

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)
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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

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