
Choosing Skills to Work on At Home with Your Child

Choosing which skills to work on first with your child can be one of the most challenging parts of working on speech and language skills at home. I have plenty of parents tell me that they would love to help their child but they don't know where to start. I have attempted to simplify this process so that you will clearly know where to start with your child. Here's what to do:

1. Go to page 3 in this packet labeled "Developmental Checklists for Speech and Language Development". Start with the very first section, labeled 6 months. You may want to print out these pages so you can make checkmarks as you go along.
2. Go through each skill and mark whether your child is not demonstrating the skill, demonstrates the skill sometimes, or demonstrates the skill most of the time (consistently). If it is an early skill that your child is already past in terms of development (such as cooing and laughing), go ahead and mark it as "demonstrates most of the time" because your child has surpassed that skill.
3. Keep going through the skills in this way until you reach the end of the section which best represents your child's age right now. I recommend printing this out and saving it so you can compare your results later.
4. Go back to the beginning of the checklists and find the earliest skill that your child is not yet demonstrating or that your child is not demonstrating all of the time. If you feel like this skill is something that you would like your child to be able to do at home, go ahead and pick that skill to start with. If not, keep working your way down the list until you find something that you would like to work on. It's just important to work on younger skills before you try to tackle more challenging older skills.
5. Work on this one skill until your child has mastered it or until your child stops making progress and you feel like he could use a break from it. Then, choose another skill on the list that is one of the earliest skills that he hasn't mastered yet.

Using Informal and Dynamic Assessment to Determine Appropriate Skills

If you have used a standardized assessment to determine which skills a client/student needs to work on, then you probably already have a pretty good idea of where to start. However, if you're still struggling to determine some appropriate goals, you can try using informal and dynamic assessment to guide your decision. Here's what to do:

1. Go through the developmental checklists starting on the next page and start from the top (at 6 months). Check the child's level of mastery for each skill. If the child has already surpassed this skill and is working on more difficult skills, you can mark the easier one as "demonstrates consistently".
2. If you get to a skill that you're not sure about, find some worksheets or activities that will allow you to ask the child to demonstrate the skill. You can use The Speech Therapy Solution materials library to find helpful worksheets and activities. First, see how the child does on the activities without any additional support.
3. If the child cannot do the skill independently, try some dynamic assessment by providing the child with some prompts or briefly teaching the child how to do the skill. If the child is able to do it with those minimal cues, then you can determine that the child's grasp of that skill is developing or emerging. Make note of that on the development checklist. If the child continues to struggle, you can mark that skill as "does not demonstrate".
4. Once you have gone up through the skills in that child's age, you can go back and look at some of the earliest developing skill. If the child is demonstrating the skill some of the time but not consistently, you may not need to directly address that skill in therapy, but rather just continue to monitor it as it may develop fully on its own. Your time will most likely be better spent on the skills that the child should be demonstrating but isn't able to do at all, even with some cueing like you used on the dynamic assessment. Choose a few of these goals to target during your therapy sessions and in home practice.

Developmental Checklists for Speech and Language Skills

Go through and mark how well the child is able to perform these skills.

Source: <https://www.linguisystems.com/pdf/Milestonesguide.pdf>

6 Months:

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Coos and Laughs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Makes some sounds that are similar to speech sounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Responds to voices and faces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Makes eye contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Makes noises to get attention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turns head toward sound source when hears noise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watches a speaker's face when	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1 Year:

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Combines some vowels and consonants together like "bah" or "mo"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Imitates simple actions of others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Responds to Name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has said first word and/or tries to use gestures to communicate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 Developmental Checklists Continued
1 Year, 6 Months:

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Able to say 50 different words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does some pretend play on self (like drinking from a cup)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 Years

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Imitates adult's actions in play (like driving a car or feeding a baby)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a vocabulary of 200-300 words (that he can say)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is combining some words together to make two-word sentences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knows spatial concepts: in, on	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knows descriptors like up and down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers basic yes/no questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers "what's this" questions about basic vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers "where" questions by pointing, like "where's Mommy?"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follows some simple one-step directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does pretend play on someone/ something else, like feeding a baby	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acts out daily routines in play like playing house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Developmental Checklists Continued

3 Years

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Has a vocabulary of about 1,000 different words he can say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knows spatial concepts like off, out of, away, and together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knows descriptors like one/many and sizes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses the present progressive “-ing” like “he is jumping”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses the pronouns “he” and “she”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has an average sentence/utterance length of around 3 words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers more complex “what” questions like “what do you eat?”, “what do you wear on your head?”, and “what is she doing?”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verbally answers basic “where” questions, like “where are your shoes?”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verbally answers basic “who” questions like “who is...”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consistently says the sounds: p, b, h, n, w	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is understood by a stranger at least 75% of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Produces final consonants at the ends of words, not dropping them off, but it’s ok if they’re not always the right sound.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Developmental Checklists Continued

4 Years

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Knows spatial concepts like next to, beside, behind, in front, around, and between	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knows descriptors like colors and "different"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses the possessive 's like "Jimmy's boot"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses the plural -s like "balls"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses past tense verbs like "jumped" and "ran"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses articles like "a" and "the"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses conjunctions like "and"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has an average sentence length of above 4 words per utterance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers basic "what" function questions like "what do you do with a fork?"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers more complex "where" questions like "where does a cow live?"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers more complex "who" questions like "who brings the mail?"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers basic "when" questions but may get some time concepts mixed up, like tomorrow and yesterday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers basic "how" questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers basic "why" questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Developmental Checklists Continued

4 Years, cont.

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Asks a variety of questions using “wh-” words and correct word order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consistently says the sounds: b, k, g, d, f, y	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Says some fricatives (long sounds like /f/, /s/, /z/, sh) even if they don't always get the right one. Should not still be replacing all of these with short sounds like /t/, /d/, /p/	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is understood by a stranger at least 80% of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follows two-step related directions, like find get your shoes and bring them here.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can take turns in games and play	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 Developmental Checklists Continued
5 Years

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Has a vocabulary of about 2,200-2,500 different words he can say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knows spatial concepts like nearest and through	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knows descriptors like superlatives (bigger, biggest), time concepts, thin, whole, fist, middle, last	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses irregular plurals like "feet" and "children"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consistently says the sound: /t/	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Says consonant blends like /sp/, /tw/ even if she don't always get both sounds correct. There should at least be two sounds present when she tries to say these.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is understood by a stranger at least 90% of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is able to follow three-step directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stays on topic during a logical conversation with someone else	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6 Years

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Knows spatial concepts like left/right	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knows descriptors like opposites and	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consistently says the sounds: /r/	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is understood by a stranger almost all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 Developmental Checklists Continued
7 Years

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Consistently says the sounds: sh, ch, j	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrates new words into his vocabulary regularly and easily, like school vocabulary words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recalls words to use when talking fluently and without long pauses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8 Years

Skill	Does Not Demonstrate	Demonstrates Sometimes	Demonstrates Consistently
Consistently says the sounds: s, z, v, th, zh	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrates new words into his vocabulary regularly and easily, like school vocabulary words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>