

Phonological awareness:

Phonological awareness is the ability to manipulate the structure of an utterance independently from its meaning. It is an auditory task that requires an individual to manipulate the utterance at the word, syllable or sound level.

When to be concerned:

If the child does not:

- Recognise letters and letter-sound matches
- Understand that print is read left to right and top to bottom
- Begin to write letters and some words heard often
- Understand that spoken words are made up of sounds
- Recognise some words by sight
- Write own first and last name
- Sound out simple words (e.g. c-a-t)
- Break down words into sounds (isolating first sounds)
- Understand rhyming



In order for a child to be academically and socially successful, all of the above skills are essential. If you are concerned about your child's speech and language skills, a formal speech-language assessment with a Speech-Language Pathologist is recommended.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT 5- to 6-year old child



Typical speech, language and hearing development at this age includes the following:

Speech:

A 5-6 year old child's speech should be 90% - 100% intelligible.

When to be concerned:

- If the child has not acquired correct speech production of late developing speech sounds [s, l, r, th] by 5-6 years of age.
- If the child's speech is unintelligible.

Language:

Language can be divided into *receptive and expressive language*. *Receptive language* refers to the ability to understand words spoken to you. *Expressive language* refers to the ability to use words to express yourself.

When to be concerned:

If the child does not:

- Use compound and complex sentences
- Use all pronouns correctly
- Use past and future tense appropriately
- Answer "How are things the same/different?"
- Use adjectives and adverbs for describing
- Use comparative adjectives, such as *loud, louder*
- Use yesterday and tomorrow
- Use prepositions correctly
- Name ordinal numbers (e.g. *first, second, third*)
- Classify according to form, colour and use
- Tell a connected story about a picture, seeing relationships between objects and happenings
- Exchange information and ask questions
- Understand number concepts up to 20
- Understand time sequences (*what happened first, second, third, etc.*)
- Understand opposite concepts (e.g. *big/little, over/under*)



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Pragmatics:

Pragmatics refers to the speaker-listener intentions and interactions and all elements in the environment surrounding the message. It is often referred to as social language skills.

When to be concerned:

If the child does not:

- Ask meanings of words
- Use threats and promises
- Ask questions for information
- Announce topic shifts
- Take more care in communicating with unfamiliar people
- Begin to use word plays
- Engages in cooperative play, such as making group decisions, assigning roles, and playing fairly



Listening:

Listening to something is not the same as hearing it. Listening skills involve a child's ability to attend to and process what he hears. These skills are integral components of a child's speech and language, social, and academic development.

When to be concerned:

If the child does not:

- Attend to a short story and answers simple questions about it
- Hear and understand most of what is said at home and in school
- Repeat four to six digits when they are given slowly
- Repeat sentences up to nine words in length
- Follow three-step directions
- Respond correctly to more types of sentences but may still be confused at times by more complex sentences.

Auditory processing:

Auditory processing is the term used to describe what happens when your brain recognizes and interprets the sounds around you. Children who have impairment in auditory processing may have a diagnosis of Auditory Processing Disorder. Children with auditory processing disorders may have an underlying receptive language disorder and lower language test scores.

The central auditory nervous system develops and matures through age 12. Persons with auditory processing disorders generally develop symptoms at an early age and continue to experience significant difficulty with auditory tasks as they mature. Auditory processing is a neural process that is separate from language comprehension and is not a hearing acuity impairment.

When to be concerned:

If a child has difficulty in one or more of the following areas:

- Auditory attention – the ability to focus on an auditory signal (speech or non-speech).
- Auditory memory – the ability to remember information presented auditorily, either immediately or after a delay.
- Auditory figure-ground problems – the ability to attend to the primary auditory message in the presence of competing auditory signals (e.g. background noise, other speakers).
- Auditory cohesion – is the ability to integrate information gathered auditorily.

Voice:

A 5-6 year old child's voice should be clear and similar when compared with other peers.

Fluency:

A 5-6 year old child's speech should be fluent, despite some grammatical errors that may still occur.

When to be concerned:

- If many repetitions of sounds, words or phrases occur, or when long pauses and hesitations occur in a child's speech. Signs of frustration during speaking may also be an indication stuttering.

