

Pandas

0-6 months

Children Can

- Turn towards a sound when they hear it.
- Be startled by loud noises.
- Watch your face when you talk to them.
- Recognise your voice.
- Smile and laugh when other people smile and laugh.
- Make sounds to themselves, like cooing, gurgling and babbling.
- Make noises, like coos or squeals, to get your attention.
- Have different cries for different needs. For example one cry for hunger, another when they are tired.

Adults Can

- Copy sounds babies makes. This will encourage more noises and is the start of conversations.
- Hold baby near your face when you talk to them so that they can see you clearly.
- Talk to baby about what you are doing. This will help them to start to learn words.
- Talk in a sing-song voice to baby. This will keep them interested in what you are saying.
- Have some 1:1 time with each baby each day to play with toys and picture books; using simple sentences to discuss what you're doing

Older Frogs and young Pandas

6 – 12 months

Children Can

- Listen carefully, and turn to someone talking on the other side of the room.
- Look at you when you speak and when their name is called.
- Babble strings of sounds, like 'no-no' and 'go-go'.
- Make noises, point and look at you to get your attention.
- Smile at people who are smiling at them.
- Start to understand words like 'bye-bye' and 'up' especially when a gesture is used at the same time.
- Recognise the names of familiar objects, things like 'car' and 'daddy'.
- Enjoy action songs and rhymes and get excited when sung to.
- Take turns in conversations, babbling back to an adult.

Adults Can

- Make different sounds to interest children. This can be the sound of your voice or things like a rattle or squeaky toy.
- Pointing to sounds will help develop children's listening skills. This will also help their awareness of the world around them.
- Encourage children to look at you during activities. This could be dressing, feeding or nappy changing. This will help children's attention and communication skills.
- Talk about everyday activities, like getting dressed, eating and bathing.

- Copy babies when they are babbling. This is a very good way to show how to take turns in communication. This will encourage them to make even more sounds.
- Use actions with words. Try waving as you say 'bye-bye' or picking up their cup as you say 'drink'. This will help children to relate what they see and do with language.
- Sing action songs and play games like 'peek-a-boo' to encourage communication and attention skills.
- Have some special time with children each day to play with toys and picture books.

Pandas

12 – 18 months

Children Can

- Enjoy games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake and toys that make a noise.
- Start to understand a few simple words, like 'drink', 'shoe' and 'car'. Also simple instructions like 'wave goodbye', 'kick ball' and 'give me'.
- Point to things when asked, like familiar people and objects such as 'book' and 'car'.
- Use up to 20 simple words, such as 'cup', 'daddy' and 'dog'. These words may not always be easily recognised by unfamiliar adults.
- Gesture or point, often with words or sounds to show what they want.
- Copy lots of things that adults say and gestures that they make.
- Start to enjoy simple pretend play, for example pretending to talk on the phone.

Adults Can

- Sing nursery rhymes with actions like 'in-cey-wincey-spider'. Play games like 'pat-a-cake' and 'peek-a-boo'. These connect words to actions and help children to understand and remember words. Games with 'more' or 'again' can also help attention and communication.
- Toys and objects that make a noise, noisy books and tapes help children's attention and listening skills.
- Talk to children about what you are doing, such as 'Maggy is putting shoes on'. This will help them to connect words to the world around them.
- If children are pointing at something, tell them what it is. If they try to say the word, say it back to them.
- Name the objects children sees. This could be their toys, clothes, parts of their body or household objects. The more children hear a word, the quicker they will remember it.

Crocodiles

18 – 24 months

Children Can:

- Concentrate on activities for longer, like playing with a particular toy.
- Sit and listen to simple stories with pictures.
- Understand between 200 and 500 words.
- Understand more simple questions and instructions. For example 'where is your shoe?' and 'show me your nose'.
- Copy sounds and words a lot.
- Use 50 or more single words. These will also become more recognisable to others.

- Start to put short sentences together with 2-3 words, such as 'more juice' or 'bye nanny'.
- Enjoy pretend play with their toys, such as feeding dolly.
- Use a limited number of sounds in their words – often these are p, b, t, d, m and w. Children will also often miss the ends off words at this stage. They can usually be understood about half of the time.

Adults Can:

- Talk about everyday activities like chopping the fruit. This helps children to connect language to the world around them.
- Use objects and gestures to help them understand instructions and questions. It is also useful to give a child two or three options, such as, 'do you want **blocks** or the **car**?', 'is this your **nose** or your **foot**?'
- Read books together. Looking at the pictures and describing them is just as good as actually reading the story. 'Lift-the-flap' books also help concentration.
- Repeat and expand on what a child says. If a child says 'juice' you can say 'more juice', 'juice please' or 'juice gone'. This shows children how words can be put together to make short sentences.
- Children learn speech sounds gradually. It is better to say the whole word back to a child rather than correcting them. It also helps them if they can see your face when you are talking to them. This helps them to watch and copy the movements of your lips.
- Children can be frustrated when adults don't understand them. Encouraging a child to use gestures or actions for objects can help. Try to be patient and wait for them to finish what they are saying or trying to show you.

Armadillos and Leopards

2 – 3 Years

Children can

- Listen to and remember simple stories with pictures.
- Understand longer instructions, such as 'make teddy jump' or 'where's Francesca's coat?'
- Understand simple 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions.
- Use up to 300 words.
- Put 4 or 5 words together to make short sentences, such as 'want more juice' or 'he took my ball'.
- Ask lots of questions. They will want to find out the name of things and learn new words.
- Use action words as well as nouns, such as 'run' and 'fall'.
- Start to use simple plurals by adding 's', for example 'shoes' or 'cars'.
- Use a wider range of speech sounds. However, many children will shorten longer words, such as saying 'nana' instead of 'banana'. They may also have difficulty where lots of sounds happen together in a word, e.g. they may say 'pider' instead of 'spider.'
- Often have problems saying more difficult sounds like sh, ch, th and r. However, people that know them can mostly understand them.
- Now play more with other children and share things.
- Sometimes sound as if they are stammering or stuttering. They are usually trying to share their ideas before their language skills are ready. This is perfectly normal, just show you are listening and give them plenty of time.

Adults Can

- Adding words to children's sentences can show them how words fit together. For example, if a child says 'dolly hair' you can say 'brush dolly's hair'.
- Often children enjoy helping. Sharing daily jobs gives a chance to talk about objects and actions.
- Use puppets and pictures to help children listen to stories. Don't be afraid to tell a story more than once. Repetition helps children to understand and remember words.
- Give children the correct example for sounds and words. This helps if they are having problems saying a certain word or sound. If you correct them or make them say it again, you can make them feel anxious. Simply repeat what they have said using the right words and sounds. With time they will be able to do it themselves.

Leopards and Giraffes

3 – 4 Years

Children Can:

- Listen to longer stories and answer questions about a storybook they have just read.
- Understand and often use colour, number and time related words, for example, 'red' car, 'three' fingers and 'yesterday / tomorrow'.
- Be able to answer questions about 'why' something has happened.
- Use longer sentences and link sentences together.
- Describe events that have already happened e.g. 'we went park.'
- Enjoy make-believe play.
- Start to like simple jokes.
- Ask many questions using words like 'what' 'where' and 'why'.
- Still make mistakes with tense such as say 'runned' for 'ran' and 'swimmed' for 'swam'.
- Have difficulties with a small number of sounds – for example r, w, l, f, th, sh, ch and dz.
- Start to be able to plan games with others.

Adults Can

- Have a special time to talk about the day. Talking about what has happened that day will help their memory skills. It will also help them to talk about things they cannot see and things that happened in the past.
- Wherever possible, use pictures, objects, puppets, acting, gestures and facial expressions. This will keep a child's interest.
- Talk about or play games involving opposites like 'on and off' or 'big and little'.
- Join a child in pretend play. Let them take the lead. This will help their language and creativity. Talk about what they are saying and doing rather than asking lots of questions. This helps their language skills and shows you are listening and interested.
- Reversing roles can be great fun for a child. Let them be the 'mummy' or the 'teacher'. This helps them to talk about new situations.
- Play with and talk about sequences of coloured bricks or shapes, numbers and days of the week.