



Development of Speech Sounds in Children

As children grow, their ability to talk in understandable language develops slowly from saying individual speech sounds to parts of words and full words. A person's way of speaking is called **articulation**. Clear articulation of distinct word parts is important for clear speech.

All children develop speech at different rates. The following guidelines give you an estimate of when children should develop the ability to say different speech sounds:

Birth to 6 months

- Babbles to get attention (e.g. ma, da).
- Uses consonants (e.g. p, b, m).
- Makes many different sounds (e.g. laughing, gurgling, cooing).

10 months to 1 year

- Says four or more different sounds more clearly.
- Tries to imitate some sounds.
- Uses babbling syllables (e.g., dada, baba, gaga).
- Repeats sequence of sounds over and over.
- Uses jargon that sounds like real speech. It seems like he or she is talking, but there are no true words.

18 months to 2 years

- Imitates sounds and words more accurately.

18 months to 4 years

- By 3 years of age, those who spend time with the child can understand the child's speech even though there may still be many speech errors.
- By 4 years of age, most people should understand approximately 80% of the child's spoken language.
- Says sounds more clearly.
- Sounds include: k, g, d, f, y, p, b, m, h, n, and w.

2 years to 6 years

- Sounds include: t, ng.

3 years to 7 years

- Sounds include: r, l, and s.

3½ years to 7 years

- Sounds include: ch, sh, and z.

4 years to 8 years

- Sounds include: j, v

4½ years to 7 years

- Sounds include: voiceless th (e.g. thank, thorn, thistle).

5 years to 8 years

- Sounds include: zh (e.g. measure); voiced th (e.g. this, that, father).

For more information, contact the Manitoba Speech and Hearing Association.