### Language Development by Age Band (Birth to 18 Years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth – 6 Months</th>
<th>6 – 12 Months</th>
<th>12 – 18 Months</th>
<th>18 – 24 Months</th>
<th>24 – 36 Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The child is able to...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Show a preference for looking toward people's eyes and faces</td>
<td>- Shift their eye gaze between people and objects</td>
<td>- Respond to others by looking and listening</td>
<td>- Use a variety of gestures, facial expressions and sounds across people and settings</td>
<td>- Use and understand combinations of words (e.g., Mommy go outside)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Respond to a caregiver’s voice by looking and listening</td>
<td>- Share emotions by looking at others, smiling, and using facial expressions</td>
<td>- Pair gestures with sounds and words to direct communication</td>
<td>- Use single words for not only object labels, but also people's names, action words, modifiers, and relational words (e.g., up, down, in)</td>
<td>- Express and share simple emotions with words (e.g., Mommy is happy, I am mad)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Smile in response to caregiver</td>
<td>- Use their sounds and babbles to gain attention</td>
<td>- Communicate nonverbally for many reasons (e.g., requesting, protesting, and starting social games).</td>
<td>- Take turns within interactions with others</td>
<td>- Request a soothing activity when distressed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Vocalize and babble in a back and forth manner</td>
<td>- Pair gestures with eye contact</td>
<td>- Use a range of gestures such as giving, showing, waving, pointing, and shaking one's head</td>
<td>- Communicate for many reasons (e.g., seeking comfort, greeting others, showing off)</td>
<td>- Request assistance from others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Communicate frequently with others to request and protest</td>
<td>- Recognize a caregiver’s emotion (e.g., mirroring sadness, happiness)</td>
<td>- Share their enjoyment and interests with eye contact, smiles and sounds</td>
<td>- Use simple self-regulatory language to maintain engagement within an activity (e.g., “first...then”)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Share what interests them with gestures, sounds and eye contact</td>
<td>- Imitate sounds and simple words</td>
<td>- Demonstrate play actions with toys (e.g. pour a drink, feed a doll, put baby to bed)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Participate in social routines such as peek-a-boo</td>
<td>- Use early ritualized words such as “bye” and “no”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Imitate simple sounds and actions demonstrated by others (e.g. clapping, waving, silly sounds)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Look up and/or turn towards the sound of their name being called</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table was developed by Pileggi, Rubin, Farran & Weldon (2018) based on information from Gard, Gilman, & Gorman (1993), Prizant, Wetherby, Rubin, Laurent & Rydell (2006), and Russell (2007). Updated: September 2021
### Language Development by Age Band (Birth to 18 Years)

#### 3 – 4 Years

The child is able to...

- Understand and use more multi-word combinations including people’s names, verbs, and nouns.
- Understand and use more sophisticated grammar (e.g., pronouns, possessives, tense)
- Request a break and/or soothing items when distressed
- Use self-regulatory language to talk through transitions between activities
- Recognize and describe emotions of oneself and others

#### 4 – 5 Years

The child is able to...

- Use a range of creative language, including both simple and complex sentences
- Engage in short dialogues, such as recalling past events or simple stories
- Use some politeness terms or markers (e.g., please, thank you)
- Determine causes for emotions of self and others
- Use self-regulatory language to talk through more extended activities (e.g., multi-step instructions)
- Recognize and repair breakdowns in communication and express remorse

#### 6 – 11 Years

The child is able to...

- Engage in conversation by staying on topic for extended interactions
- Balance comments and requests for information
- Adapt tone of voice to different listeners (e.g., adults versus peers)
- Provide essential background information based upon listener’s perspective
- Initiate and maintain conversations that are related to the topic and the interests of others
- Think about the conversational partner’s likes, dislikes and emotions
- Tell stories and enact social sequences role playing and visualizing an event before it takes place
- Use self-regulatory language to talk through multi-step activities and plan for future events

#### 12 – 18 Years

The adolescent is able to...

- Understand and use nonverbal gestures, facial expressions, and gaze to express and follow subtle intentions (e.g., sarcasm and other nonliteral meanings)
- Understand and use tones of voice to express and follow emotional states
- Understand and use more sophisticated language (e.g. word choice) to provide background information for one’s listener
- Understand and use more sophisticated language to describe relationships within conversation
- Understand reading passages and use written expression to share experiences
- Problem solve and self-monitor future, goal-directed, behavior (i.e., executive functioning)
- Perceive one’s actions within social events and predict social behavior in others in order to self-monitor
- Effectively negotiate and collaborate within interactions with adults and peers

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