



Language Development 3-4 years

Understanding what makes your toddler tick - the key to a happy, well-balanced child



Articles

Language Development aged 3 to 4 years

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Once your little tot turns three, she will have an expressive vocabulary of up to 500 words and be able to chat in sentences of six or more words. Expressive vocabulary means what she can actually say and express. Her receptive speech (what she can hear and understand) is still more advanced than her expressive speech, but communication is definitely easier at this stage. She will be able to carry on a simple conversation and she will ask loads of questions (those dreaded why's and where's and when's!). She will happily chat about what she has seen or done – even with strangers (“Hey Lady, you know what ...?”.) Your child should speak well enough for strangers to understand her and is starting to use ‘-s’ on verbs to show the present tense such as when she says, “Mommy *runs* after me”. She also begins to use plurals and will often talk to herself or an imaginary friend.

It is important now to foster and strengthen her **listening** skills. Good listening skills are the precursor to satisfactory life skills. If your child has good listening skills she will;

- be able to focus on a particular sound while ignoring background noise
- be able to hear differences between tone and sounds
- be able to remember word order for sentence formation
- be able to carry out instructions
- be able to acquire language skills which will boost her self esteem and confidence because she will be able to communicate

Checklist for hearing

- By now your toddler will be able to use a two to three word sentence at least and should confidently ask for things and talk about her activities.
- She should be able to follow simple directions
- She should be able to follow more complex instructions.
- She should begin to understand the difference between ‘not now’ and ‘no more’
- If your toddler has suffered from repeated ear infections and has difficulty with hearing and balance – seek professional advice.
- If you are worried about your child’s hearing, it is a good idea to take her for a hearing test with a qualified audiologist, preferably with paediatric experience. For details of an audiologist in your area, contact the South African Speech Language and Hearing Association on www.saslha.co.za.

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