

## IS MY CHILD'S SPEECH OR LANGUAGE DELAYED?

Parents are often the first adults to notice a possible delay in their child's speech or language development. Your child's speech may not be clear. Or, your child may use shorter sentences than other children the same age. This observation generally leads to three questions:

**Is my child's speech or language delayed?**  
Speech skills are different from language skills.

Language refers to the use of words and sentences to convey ideas. Speech is the production of sounds that make up the words and sentences.

Using developmental milestones, such as those listed below, you can compare your child's development with that of other children the same age.

Use caution when applying any measure of development to your child. Individual differences or special circumstances need to be accounted for.

### Milestones of Speech and Language Development

- One year old children should be able to understand a variety of words and should be using a few single words.
- By age two, words should be combined into two and three word phrases and sentences.
- Between the ages of three and five, children learn to carry on a conversation, ask and answer questions, follow and give directions, and speak alone in the presence of a group. These skills are important to success in kindergarten.
- After age five, sentences become increasingly complex. Children begin using words like "when," "while," and "since" to relate two or more ideas in a single sentence.

The language level used by teachers and text books assumes that children have these skills by the age of seven or eight.

- As a rule, children use understandable speech by age four and use all speech sounds correctly by age five to seven.



### At what point should I be concerned about my child's development?

Both social and academic success depend on well developed speech and language skills. Your child may be having difficulty developing these skills if:

1. Your child has experienced ear infections or an unusually long stay (six months or more) in the hospital.
2. The child is not understood by playmates or others outside the immediate family.
3. The child is frustrated when trying to communicate and the situation does not improve over a one or two month period.
4. There is a *delay* of one year or more in developing speech and language skills. For example:

#### *Three year old:*

- Says only one or two words at a time.
- Cannot answer "what" or "who" questions;
- Speech is not comprehensible except in context.
- Does not seem to hear or understand all that is said; seems to "tune out" what others say.
- Does not start conversations. Speaks only when spoken to.

- Does not understand spoken directions without visual assistance from pointing and other gestures.
- Repeats what others say rather than responding.

**Four year old:**

- Talks in only two or three word phrases. Word order is poor.
- Cannot answer simple "what", "where", or "why" questions.
- Sentences or words are jumbled and disordered – hard to understand.
- Does not talk to peers or adults unless prodded, and then talks as little as possible.
- Does not respond to simple two-step directions.
- Cannot listen to two or three lines of a story and answer simple questions about what was read.

**Five year old:**

- Talks in only three or four words sentences about present events.
- Cannot answer questions about "yesterday" or "tomorrow". Cannot answer "how" questions".
- Poor articulation is still a problem. Child's speech is unclear.
- Talks a great deal, but remarks may not be relevant to the situation.
- Has trouble sitting and listening to story of more than four or five sentences without "tuning out".

**What can I do about my child's speech and language problem?**

If your child is in school confer with his/her classroom teacher who may refer your child to the School Based Team.

If your child is in preschool first discuss your concerns with your family doctor. He or she may then refer your child to a Speech/Language pathologist.

**WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROMOTE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AT HOME:**

**Talk with your child when you are driving from place to place. Talk about:**

- ⊙ what you see
- ⊙ road safety
- ⊙ buildings and the people in them

**Take mini field trips to:**

- ⊙ a pet store
- ⊙ post office
- ⊙ Old McDonald's Farm
- ⊙ Butterfly World

**Make a scrapbook with your child - make a page of:**

- ⊙ colours
- ⊙ foods
- ⊙ community helpers
- ⊙ cars
- ⊙ animals
- ⊙ furniture

**When looking at books with your child encourage thinking skills by asking him or her:**

- What? .When? .Where?
- Who? How?

**Take advantage of your library.**

Find out what special services are available (story hours, films, special displays, etc.).

**Choose T.V. shows your child watches and whenever possible watch them with your child so you can:**

- ⊙ discuss different aspects of the show
- ⊙ make predictions about what will or might have happened
- ⊙ talk about what is happening

**When you are shopping, take some time to talk about the things you are buying:**

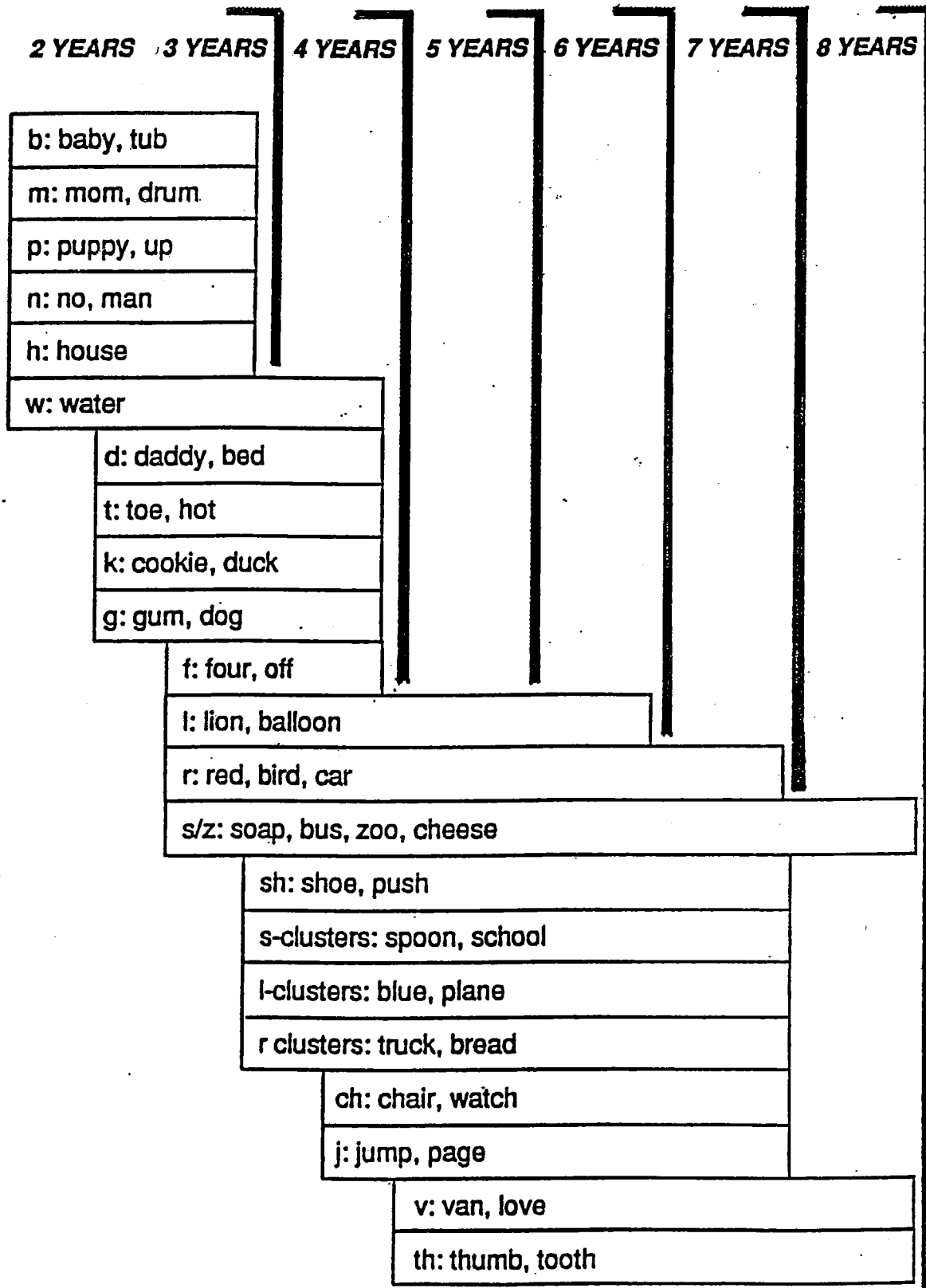
- ⊙ are they fruit, vegetables, dairy foods
- ⊙ point to size, shape, and colour of products
- ⊙ ask child to identify the numbers on the price tags or letters on the labels

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***Read to Your Child EVERY NIGHT***

# SPEECH SOUND DEVELOPMENT CHART

*Each bar ends where 90% of children use that sound*



*Adapted from Vancouver Health Department*

3