

2-3 Year Old Language Milestones

By the end of the third year, children usually understand much of what you say to them. They're also talking more. At this age, most children can do these things:

- Understand the words for familiar people, everyday objects and body parts
- Use a variety of single words by 18 months and speak in sentences of two to four words by 24 months (may combine nouns and verbs, like "mommy eat"); have a vocabulary of 200+ words by 36 months
- Repeat words she hears
- Start asking "what's that?" and "why?"
- Begin using plurals (*dogs*) and basic pronouns (*me, you*)

3-4 Year Old Language Milestones

By the end of the year, 3-year-olds typically have a lot to say. They also understand more of what *you* say—but may not always follow your directions. Kids this age typically use language like this:

- Begin using plurals (*dogs*) and basic pronouns (*me, you*)
- Use the basic rules of grammar, but make mistakes with words that don't follow the rules, like saying "mouses" instead of "mice"
- Speak well enough that most strangers can understand what they're saying
- Use five or six words in a sentence and have a two- to three-sentence conversation
- Tell you their name, the name of at least one friend and the names of most common objects
- Understand words like "in," "on," "behind" and "next"
- Ask "wh" questions, like "why," to get more information about things

4-5 Year Old Language Milestones

Language development tends to explode this year. This may include developing a vocabulary of more than 1,000 words and using complicated sentences that combine more than one thought. Kids start asking who, what, why, when and where questions—and maybe even can answer some too. By the end of this year, most children can do these things:

- Sing silly songs, make up goofy words and start rhyming
- Follow simple, unrelated directions ("Go find your shoes and pick up that toy.")
- Change speech patterns depending on who he's having a conversation with, such as speaking in short sentences to a younger sibling
- Pronounce most sounds correctly, but still have trouble with *s*, *w* and *r* sounds
- Ask for the definition of unfamiliar words
- Make up stories and talk about what he's thinking
- Argue, even though the argument might not be logical

5-6 Year Old Language Milestones

In kindergarten, most kids understand and can use thousands of words, usually in sentences five to eight words long. Many 5-year-olds have the language development needed to:

- Use words to argue and try to reason with people; *because* is an oft-used word
- Use most plurals, pronouns and tenses correctly
- Tell stories, jokes and riddles; may understand simple puns
- Use language to talk about opposites and compare things (“That black cat is smaller than the white one.”)
- Talk about things that are going to happen as well as things that have already happened
- Follow simple multi-step directions
- By the end of kindergarten, most children can recognize common words, such as *the* and *me*, and they can begin reading three-letter words, like *hat*.