

Your 5 Year Old

Speech and Language Tips



Talk Box

5 year olds have conversations and tell stories.

By the time your child is 5 years old, they've learned basic sentences and most speech sounds. They'll still make some mistakes when talking. That's OK. They have lots to learn, like more speech sounds, new words, and more complex sentences.

How children learn language

Children learn language through everyday conversations and in almost everything they do. They learn new words, new sentences, and how to play with language. Talk, read, and sing with your child in the language or languages you use at home.



Try these tips in your language

Talking tips

- **Use complete sentences when you talk to your child.** This will encourage them to use complete sentences too.
- **Use lots of describing words when you are talking.** Talk about the size, shape, colour, and use of things. You might say, "Let's go get some long, yellow bananas. I like to eat sweet bananas. What do you like about bananas?"

Listening tips

- **Say your child's name to get their attention.** Say, "Beth, are you ready? I have something to tell you."
- **Use descriptive words when giving directions.** Use colour, number, and location (behind, between, in) words. You might say, "Can you put one red apple in the basket?"
- **When you tell your child what to do, show them at the same time.**
- **Encourage your child to ask questions or ask you to repeat something when they don't understand.** This shows that they are listening.

Activities to try



Children learn by doing

- **Visit different places.** This helps your child learn new words. Going to the library, community center, grocery store, or playground lets you use different words.
- **Involve your child in group activities.** Playing at the playground or other group activities help your child learn how to listen in a group, make friends, and take turns. Group activities give your child a chance to practice waiting and taking turns.
- **Play games like I Spy and Simon Says.** These games help your child listen, use describing words, group things together, and take turns.



Children learn by reading

Reading and language go together. Reading helps your child learn to talk and listen. Talking and listening help make reading and writing easier. All of these skills are important in school. Here are some tips to keep reading fun:

- **Read books with your child every day.** It's OK to read the same book every night for several weeks if your child likes it.
- **Choose books with lots of pictures and not too many words.** Have fun talking about the pictures.
- **Let your child finish a sentence in a familiar story.** For example, if you are reading *The Three Little Pigs*, you could read "Little pig, little pig, let me come in." Let your child finish with "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."
- **Choose books that have lots of rhyming words.** Point out the words that rhyme by saying, "Hop, pop. These words rhyme. They sound the same at the end."
- **Talk about how longer words are made up of smaller parts.** For examples, "elephant" made up of smaller parts or syllables (e + le + phant). Clap, tap, or stomp out the parts of the word with your child.

Screens and your child

Children learn language best from taking turns. Time spent on a screen is a missed chance to talk. Minimize screen time. Screen time is using a tablet, phone, television, or other screen. To learn more about screen time, ask a healthcare provider or visit the Canadian Paediatric Society.

Some children use apps or devices to communicate, which is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication. These programs are designed to support communication and are not considered screen time.



What to expect

5 year olds:

- understand words for concepts like colours, shapes, locations, textures (like rough or soft), time (like next or after), and numbers.
- use present, future, and past tenses. For example, “She walks to the park. She will walk to the park. She walked to the park.”
- retell a story by naming the characters and talking about what happened.
- take turns in a conversation, interrupt less, and look at the person who is speaking.
- can find the front of the book and its title. They pretend to read the story in a way that sounds like they are really reading.

6 year olds:

- listen for 15 to 20 minutes.
- understand words like before and after, first, second, and third.
- speak in sentences that are 6 to 7 words long.
- tell who was in a story, where the story took place, and what happened.
- know how their friends are feeling and tell you how they’re feeling.
- use different ways to help with reading a story like predicting what will happen, asking questions, or using pictures.

5 year olds:

- use the following sounds correctly: p, b, m, d, n, h, w, g, k, f, t, ng (as in sing), y, s, z, l, sh, ch, j and v.
- may also be using sounds like: r, zh (as in measure), and th (as in the).
- are understood by everyone almost all of the time.
- can clap out syllables or count syllables, like truck has one syllable and caterpillar has 4 syllables.

When to get help

Reach out for help if your child:

- speaks only in very short sentences.
- makes a lot of mistakes when talking in sentences.
- is hard to understand.
- has trouble following directions.
- has trouble understanding what people say.
- uses vague words like stuff or thing and points instead of using the right word.

Where to get help

Are you concerned about your child's speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. For more information go to: AHS.ca/PedRehab

For more ideas

- hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Parent-Tips.aspx
- firstwords.ca



It's never too early to help your child with speech and language development.