




## Early Communication and Language monitoring tool

This tool outlines key milestones in speech, language and communication development to support identification of children's needs in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The purpose of this tool is to help assess a child's level of development in order to make informed decisions about what the child needs to learn and be able to do next. The tool can help practitioners to notice whether a child is at risk of falling behind in their development and supports early identification of the need for referral for specialist support.

 Red flags are particular statements which serve as an alert for close monitoring. Where a child has not reached a red flag by the age indicated, this is not necessarily a sign of difficulty but should prompt further discussion with the family, additional assessment and possible referral for specialist support.

**NB** If there are concerns at any point you may wish to complete a more detailed check with parent / carer using the I CAN Progress checker: [ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/progress-checker-home](https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/progress-checker-home)

### Early identification at 2 years

The Early Communication and Language monitoring tool can be used to inform the statutory progress check at age two:

When a child is aged between two and three, practitioners must review their progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short written summary of their child's development in the prime areas. (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage March 2021, Page 18)

If the child is **2 to 2½ years** old and the early years practitioner identifies **concerns**, a decision on the best way forward to assess the child's SLCN (speech, language and communication needs) should be agreed between the **health visitor** and the **early years practitioner** with the **parent/carer**, which may include the Early language identification measure (ELIM) and intervention. (Ref ELIM Guidance handbook, Page 6)

### Notes on monitoring early communication and language

Judgements of a child's stage of development are made through a process of ongoing observational assessment. Do check across each profile to ensure an holistic review. Observation involves noticing what children do and say in a range of contexts, and includes information from the family about what children do and say at home.

For children learning English as an additional language, it is important to find out from families about how children use their home language and how they communicate at home. Families should also be encouraged to continue to communicate with their child(ren) in their mother tongue / first language.

#### References:

Development Matters Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage, Department for Education, Sept 2021  
Universally speaking from birth to five, I CAN and the Communication Trust, March 2015

The National Strategies Early Years, Every Child a Talker: Guidance for Early Language Lead Practitioners, Department for children schools and families, 2008



Best start in speech, language and communication – supporting evidence, Public Health England, Department of Health and Social Care & Department of Education, October 2020

Early Language Builders, Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan, Elklan, 2006

## Early Communication and Language monitoring tool

### RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

**Receptive language** is the “input” of language; the ability to understand information. It involves understanding the words, sentences and meaning of what others say or what is read. For example, a child's ability to listen and follow directions such as “put on your coat” relies on the child's receptive language skills. In typical development, children are able to understand language before they are able to produce it.




<b>Child's name:</b>		<b>D.O.B:</b>
<b>Completed by:</b>		<b>Languages spoken:</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Listening and attention</b>	<b>Y/N? – age in months</b>
Around 6 months	Does the child respond to familiar voices?	
Around 12 months	Can the child move attention from one activity to another? They may still be easily distracted by a new event. (This is known as Fleeting attention.)	
Around 15 - 18 months	Can the child focus on a task of their own choice ignoring everything else? (This is known as Rigid attention.)	
By around 2	 By 2 years – Is the child responding to speech and/or sounds with adult support?	
By around 3 years old	 By 3 years - Is the child is starting to control their attention; they can change activity with minimal adult support? For example, when playing they can stop when requested and follow instructions to ‘tidy up’. Using the child’s name can help. (This is known as Focussed attention.)	
Between 4 and 5 years	Does the child listen for and respond to instructions while they are busy with something else? For example, ask them to get their coat and shoes while they are playing not watching TV or using a computer, they are too absorbing. (This is known as Two-channelled attention.)	
Further information, advice discussed with child's parent/carer, agreed next steps		




Age	Understanding	Y/N? – age in months
Around 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/> By 12 months - Does the child turn to their own name?	
Around 12 months	<p>Can the child choose between 2 objects?</p> <p>For example, “Do you want the ball or the car?”</p>	
Around 15 -18 months	Does the child understand lots of different single words and some two-word phrases, such as “give me” or “shoes on”?	
By around 2	<p>Does the child understand many more words than they can say – between 200 - 500 words?</p> <p><i>Please note that the numbers give an approximate idea of the size of a child’s vocabulary. At this stage of development there is no expectation that practitioners will count every word a child understands.</i></p>	
	<p>Can the child understand simple questions and instructions?</p> <p>For example, “Where’s your hat?” or “Get the apple.”</p>	
Towards their third birthday	<input type="checkbox"/> By 30 months – Can the child show that they understand action words by pointing to the right picture in a book?	
By around 3 years old	<input type="checkbox"/> By 3 years - Can the child follow instructions with three key words?	
Between 4 and 5 years	<p>Is the child beginning to get the idea of time?</p> <p>For example, “Mummy will be here after lunch.”</p>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Does the child understand a longer list of instructions?	
	<p>For example, “First get your lunchbox, then sit at the red table.” Note if they have to watch another child in order to know what to do, rather than understanding it themselves. This might indicate difficulties in hearing or understanding.</p>	
Further information, advice discussed with child’s parent/carer, agreed next steps	Can the child answer simple ‘why’ questions?	



## Early Communication and Language monitoring tool


### EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

**Expressive language** is the “output” of language, the ability to express your wants and needs through verbal or nonverbal communication. It is the ability to put thoughts into words and sentences in a way that makes sense and is grammatically correct.

<b>Child's name:</b>		<b>D.O.B:</b>
<b>Completed by:</b>		<b>Languages spoken:</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Y/N? – age in months</b>
Around 6 months	Does the child ‘take turns’ in conversations with babbling?	
Around 12 months	Is the child beginning to use single words like mummum, dada, tete (teddy)?	
	 Does the child point to things and use gestures to show things to adults and share interests?	
Around 15 -18 months	 By 16 months - Can the child say around 10 words (they may not all be clear)?	
	Is the child using a range of adult like speech patterns (jargon) and at least 20 clear words? <i>Jargon is when the child puts sounds together with rhythm and tone in a way that sounds like speech, using a mix of babble and real words.</i>	
By around 2	Can the child use up to 50 words?	
	Is the child beginning to put 2 or 3 words together, for example “more milk”?	
	Is the child asking questions such as the names of object and people?	
By around 3 years old	Is the child frequently asking questions, such as the names of people and objects?	
	Can the child use around 300 words? These include words to describe actions (verbs), descriptive language, words for time (for example, ‘now’ and ‘later’), space (for example, ‘over there’) and function (for example, they can tell you a sponge is for washing). <i>Please note that the number gives an approximate idea of the size of a child’s vocabulary. At this stage of development there is no expectation that practitioners will count every word a child uses.</i>	
	Is the child linking up to 3-4 words together?	
	Is the child using pronouns (‘me’, ‘him’, ‘she’), plurals and prepositions (‘in’, ‘on’, ‘under’)? These may not always be used correctly to start with.	
	 Does the child speak fluently, without stammering? Children can go through a phase of being non fluent. Please contact your Speech & Language Therapy Service if the child is stammering.	

3 ½ to 4 years old	Is the child linking up to 5 words together?	
	 Does the child speak fluently, without stammering? Children can go through a phase of being non fluent. Please contact your Speech & Language Therapy Service if the child is stammering.	
Between 4 and 5 years	Is the child using sentences of 4 to 6 words? For example, “I want to play with cars” or “Daddy ate my strawberry yoghurt?” (It is very common for children to use the incorrect word ending – e.g. ‘eated’).	
	Can the child join sentences using words like ‘because’, ‘or’, ‘and’? For example “my knee hurts because I falled over’.	
	Is the child using the future and past tense? For example, “I am going to the park” and “I went to the shop.”	
	Can they create simple sequenced stories and put longer sentences together? “I went to Jamilia’s house, I had spaghetti for tea and Daddy picked me up in his car”.	
	 A child may be struggling if they regularly get frustrated or give up trying to tell you something, regularly forget the words or miss out important pieces of information or sound muddled and disorganised in their talking.	
	 Does the child speak fluently, without stammering? Children can go through a phase of being non fluent. Please contact your Speech & Language Therapy Service if the child is stammering.	
Further information, advice discussed with child’s parent/carer, agreed next steps		

Age	Speech Sounds	Y/N? – age in months
Birth to 2 years	As children are learning to talk their speech sounds develop gradually over time, starting with gurgling, cooing and babbling.	
By around 3 years old	<p>Is the child’s speech clear? <b>(if the answer is NO please see guidance below)</b></p> <p><i>At this age there may be many immature speech patterns, so speech may not be clear. The child may leave out last sounds or substitute sounds (e.g. ‘tap’ for ‘cap’) in single words. Lots of children will do this at this age but it will need to be monitored to ensure this develops over time.</i></p> <p> Contact your Speech &amp; Language Therapy Service for advice if children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appear to be talking in short phrases/sentences which are made up of vowel sounds only e.g. ‘eye uh eye a’ = my mum likes cats.</li> <li>- Replace one vowel sound with another e.g. pig = pog.</li> <li>- Use a limited range of sounds and a preferred sound e.g. ‘de dod den dard’ (the dog went park).</li> <li>- Miss out the first sounds in words e.g. ‘ig’ = pig, ‘og’ = dog.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consider whether a hearing test might be needed.</b></p>	
3 ½ to 4 years old	 Can the child consistently use the following sounds in words?	
	<b>m</b>	
	<b>n</b>	
	<b>p</b>	
	<b>b</b>	
	<b>t</b>	
	<b>d</b>	
	<b>f</b>	
	<b>v</b>	
	<b>s</b>	
	<b>z</b>	
	<b>h</b>	

	 Are the child's speech sounds almost as clear when they are talking in phrases or sentences compared with when talking in single words?	
Between 4 and 5 years	Is the child beginning to use the following sounds in words?	
		k
		g
		w
		l
		y
		ng
		sh
		ch
		j
		v
		th
		r
	Is the child beginning to use sound clusters? For example, pl in play, sm in smile. Some may be simplified such as 'gween' for 'green'.	
Further information, advice discussed with child's parent/carer, agreed next steps		

To support a more detailed speech sounds check for a child 3 - 5 years please go to:


<https://www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Speech-screener-record-form-and-pictures.pdf>

## Early Communication and Language monitoring tool

### SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND PLAY

Watch out for children who get extremely upset by certain sounds, smells or tastes, and cannot be calmed. Or children who seem worried, sad or angry for much of the time. You will need to work closely with parents and other agencies to find out more about these developmental difficulties.

(Ref: Development Matters: PSED Observation checkpoint 0-3 years)

<b>Child's name:</b>		<b>D.O.B:</b>
<b>Completed by:</b>		<b>Languages spoken:</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Social communication</b>	<b>Y/N? – age in months</b>
Around 6 months	Does the child respond to their name?	
	Does the child respond to the emotions in your voice?	
Around 12 months	Does the child 'take turns' by babbling and/or using single words?	
Around 18 months	Is the child curious about the world?	
	Are they exploring and wanting to be noticed by you?	
By around 2	Is the child asking questions, such as the names of people and objects?	
	 By 2 years – Does the child try to communicate?	
	Is the child showing interest in other children playing, sometimes joining in?	
By around 3 years old	Can the child sometimes share or take turns with others, with adult guidance? Does the child understand "yours" and "mine"?	
Between 3 and 4 years	Can the child use talk/sign to express their feelings such as 'happy', 'sad', 'angry' or 'worried'? <i>Note: watch out for children who seem worried, sad or angry for much of the time, children who seem to flit from one thing to the next or children who seem to stay for over-long periods doing the same thing, and become distressed if they are encouraged to do something different. You will need to work closely with parents and other agencies to find out more about these developmental difficulties.</i>	
Between 4 and 5 years	Does the child talk with other children?	
	Does the child join in with group conversations and games?	
	Does the child express their feelings and consider the feelings of others?	
Further information, advice discussed with child's parent/carer, agreed next steps		



<b>Age</b>	<b>Symbolic Play</b>	<b>Y/N? – age in months</b>
Around 6 months	Does the child look, hear, feel, smell or taste things to try and work out what they are?	
Around 12 months	Does the child connect familiar objects with every day routines? For example, they may smile, kick legs or reach out towards a drink.	
Around 15 months	Does the child show that they recognise familiar objects and how they are used in routine situations? For example, the child picks up a cup and puts it to their mouth or uses a brush to brush hair (rather than explore with the mouth).	
Around 18 months	Does the child pretend to use familiar objects on them self? For example, the child pretends to eat from an empty bowl.	
By around 2	Does the child use objects on a doll or teddy (pretend play now moves beyond oneself)? For example, the child acts out everyday events such as feeding a teddy, putting a doll in bed.	
By around 3 years old	Does the child act out routines (the child is able to act out simple sequences of play)? For example, the child undresses a doll, prepares the bath, washes and dresses the doll.	
	Does the child take part in pretend play (for example, being 'mummy' or 'daddy')?	
By around the age of 4	Does the child plan their play (communicates verbally or nonverbally what they are about to do)? For example, says "teddy wants a drink" then picks up teddy and gives it a drink.	
	Does the child take part in other pretend play with different roles? For example, being the Gruffalo or acting out the role of a super hero.	
Between 4 and 5 years	Does the child engage in elaborate make-believe play with friends, often in role and negotiating how play will develop? For example, a child may play in role, then come out of character to discuss how the play is to develop, then return to the role once again.	
Further information, advice discussed with child's parent/carer, agreed next steps		