Speech and Language Development during Elementary School

By the end of kindergarten your child should be able to do the following:

Listening

- Follow 1-2 simple directions in a sequence
- Listen to and understand age-appropriate stories read aloud
- Follow a simple conversation

Speaking

- Be understood by most people
- Answer simple 'yes/no' questions
- Answer open-ended questions (e.g., 'What did you have for lunch today?')
- Retell a story or talk about an event
- Participate appropriately in conversations
- Show interest in and start conversations

Reading

- Know how a book works (e.g., read from left to right and top to bottom in English)
- Understand that spoken words are made up of sounds
- Identify words that rhyme (e.g., cat and hat)
- Compare and match words based on their sounds
- Understand that letters represent speech sounds and match sounds to letters
- Identify upper- and lowercase letters
- Recognize some words by sight
- 'Read' a few picture books from memory
- Imitate reading by talking about pictures in a book

Writing

- Print own first and last name
- Draw a picture that tells a story and label and write about the picture
- Write upper- and lowercase letters (may not be clearly written)

By the end of first grade your child should be able to do the following:

Listening

- Remember information
• Respond to instructions
• Follow 2-3 step directions in a sequence

**Speaking**

• Be easily understood
• Answer more complex 'yes/no' questions
• Tell and retell stories and events in a logical order
• Express ideas with a variety of complete sentences
• Use most parts of speech (grammar) correctly
• Ask and respond to 'wh' questions (who, what, where, when, why)
• Stay on topic and take turns in conversation
• Give directions
• Start conversations

**Reading**

• Create rhyming words
• Identify all sounds in short words
• Blend separate sounds to form words
• Match spoken words with print
• Know how a book works (e.g., read from left to right and top to bottom in English)
• Identify letters, words, and sentences
• Sound out words when reading
• Have a sight vocabulary of 100 common words
• Read grade-level material fluently
• Understand what is read

**Writing**

• Express ideas through writing
• Print clearly
• Spell frequently used words correctly
• Begin each sentence with capital letters and use ending punctuation
• Write a variety of stories, journal entries, or letters/notes

*By the end of second grade your child should be able to do the following:*

**Listening**

• Follow 3-4 oral directions in a sequence
• Understand direction words (e.g., location, space, and time words)
• Correctly answer questions about a grade-level story
Speaking

- Be easily understood
- Answer more complex 'yes/no' questions
- Ask and answer 'wh' questions (e.g., who, what, where, when, why)
- Use increasingly complex sentence structures
- Clarify and explain words and ideas
- Give directions with 3-4 steps
- Use oral language to inform, to persuade, and to entertain
- Stay on topic, take turns, and use appropriate eye contact during conversation
- Open and close conversation appropriately

Reading

- Have fully mastered phonics/sound awareness
- Associate speech sounds, syllables, words, and phrases with their written forms
- Recognize many words by sight
- Use meaning clues when reading (e.g., pictures, titles/headings, information in the story)
- Reread and self-correct when necessary
- Locate information to answer questions
- Explain key elements of a story (e.g., main idea, main characters, plot)
- Use own experience to predict and justify what will happen in grade-level stories
- Read, paraphrase/retell a story in a sequence
- Read grade-level stories, poetry, or dramatic text silently and aloud with fluency
- Read spontaneously
- Identify and use spelling patterns in words when reading

Writing

- Write legibly
- Use a variety of sentence types in writing essays, poetry, or short stories (fiction and nonfiction)
- Use basic punctuation and capitalization appropriately
- Organize writing to include beginning, middle, and end
- Spell frequently used words correctly
- Progress from inventive spelling (e.g., spelling by sound) to more accurate spelling

By the end of third grade your child should be able to do the following:

Listening

- Listen attentively in group situations
- Understand grade-level material
Speaking

- Speak clearly with an appropriate voice
- Ask and respond to questions
- Participate in conversations and group discussions
- Use subject-related vocabulary
- Stay on topic, use appropriate eye contact, and take turns in conversation
- Summarize a story accurately
- Explain what has been learned

Reading

- Demonstrate full mastery of basic phonics
- Use word analysis skills when reading
- Use clues from language content and structure to help understand what is read
- Predict and justify what will happen next in stories and compare and contrast stories
- Ask and answer questions regarding reading material
- Use acquired information to learn about new topics
- Read grade-level books fluently (fiction and nonfiction)
- Reread and correct errors when necessary

Writing

- Plan, organize, revise, and edit
- Include details in writing
- Write stories, letters, simple explanations, and brief reports
- Spell simple words correctly, correct most spelling independently, and use a dictionary to correct spelling
- Write clearly in cursive

By the end of fourth grade your child should be able to do the following:

Listening

- Listen to and understand information presented by others
- Form opinions based on evidence
- Listen for specific purposes

Speaking

- Use words appropriately in conversation
- Use language effectively for a variety of purposes
- Understand some figurative language (e.g., 'the forest stretched across')
- Participate in group discussions
• Give accurate directions to others
• Summarize and restate ideas
• Organize information for clarity
• Use subject area information and vocabulary (e.g., social studies) for learning
• Make effective oral presentations

**Reading**

• Read for specific purposes
• Read grade-level books fluently
• Use previously learned information to understand new material
• Follow written directions
• Take brief notes
• Link information learned to different subjects
• Learn meanings of new words through knowledge of word origins, synonyms, and multiple meanings
• Use reference materials (e.g., dictionary)
• Explain the author’s purpose and writing style
• Read and understand a variety of types of literature, including fiction, nonfiction, historical fiction, and poetry
• Compare and contrast in content areas
• Make inferences from texts
• Paraphrase content, including the main idea and details

**Writing**

• Write effective stories and explanations, including several paragraphs about the same topic
• Develop a plan for writing, including a beginning, middle, and end
• Organize writing to convey a central idea
• Edit final copies for grammar, punctuation, and spelling

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*By the end of fifth grade your child should be able to do the following:*

**Listening**

• Listen and draw conclusions in subject area learning activities

**Speaking**

• Make planned oral presentations appropriate to the audience
• Maintain eye contact and use gestures, facial expressions, and appropriate voice during group presentations
• Participate in class discussions across subject areas
• Summarize main points
• Report about information gathered in group activities

Reading

• Read grade-level books fluently
• Learn meanings of unfamiliar words through knowledge of root words, prefixes, and suffixes
• Prioritize information according to the purpose of reading
• Read a variety of literary forms
• Describe development of character and plot
• Describe characteristics of poetry
• Analyze author’s language and style
• Use reference materials to support opinions

Writing

• Write for a variety of purposes
• Use vocabulary effectively
• Vary sentence structure
• Revise writing for clarity
• Edit final copies

Suggestions for Parents and Caregivers

...in early elementary grades (K-2):

• Talk with your child frequently
• Read a variety of books; read often and talk with your child about the story
• Help your child focus on sound patterns of words such as those found in rhyming games
• Have your child retell stories and talk about events of the day
• Talk with your child during daily activities; give directions for your child to follow (e.g., making cookies)
• Talk about how things are alike and different
• Give your child reasons and opportunities to write

...in later elementary grades (3-5):

• Continue to encourage reading; find reading material that is of interest to your child
• Encourage your child to form opinions about what he or she hears or reads and relate what is read to experiences
• Help your child make connections between what is read and heard at school, at home, and in other daily activities
• Talk aloud as you help your child understand and solve problems encountered in reading material
Help your child recognize spelling patterns, such as beginnings and endings of words (e.g., pre- or -ment)
Encourage your child to write letters, keep a diary, or write stories