take turns throughout routines, labeling "it's your turn" or "it's my turn." 0-1 years: Encourage communication. For example: When your child coos or says something, repeat and respond to what they are saying! Introduce new vocabulary when you go new places or try new things. Sing songs and nursery rhymes! Vary the pitch and volume of your voice. Leave the ending off of frequently repeated lines of the song to encourage the child to 'fill in the blank'. Introduce picture books point and talk about various colors/objects seen
- 2-3 years: Talk: during your daily activities, TALK about what you are doing. Ask and answer questions! Read everyday! Model reading books, labels, signs on the road, anything!
- Describe objects that have different sizes, textures, and colors. Use comparison words such as big, little, hard, and soft. Play games that encourage children to follow directions, such as Simon Says. Encourage pretend play: pretending to talk on the phone to one another. Ask why questions, and be prepared to answer them. An example of this would be, "Why to we eat breakfast?"
- At Any Age: It is important to work on joint attention at any and every age as this is a critical skill for language development.

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- At Any Age: It is important to work on joint attention at any and every age as this is a critical skill for language development
- We have other modules available for viewing on the following developmental domains: Vision, Language, and Hearing
- Scan the QR code to go directly to the Early Years Project on the sound beginnings website.
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- The Early Years Project is a collaboration with the Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (or Eddie) program.

# All About Communication Series Video Scripts

## The Early Years Project

### Communication- What is it?

- This is All About Communication, the series, provided by the Early Years Project.
- Within the Communication Series we will talk about What communication is. How it works. Early communication skills, developmental milestones, potential signs of delay, how to refer a child, how to work on communication development in the home, and if you are an early childhood provider, how you can foster development in your classroom or room.
- In this video we will talk about what communication is, how it works, and early symbolic communication.
- We will start with what it is. there are a lot of definitions of communication, but for the sake of this presentation, communication is the exchange of messages.
- Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. Verbal communication includes spoken words, vocalizations, or verbalizations. Non-verbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, body language, or a communication device.
- Communication can also be manual, written, or visual. Manual communication refers to any type of communication that we use our body, specifically hands, to communicate. This includes but is not limited to: hand signals such as American Sign Language, Cued speech, fingerspelling, or other similar forms of communication. Written communication can be written such as road signs, letters, text messages, or notes. And finally, visual communication can be charts, graphs, or pictures.
- Communication is often a combination of all of these forms working together simultaneously. And if you think about it, it makes sense. Say someone is using American Sign Language. That is a manual form of communication, but you will likely see gestures or facial expressions. while the individual is signing, which would be a nonverbal form of communication.
- How are language and communication different? They both go hand in hand. They both have to do with interacting with others and building relationships. Communication is the act of sending and receiving a message. Language is the mode in which we send it. We have different languages, and whatever language I use, I would be sending the same message.
- In other words, communication is like a road and language is the car.
- We're driving through these beautiful mountains in this picture, both cars are going to the same destination on the same road from the same starting point (the communication is the same), but one car is a Ford and one is a Toyota (the language that we are using is different).

- Why is communication important? Communication gives us the ability to share thoughts, wants, and needs. The ability to learn a language builds on foundational communication skills. Infants learn from an early age that they can express themselves in order to form deeper connections with the world around them and to get their needs met.
- Communication occurs through a series of steps referred to as a feedback loop. The communication feedback loop can occur between two or more partners. I like to think of it as people throwing a ball back and forth.
- The first step of the communication feedback loop is the sender, or a person who is intending to communicate in some form. The sender has a thought/need/want that they want to share with another person.
- The second step of communication is encoding. During this step, the sender turns the desired message into a message that can be communicated choosing in what way they are going to communicate. Examples include: spoken language, ASL, etc.
- The third step of the communication process is message or channel. This step can also be referred to as the channel. In what way is the sender going to get that message to the other person- through the air? Over the phone? Then they are going to send the message in whatever mode they select.
- The fourth step is decoding. In this step, the second person receives the message, through the channel, then breaks it apart to gather what the sender was trying to convey.
- Finally, the second person (receiver) deciphers the message, then begins to formulate a response. Then this process repeats itself, going the opposite direction.
- Another critical part of the communication process includes feedback. This is the act of the sender watching the receiver to see if they seemed to have understood the message through non-verbal cues (nodding, facial expressions) or verbal responses.
- Noise can significantly impact the effectiveness of the communication. Whether the environment is too loud, or if a sender/receiver cannot hear the message, there are many distractions that can arise during the communication feedback loop. This is important to consider when learning about various forms of hearing and/or vision loss and how these losses can impact communication between two people.
- Which leads us to wonder- why is the communication loop so important? I'm not using this example to call any parents out, but to put the communication feedback loop in an example. Let's say this girl is think so excited to share the story of her day, but her dad is distracted by work. Eventually, the girl is going to get discouraged that she isn't able to share the excitement and she might just give up. Over time, she going to learn that her dad is not usually ready to hear about her day and may eventually stop sharing altogether.
- Now, translate this to infants when they are beginning to babble. What do we do when a baby babbles? We babble back!
- Early Communication Skills

- The list of early communication skills can vary and be divided in many ways. Some of the foundational communication skills include: prelinguistic communication, joint attention and referencing, early symbolic communication, and play. While all of these areas are important, we are going to primarily talk about the first two areas shown in this visual for the purpose of this module.
- Prelinguistic Communication. This refers to the skills that develop BEFORE we begin speaking or expressing words manually or visually. These skills include: Gesture (point, show, give, turn take): An example of this would be pointing to request an object that is out of reach. Eye gaze, Joint visual attention, Initiation: or starting a conversation or task, Looking at these areas, let's break down joint attention a little further.
- Joint attention is when one person purposefully coordinates their focus of attention with another person and usually an object to express a want or need. Listen to that again- Joint attention is when one person purposefully coordinates their focus of attention with another person and usually an object to express a want or need. So, let's view an example.
- The following video depicts a baby sitting up on a bed. In the bottom right corner of the video we see a toy that appears to light up while playing music. The baby giggles and smiles to demonstrate that she likes the toy and the sound that it makes. She watches the toy, listens to it, giggles, then the music stops and the light turns off. Once this happens, the baby looks to the parent behind the camera. This is a perfect example of joint attention- that look communicates that the baby is enjoying it and that she needs her parent to press play. They are sharing interest in the same object, which is the toy. That look communicates that she wants more of the music and the light that comes from the toy.
- That was joint attention. Let's talk briefly on early symbolic communication. Early symbolic communication includes: Crying, Cooing and babbling, Facial expressions, Body movements, Looking at you, Moving arms to show excitement. So, we see a lot of gestures on this list, but we are growing the skills even more through crying babbling and facial expressions to further express wants/needs.
- The last area we will briefly touch on is play. There are different types of play such as:
- Solitary play, Onlooker behavior, Parallel play, Associative play, Cooperative play. Communication is essential for all of these types of play. Children need to play in order to learn to work well with others, take turns, and share, which are all very important life skills that we use long term.
- This was the first portion of the Communication series. The Early Years Project is brought to you by Illinois Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program in collaboration with Illinois Hands and Voices, Guide By Your Side.
- We invite you to take out your phone or device to take our brief survey. Scan the QR code to give us your thoughts.
- Thank you!

## Developmental Milestones, Potential Signs of Delay, Referrals

- This is All About Communication, the series, part of the Early Years Project.
- In this video we will cover development milestones
- As a disclaimer before we get started, Milestone expectations vary among medical professionals, school systems, and early education providers. The following list compiles guidelines from multiple national organizations and is used throughout The Early Years Project. Continue to utilize the milestone expectations most relevant to you and your organization.
- The communication milestones are primarily taken from the American Speech Hearing Association as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Language milestones from 0 to 4 months. From 0-2 months, we would expect a baby to react to loud sounds or look at your face. From 3-4 months, they are beginning to look for your attention. This can be seen through looking at your face to get your attention or making sounds to keep your attention.
- Now we are going to take a look at milestones from 5-9 months.
- From 5-6 months, a baby may begin making sounds back and forth with you.
- Then we would want to see some facial expressions, smiling/laughing, or reaching out their arms to be picked up from 7-9 months.
- From 10-26 months, we see a lot of milestones continuing to emerge.
- From 10-12 months, we would want a baby to begin to point in order to ask for help or something they want as well as waving bye.
- During the 16-18 month age range, we would like to see a child begin to follow the direction of gaze, a head turn, and/or pointing gesture of another person. So if you look or point at something, the child also looks in that direction.
- Finally, we would want to hear a child take at least two turns in a conversation with you between the 31-36 age range. Which concludes the milestones for communication development. Remember, language developmental milestones are much more complex and look at both what a child understands and uses of a language. Communication skills are much more concrete and we want these to develop early in order for language skills to build upon these communication skills.
- From 2-3 years old, we will touch a little bit on the words that they would be using. They will typically say or sign 2 or more words together. Using words like "I, me, we." They ask questions like: who, what, where, why.
- From 3-4 years, they say sentences with 4 or more words together. They say some words in a song or story.
- Communication milestones from 4-5 years, these really tie into language. Communication is the foundation that we build language on. Communication milestones are seen a lot in the first 2 years of life, and then after that, the milestones fall more underneath language milestones. Learning names of letters and numbers, asking a lot of questions.
- From 5-6 years, they can understand simple conversations and able to understand unrelated multistep directions.



- As previously mentioned, milestones can vary between sources and organizations. The milestones provided in this presentation were compiled from the following sources: American Speech-Hearing Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Children and Young People's Health Services.
- Now that we've talked about what communication skills include and their expected development, let's discuss signs of delay.
- But first, what is a delay and how is it identified? A delay is identified through observation, assessment, and comparison to typical developmental milestones for a child's age.
- Some actions we may see that would indicate a potential delay include: A child not attempting to get or keep your attention by 3-4 months of age. Not using gestures, pointing, or waving by 12 months of age. Preferring gestures over verbalizations at 18 months of age. Or, not following your eye-gaze or point towards an object by the age of 18 months. Keep in mind that development for each child is also very individualized. If you have concerns that your child or a child you know may be presenting with some of these potential signs of delay, it is important to contact your physician or a speech-language pathologist.
- Referrals
- As we just talked about, it is important to refer a child for another opinion in their development as well as some resources that can help with their development. So, what can we do if our child or a child we know is not reaching communication milestones as expected?
- Our first option would be to contact your primary care physician or pediatrician. These professionals would be able to observe the skills your child is demonstrating and they would be able to make a referral to an Early Intervention program in your area. A caregiver can self-refer their child for Early intervention services, by contacting their Child and Family Connections facilitator for their area, not having to wait for a medical professional to do so. Early Intervention services and processes vary from state to state. Through Early Intervention, one or a team of therapists will come to you to evaluate your child. If they demonstrate significant delays in one or more areas, your child may be eligible for Early Intervention services, free to the family. Again, it is important to remember that Early Intervention services vary greatly from state to state. Another resource that can be accessed is the Department of Health and Human Services. By searching the link provided on this slide, you will be able to enter your zip code that would provide you with early childhood services in your area. These services would be able to help foster development and make further referrals as needed.
- This concludes developmental milestones, potential signs of delay, and referrals. The Early Years Project is brought to you by Illinois Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program in collaboration with Illinois Hands and Voices, Guide By Your Side.
- We invite you to take out your phone or device to take our brief survey. Scan the QR code to give us your thoughts.
- Thank you!



- This is All About Communication, part of the Early Years Project
- In this video we will talk about fostering development and how you can build communication skills at home.
- Fostering development in babies and toddlers is crucial because this early period is a critical stage of growth and learning that highly impacts a child's future well-being. In other words, the earliest years of a child's life are laying the foundation for all skills they will continue to develop throughout their lives.
- So, what are some things you can do at home to help foster communication development with your child or a child you know? At any age: Talk! During your daily activities- talk about what you are doing. For example, while at the park with your child you could say, "We are walking at the park. It is a sunny day and it is warm outside. I can feel the sunshine on my face- it's bright and it feels warm!". Ask and answer questions about your environment. While at the park you could ask questions such as, "What is that family doing over there? They are chasing each other and playing tag! Do you see and hear them?". Model good and clear speech sounds! It can be very easy to model "baby talk" or imitate "cute" words/phrases that your child uses. For example, "Where my tock?" instead of "Where's my sock?". But, we also want to keep in mind that if we use these phrases, that our children will continue to imitate us as they grow up. Take turns throughout routines, labeling "it's your turn" or "it's my turn". An easy way to implement this is through taking turns while sharing a snack. Excitedly tell your child "Let's share our Goldfish!" your turn to eat one/my turn to eat one!
- From birth to one year, Encourage communication and the back and forth exchanges with your child. For example, when your child coos or says something, repeat and respond to what they are saying! This introduces the "back and forth" exchanges of communication. You can also sing songs and nursery rhymes with your child. You can make this more interesting for the child by changing the pitch and volume of your voice. Leave the ending off of frequently repeated lines of the song to encourage the child to 'fill in the blank'.
- Another great way to model language for your child is to read stories together. The more animated, the better. You may feel ridiculous, but this is so fun and engaging for children. They can learn so much through you talking about the colors, what the images are depicting, asking them questions to predict what will happen next, labeling new objects that your child may not have the opportunity to see in real life. Here is a video of a woman reading to a group of children and their parents.
- From 2-3 years of age...We still want to describe and talk about objects in our environment. You can talk about colors, textures, and size. Practice following directions. Play games that encourage children to follow directions, such as Simon Says. You might have your child pretend to be a spy- send them on a "secret mission" that allows them to practice completing multiple step directions. Ask WHY questions! Ask your child why questions and be prepared to answer them. So while you are making breakfast ask your child, "Why do we eat breakfast?". Give the child an opportunity to think and respond, then provide them with an answer such as, "Breakfast helps our bodies wake up in the morning and gets our brains ready to learn".

- And at any age, work on joint attention! We talked about this a little bit at the beginning of the presentation, but here is a video from MedBridge talking about joint attention a little more in depth.
- Working on communication skills at different levels of complexity. Here is a video to show different ways to get your child to communicate.
- That concludes the video on fostering communication development. The Early Years Project is brought to you by Illinois Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program in collaboration with Illinois Hands and Voices, Guide By Your Side.
- We invite you to take out your phone or device to take our brief survey. Scan the QR code to give us your thoughts.
- Thank you!

- This is All About Communication, a series, part of the Early Years Project
- This is the conclusion of the Communication videos.
- In this video, we have covered: What communication is, how communication works, the importance of developing communication skills, early communication skills, developmental milestones, potential signs of delay, referrals and how to foster communication development at home.
- Early communication skills consist of: prelinguistic communication, joint attention, early symbolic communication, and play.
- We talked about ways you can incorporate communication development into your daily routine such as talking about everything you are doing and everything in your environment. Asking and answering questions, modeling clear speech, and taking turns are great for developing communication skills as well.
- And remember- Caregivers are the captain of their child's language development. Professionals can coach you how to work on communication skills with your child, but the caregiver is the one that executes the plays. While therapists have a very important role in helping a child develop their communication skills, the therapist is only with a child for 6% of their week. The caregivers are with the child for the other 94% of the week.
- Please visit Illinois Sound Beginnings to access the remaining three modules discussing development of...
  - Vision
  - Language
  - And hearing
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