SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES

Afasic voice for life

Babies usually say their first word at about 12 months. More words follow – slowly at first, but from around the age of 2, the process speeds up. By the time they start school most children are competent talkers.

This summary shows how a typical child develops speech and language:

At 18 months
> Has a vocabulary of approximately 20 words – mostly the names of people or things
> Can follow simple commands e.g. *Pick up Teddy*
> Understands some everyday words and phrases such as *Milk, Coat, All gone*

At 2 years
> Uses approximately 50 words and understands many more
> Can put two words together e.g. *Baby crying, Bye-bye Daddy, More juice*
> Understands simple questions like *Where's Teddy*
> You can understand most of what (s)he says

At 3 years
> Speaks in sentences of 3 – 5 words
> Asks *who, what, where* questions
> Knows the difference between *big* and *little*
> You can understand almost all (s)he says

At 4 years
> Uses and to link sentences together
> Understands and uses descriptive words such as colours
> Talks about things that have already happened or will be happening
> People outside the family can usually understand him or her

At 5 years
> Talks well, with few grammatical errors
> Understands most of what you say
> Should be completely intelligible
> Is beginning to learn abstract concepts e.g. words relating to time
> Understands language well enough to appreciate simple jokes and ask what a new word means

After 5 years
> Produces the final few speech sounds, if not already in place: *l, r, ng* by 6 years and *th, sl, spr* by 7 - 8.
> Continues to:
  » Learn more words
  » Use and understand figurative language and more complex sentences.
> This later language development is related more to children's learning at school and elsewhere than innate processes in the brain, so it is not really possible to give clear milestones.