

Stage	Listening and Attention	Understanding (Receptive Language)	Talking (Expressive Language)	Social Communication
0-11 months	Turns toward a familiar sound then locates range of sounds with accuracy. Listens to, distinguishes and responds to intonations and sounds of voices. Quietens or alerts to the sound of speech. Fleeting Attention – not under child's control, new stimuli takes whole attention.	Stops and looks when hears own name.	Gradually develops speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults; says sounds like 'baba, nono, gogo'.	Gazes at faces and copies facial movements, eg. sticking out tongue. Concentrates intently on faces and enjoys interaction. Uses voice, gesture, eye contact and facial expression to make contact with people and keep their attention.
8-20 months	Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing for short periods. Pays attention to dominant stimulus – easily distracted by noises or other people talking. Moves whole bodies to sounds they enjoy, such as music or a regular beat. Has a strong exploratory impulse.	Responds to the different things said when in a familiar context with a special person (e.g. 'Where's Mummy?', 'Where's your nose?'). Understanding of single words in context is developing, e.g. 'cup', 'milk', 'daddy'	Uses single words. Frequently imitates words and sounds. Enjoys babbling and increasingly experiments with using sounds and words to communicate for a range of purposes (e.g. <i>teddy, more, no, bye-bye</i>)	Likes being with familiar adult and watching them. Developing the ability to follow an adult's body language, including pointing and gesture. Learns that their voice and actions have effects on others. Uses pointing with eye gaze to make requests, and to share an interest.
16-26 months	Listens to and enjoys rhythmic patterns in rhymes and stories. Enjoys rhymes and demonstrates listening by trying to join in with actions or vocalisations. Rigid attention – may appear not to hear.	Selects familiar objects by name and will go and find objects when asked, or identify objects from a group.	Beginning to put two words together (e.g. 'want ball', 'more juice') Uses different types of everyday words (nouns, verbs and adjectives, e.g. <i>banana, go, sleep, hot</i>) Beginning to ask simple questions.	Gradually able to engage in 'pretend' play with toys (supports child to imagine another's point of view). Looks to others for responses which confirm, contribute to, or challenge their understanding.
22-36 months	Single channelled attention. Can shift to a different task if attention fully obtained – using child's name helps focus. Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories. Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door.	Identifies action words by pointing to the right picture, e.g., "Who's jumping?" Understands 'who', 'what', 'where' in simple questions (e.g. <i>Who's that/can? What's that? Where is.?</i>). Developing understanding of simple concepts (e.g. <i>big/little</i>)	Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating. Uses action, sometimes with limited talk, that is largely concerned with the 'here and now' (e.g. reaches toward toy, saying 'I have it'). Uses a variety of questions (e.g. <i>what, where, who</i>). Uses simple sentences (e.g. 'Mummy gonna work.')	Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences and thoughts. Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic. Enjoys being with and talking to adults and other children. Interested in others' play and will join in. Responds to the feelings of others.
30-50 months	Listens to others in one to one or small groups, when conversation interests them. Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. Focusing attention – still listen or do, but can shift own attention. Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity).	Understands use of objects (e.g. "What do we use to cut things?") Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture. Beginning to understand 'why' and 'how' questions.	Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g. using <i>and, because</i>). Can retell a simple past event in correct order (e.g. <i>went down slide, hurt finger</i>). Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences. Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks e.g. <i>who, what, when, how</i> . Uses a range of tenses (e.g. <i>play, playing, will play, played</i>)	Beginning to accept the needs of others, with support. Can initiate conversations. Shows confidence in linking up with others for support and guidance. Talks freely about their home and community. Forms friendships with other children.
40-60+ months	Sustains attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions. Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly when appropriate. Two-channelled attention – can listen and do for short span. Integrated attention – can listen and do in range of situations with range of people; varies according to the demands of the task.	Understands humour, e.g. nonsense rhymes, jokes. Demonstrates understanding of "how?" and "why?" questions by giving explanations. Able to follow a story without pictures or props. Understands instructions containing sequencing words; first...after...last, and more abstract concepts – long, short, tall, hard soft, rough.	Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words. Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention. Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations. Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events. Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play.	Has confidence to speak to others about their own wants, interests and opinions. Initiates conversation, attends to and takes account of what others say. Explains own knowledge and understanding, and asks appropriate questions of others. Shows awareness of the listener when speaking. Expresses needs / feelings in appropriate ways. Forms good relationships with adults and peers. Works as part of a group or class, taking turns