

Language and The Early Years: An Overview of Sensory Development Script

The Early Years Project

- Language and the Early Years: An Overview. This video is an introduction to language development.
- This video contains the following sections: What is Language?– A definition of language and its importance in the lives of all individuals, including children. Key Developmental Milestones– some important language milestones. Signs of Delay– these signs may be an indication of language delays. Fostering Development– with some simple methods to help a child in their language development.
- What is Language?
- Language is a system of sounds and words used in a highly structured way.
- Communication and language are different, yet they go hand in hand. As individuals, we must have both communication and language skills to interact with one another and get our wants and needs met. Communication is sending the message. Language is the mode in which we send it.
- For example, communication can be thought of as a road, while language is the type of car we are driving. While one person may be driving a Fiat, another may be driving a Toyota. Both cars are leaving from the same place and arriving at the same place, but they are different in their own ways. If you think about it, the different style of cars can represent different languages
- There are two overarching types of language. Receptive language and expressive language. Receptive language refers to the understanding of language. Receptive language knowledge can be demonstrated through pointing to an object upon request, answering questions accurately, understanding size concepts, and following directions with prepositions. Expressive language refers to what we use to interact with others and to express our knowledge, wants and needs. Examples of expressive language skills can include labeling objects/people/places, describing objects, or using multiple word phrases/sentences.
- 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.

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- Here are some key milestones in the 0-24 month age range. Birth-9 Months: Makes sounds other than crying, Cooing, Makes sounds back when you talk to them, Makes different sounds like “mamama” and “bababa” 9-12 Months: Calls a parent “mama” or “dada” or another special name, Understands “no” (pauses briefly when you say it)
- 1-2 years: Tries to say one or two words besides “mama” or “dada”, like “ba” for ball or “da” for dog. Looks at a familiar object when you name it. Follows directions given with both a gesture and words. Tries to say three or more words. Follows one-step directions without any gestures, like giving you a toy when you say “give it to me” Points to things in a book like when you say, “Where’s the bear?” Says at least two words together, like “more milk.” Uses more gestures than just waving or pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes. Says about 50 words at 2 years.
- Here are some developmental milestones for the 2-5 year age range. 2-3 Years: Says two or more words together, with one action word. Says words like “I, me, we.” Follows two-step directions. Asks “who”, “what”, “where”, or “why” questions. Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked. Says first name when asked. Talks well enough for others to understand most of the time. 3-4 years: Says sentences with 4+ words. Says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme. Answers simple questions like “What is a crayon for?”
- 4-5 years: Tells short stories. Follow 3+ step directions or complex directions. Asks why, what, where, who and how questions to learn more about their environment. Understands time words such as “today, yesterday, and tomorrow.” Names letters and numbers. Here are some milestones for the 5-6 year age range. Follows multi-step unrelated directions. Follows and understands a simple conversation. Learning what rhyming words are. Learning written letter and sound correspondence. Asks meaning of words. Plays cooperatively with others, assigns roles to others in games.
- Here are the sources used to create the milestones listed here.
- Signs of Delay
- A delay is identified through observation, assessment, and comparison to typical developmental milestones for a child’s age.
- Potential Signs of Delay- By 10-12 Months does not: Call a parent “mama” or “dada” or another special name. Demonstrate understanding of “no” (pauses briefly when you say it). By 16-18 Months, does not: Try to say three or more words. Follow one-step directions without any gestures, like giving you a toy when you say “give it to me.” By 31-36 Months does not: Ask “who”, “what”, “where”, or “why” questions. By 37-48 Months does not: Say sentences with 4+ words. Say some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme.

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- Fostering Development
- 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.
- Here are some activities that a caregiver, professional, or anyone who interacts with children can implement. The activities listed provide ideas for any age-range.
- The list of activities on the right show activities that are tailored to the 0-12 month age range.
- and 2-3 year age range. 0-1 years: Singing any nursery rhymes you know. Make it interactive through letting the child fill in the last word through speaking, signing, or through a gesture. Making the child request "more" or "more please" through activities like pushing them on the swing at the park, giving them 1-2 pieces of their preferred snack, or more of a preferred action/object (blowing bubbles, tickles, etc.) 2-3 years: Read to your child daily. Talk about the pictures on the page. Use toys you already have- you may teach concepts like "on, off, tall, short, big, small, more, up, down" through stacking blocks, cups, or any other objects you have in your environment!
- Here are some activities that can help foster language development for the 4-6 year age range. Engage children in more conversations. Get on the child's level. Take turns talking. Talk about what the child is doing, what they are looking at, and what they are interested in. Asking children questions: Ask children about what they are doing. Ask children to make predictions. Ask children to provide explanations. Ask children to connect learning to their own lives.
- All of these activities and more can be found in the Language: Fostering Development handout in the activity section of the Early Years project on illinoisoundbeginnings.org
- Let's take a moment to discuss language modeling. Language modeling refers to using language to encourage our child's language skills to grow.
- Here are some specific types of language modeling strategies. Recasting. When recasting, we can expand on what a child says. Self-talk. Self-talk refers to narrating your actions to model expressive language. Parallel Talk. Parallel talk is very similar to self-talk; however, you might narrate what your child is doing while they are playing. Focused Stimulation. This refers to the repeated use of a word that you would like your child to eventually start using. Please pause the video now to read specific examples of each modeling strategy.
- We have other modules available for viewing on the following developmental domains: hearing, communication, and vision.
- Scan the QR code to go directly to the Early Years Project on the sound beginnings website.
- The Early Years Project is a collaboration with the Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (or Eddie) program.

All About Language Series Video Scripts

The Early Years Project

Language- What is it?

- All About Language: The Early Years Project
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- This video is the full-length module covering language development. In this video, we will discuss: What language is, the difference between communication and language, the two overarching types of language, types of language processing, developmental milestones, risk factors for language delays, referrals, fostering development with video examples, and key takeaways from the presentation.
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- What is Language?
- Language refers to a system of sounds and words that are used in a highly structured way.
- It is important to note that language evolves and changes over time. We can see this in slang words/sayings that have changed over time. In the 60s we had “outta sight”, the 80s we had “totally tubular”, the 90s brought “as if!” and nowadays we hear people say “pop off” when they are ranting about something.
- According to Nations Online, in 2022 there are more than 7,000 reported language across the world.
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- So, how are communication and language different?
- Communication and language go hand in hand. You have to have BOTH in order to interact with others and build social relationships. Communication is the act of sending a message where language is the mode in which we send the message.
- In other words, communication is like a road and language is the car.
- Both cars are starting from and going to the same destination on the same road, the way in which they travel is a little different. One car is a Ford while one is a Toyota.
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- The Two overarching types of language
- When looking at language and language development, we often talk about receptive language and expressive language. One refers to what we demonstrate understanding or knowledge of and one is what we actually use when interacting with others.
- Receptive language refers to what we demonstrate understanding of a language. Some examples of this include: following directions, pointing to an object when named, or answering questions accurately. Some more examples include understanding size concepts and following directions with prepositions or directional words such as on, off, above, under, in, out.

- Expressive language refers to what we actually use to express ourselves. Some examples of this could include labeling objects, or describing objects.
- Expressive language also includes putting multiple words together. Some examples include...
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- Two types of language processing
- There are two primary types of language processing or learning. These are the analytic processing and gestalt processing types. Now, let's break these down a little further.
- Analytic language processing means that a child is learning single words first. They are learning each word individually, then putting these words together. We can think of this way of language learning as putting a puzzle together. We start with one piece, then add another, then another.
- With the analytic language learning, we can look at the example word "go".
- From there, we can add more words or more puzzle pieces that we have also learned to build phrases, then sentences. For example, we can say "go in" then add more words to make the phrase "go in the house". We are learning words individually then putting them together.
- Gestalt language processing is really the opposite. This means that a child is learning words as a group first, then breaking them apart into smaller pieces. These children are starting with the whole puzzle, then taking it apart.
- What does this look like? Repeating lines from movies or TV shows, phrases that are rich in intonation (so we hear adult like speech from them), or you may hear someone label the child's speech as being echolalic. Let's use the example "Time to go to bed!"
- Let's say a child heard their parents say this phrase to them every night. A child who is a gestalt language learner may use this phrase when going to any different location. They may say it when going to lunch at school, when going home after school or when they are getting on the bus. They are using a previously learned phrase to express what they are trying to say but it isn't always completely correct.
- While learning language, these children are going to break these phrases down gradually into smaller chunks until they get to single words. So they may use "go to bed" when going to those different places on the last slide until eventually...
- They get to the single word level.
- It is SO IMPORTANT to note that both forms of language processing or learning ARE NATURAL FOR CHILDREN AND NOT ONE WAY OF LEARNING LANGUAGE IS CORRECT. Gestalt language processing is often associated with children who are neurodivergent or have autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, or another disability; however, just because a child is a gestalt language processor DOES NOT MEAN they have one of these disabilities. They simply learn language in a different way.
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- Please access the Early Years project to access educational resources and videos such as this in other areas of development including...
- Vision
- Communication
- And Hearing
- Scan the QR code to access the Illinois Sound Beginnings Website to learn more about The Early Years Project and to access our resource and activity library.
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- The Early Years Project was created in collaboration with Illinois Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program
- Thank you!

Developmental Milestones

- All About Language: The Early Years Project
- Developmental Milestones Before we get started with the milestones, as a disclaimer: Milestones vary among medical professionals, school systems, and early education providers. The following list compiles milestones from multiple national organizations. Please utilize the milestone expectations most relevant to you and your organization.
- Language Milestones from zero to 9 months, we want to hear a baby making sounds other than crying. Examples: cooing, mama, baba. From 9 to 12 months a child might start calling their parents mama and dada, or any other specific name. They understand the word no. This mean they always follow the direction, but if they pause after hearing it, they are showing the word means
- From 1-2 years, we would like to see children a few words other than mama and dada, like “ba” for ball and “da” for dog. They will look at a familiar object when you name it, follow directions with a gesture and words. They will try to say 3 or more words and follow one step directions without any gestures like giving you a toy when you say “give it to me.”
- From 1-2 years, they can say about 50 words. They may point to objects in a book when you are reading, they may say at least 2 words together, like more milk. They use more gestures than just waving or pointing.
- From 2-3 years, this is when they say 2 or more words together and that expressive language grows. Says words like “I, me, we.”, Follows two-step directions. Asks “who”, “what”, “where”, or “why” questions. Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked. Says first name when asked. Talks well enough for others to understand most of the time.
- Language milestones from 3-4 years. They say sentences with 4 or more words. Says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme. Answers simple questions like “What is a crayon for?” Some examples of things they might say at this time: “I love to color!” “I color with a crayon.” “Mom is picking me up today.”
- From 4-5 years, they love to tell stories. They can follow 3+ step directions or complex directions. Asks why, what, where, who and how questions to learn more about their environment. Understands time words such as “today, yesterday, and tomorrow.” Names letters and numbers.

- And finally from 5–6 years... so now around this time they are in or completing kindergarten. Around this time they are following multi-step unrelated directions. Following and understanding a simple conversation. Learning what rhyming words are. Learning written letter and sound correspondence. Asking meaning of words. Playing cooperatively with others.
- These are the resources that were used while compiling these milestones: American Speech Hearing Association and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were the primary sources.
- Risk factors for language delays
- A delay is identified through observation, assessment, and comparison to typical developmental milestones for a child's age.
- Some risk factors for delays include...
- Potential signs of language delays would be if a child does not...
- Referrals
- What if my child or a child I know is not reaching these milestones?
- Referral options were covered more extensively in the full length communication video; however, we would like to note that parents and caregivers CAN refer their child for an early intervention evaluation. The link provided on this slide in the second box on the right hand side provides a direct link to the department of human services of Illinois; however, you can search this for any state, enter your zip code, and find a list of providers in your area.
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- Thank you!

Fostering Development

- All About Language: The Early Years Project
- Fostering Development
- Fostering development in babies and toddlers is crucial because this early period is a critical stage of growth and learning that impacts a child's lifetime.
- On this slide, we see activities that can help foster language development at any age. This might include...
- From birth to one year, we can help a child foster language development through requesting and singing nursery rhymes. Requesting can be worked on through giving your child a snack one piece at a time. THIS DOES NOT HAVE TO BE VERBAL REQUESTING. This can be sign language, using a communication device, ANYTHING. Make songs more interesting for your child through varying the pitch and intonation. Make it more interactive for them through leaving the last word off for them to "fill in the blank".
- Again, we can easily work on language skills through making a child request "more" or "help". We can then push them more and more by saying "more please" or "help please"- gradually adding more and more words. THE FOLLOWING SLIDE CONTAINS A VIDEO TALKING ABOUT REQUESTING A LITTLE MORE IN DEPTH.
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- Fostering language development from 2-3 years, we want be able to: Expand the child's phrases so the phrases are complete. Add new and interesting words to the child's utterance. Connect to new and familiar concepts. Repeat what the child says, and add a little more Add words that describe, name, and provide more information.
- At any age we can work on movement. Movement is incorporating a different kind of sensory input for children. When they are moving and learning and moving at the same time, they are really benefiting from it. We can work on" tickling, chasing, hide & seek, home rollercoaster, and home obstacle courses.
- From 4-6 years, asking and answering questions is so important for language development!
- Language Modeling is SO GOOD for children to learn language! Language modeling refers to Using complete speech and language system to encourage your child's language to grow. THE NEXT SLIDE TALKS ABOUT LANGUAGE MODELING A LITTLE MORE IN DEPTH AND HOW WE CAN WORK ON IT AT HOME.
- Now we'll cover some tips for preschool teachers and early educators; however, these techniques can absolutely be implemented at home as well.
- No matter where we are- school or home- we want to foster language rich environments. What does this mean? A language rich environment gives children the opportunity to talk, sing, and read through multiple conversations and daily activities. There is often a gap between the kind of language environment that is at school and the language they are exposed to at home. This can be referred to as a "word gap".
- How do we create language rich environments? We can engage the child in more conversations by getting on their level, taking turns, talking about what they are going and what they are interested in. We want to facilitate thick conversations. This encourages back and forth exchanges in a conversation, extends the child's productions, and pushes them to think more and more.
- These are some tips to reduce frustration when interacting with a child who has limited expressive language skills. If asking them an open- ended question like "What do you want for supper?" you can give them two choices, holding out each hand one at a time when

- These are some tips to reduce frustration when interacting with a child who has limited expressive language skills. If asking them an open-ended question like “What do you want for supper?” you can give them two choices, holding out each hand one at a time when presenting the options. They can then tap the hand that they prefer. Ask them to show you things they are talking about if you are not able to understand them. THE FOLLOWING TWO VIDEOS DISCUSSES HOW TO CREATE LANGUAGE RICH ENVIRONMENTS.

Language- Wrap Up

- This is the All About Language Series, from The Early Years Project
- Wrap Up
- So, what have we covered today?
- In this video, we discussed: What language is, the difference between communication and language, the two overarching types of language, types of language processing, developmental milestones, risk factors for language delays, referrals, fostering development with video examples, and key takeaways from the presentation.
- The differences between communication and language is that communication is like the road while language is like the car. Language refers to the way in which we choose to get from one place to another.
- Language skills consist of two overarching areas- receptive and expressive language. Receptive being what we understand and expressive referring to what we are able to use.
- At any age, we want to talk about what we are going, modeling new and interesting words for children, expanding on what they say, and responding to their questions as much as possible.
- 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.
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