What Is Communication and Language Development

Children grow and develop rapidly in their first five years across the four main areas of development. These areas are motor (physical), communication and language, cognitive, and social and emotional.

Communication and language development is about more than talking. It means all the different ways a child understands and communicates, only part of which are spoken words.

Communication and language development is important, because speaking is an indicator of fine motor skill development and a reflection of cognitive development.

Reading is one of the best ways to encourage communication and language development. As an infant, hearing words and seeing pictures helps a child understand the two are connected. This lays a foundation for speech, which begins around nine months and typically increases as a child grows.

Parents and caregivers play a big role in a child’s communication and language development. Here are some suggestions for how to encourage this development:

- Answer when your baby makes sounds. This will help him/her learn to use language.
- Read to your baby. This will help him/her develop and understand language and sounds.
- Help to develop your toddler’s language by talking with him/her and adding words. For example, if your toddler says “baba,” you can respond, “Yes, you are right – that is a bottle.”
- Encourage your child to tell you his/her name and age.
- Teach your child simple songs like “Itsy Bitsy Spider,” or other cultural childhood rhymes.
- Help your child develop good language skills by speaking in complete sentences and using "grown-up" words. Help your child to use the correct words and phrases.

For more information on how to encourage and support a child’s development, visit the Communication and Language page.