

Does My Child Need a Speech-Language Evaluation?

Children grow and develop at different rates, which can make it increasingly difficult for parents to recognize when their child may have a delay in speech and/or language skills. It is important to remember that even if you are concerned about your child's speech and language, there may not be a problem. On the other hand, if there is a problem, it is best to determine exactly what the problem is and receive help early on. Research has repeatedly found that early detection and intervention are critical. Below is a list of red flags that may be indicative of a speech and/or language delay and therefore warrant a full evaluation by a speech-language pathologist. Talk to your child's pediatrician if you notice that your child:

Language

- 6-12 months
 - Is not babbling or cooing
 - Is using a small variety of sounds in babbling
 - Does not understand/respond to name
 - Is not turning eyes or head toward a sound
 - Is unable to play in social games like peek a boo
 - Does not understand simple words (e.g. mama, juice)
- 12-15 months
 - Has difficulty following simple 1 step directions (e.g. "Sit down")
 - Does not point and/or use gestures (waving hi/bye, shaking head no/yes, etc.)
 - Does not understand simple words (e.g. mama, juice)
 - At 15 months, has not used first word
- 16-23 months
 - Does not have any words (at 18 months, does not use six to ten words consistently)
 - Is unable to point to body parts (16-17 months)
 - Prefers gestures to communicate over vocalizations (18 months)
 - At 20 months, does not follow simple directions
- 2 years
 - Has a limited vocabulary (<50 words in his/her expressive vocabulary)
 - Has little response to directions
 - Does not produce simple 2 word combinations
 - Has decreased interest in social interactions
- 3 years
 - Is using 1-2 word utterances only
 - Has difficulty following directions and answering wh- questions
 - Is not understood by unfamiliar people
- 4-5 years
 - Seems "off topic" or makes inappropriate remarks to conversation even though she/he is very verbal
 - Is using pronouns incorrectly
 - Is avoiding his/her peers and/or adults
 - Is unable to express a wide range of emotions

Articulation

- Has a limited variety of consonants
 - The following sounds should be present in a child's repertoire by 20-24 months (p, b, t, d, n, w, h, m)
- Is producing vowel distortions
- Decreased intelligibility – please refer to the table below for general guidelines

Age	Intelligibility Level
19-24 months	25-50%
2-3 years	50-75%
4-5 years	75-90%
5+ years	90-100%

Data from Peña-Brooks & Hegde (2007)

- At 3 years, children should no longer delete final consonants (i.e. *da* for *dad*, *po* for *pop*), front velar consonants (i.e. *gog* for *dog*, *tan* for *can*) or assimilate consonants (i.e. *tat* for *cat*, *bap* for *cap*). For more information regarding phonological processes, please contact tanya@therapybuddies.com.

Stuttering

- More typical
 - Hesitations (Slight pauses without any sound)
 - Interjections (i.e. "Um...uh...I want to go outside")
 - Revisions (i.e. "The girl...The woman went shopping")
 - Unfinished word
 - Phrase and word repetitions (i.e. "I need I need to go to the bathroom"/"I-I need to go")
- Less typical
 - Word, syllable, sound repetitions
 - Saying a word too many times becomes less typical; reason why it's in both categories
 - Prolongations (i.e. "IIIIIIII want to play!")
 - Blocks (child opens mouth to speak but no sound comes out)
- If your child's speech is characterized more by the "less typical" disfluencies, it is important to discuss this with a certified and licensed speech language pathologist. If he/she is concerned by the disfluencies, a thorough assessment can be completed in order to better differentially diagnose the child as normally disfluent or as a stutterer.

Pragmatics

- Has limited or no eye contact
- Has difficulty with turn taking or reciprocity of communication
- Is unable to engage in pretend or symbolic play

Other Red Flags

- Has problems with chewing and swallowing
- Has an ongoing hoarse voice
- Is playing with toys in an unusual way or no interest in toys
- Has limited food options/difficulty with different textures

For more information, please contact tanya@therapybuddies.com. I would be more than happy to answer any of your questions or provide you with more information!