Stages of Speech and Language Development.

The following information provides some of the major characteristics of language development as the child develops. The examples are key points of what to expect of a typical child through the various stages of language development from birth to five years.

Birth to 6 months

- ☐ Startles and/or react to loud sounds
- ☐ Is soothed by calm gentle voices
- ☐ Demonstrates pleasure and displeasure sounds i.e. grunts, laughs, giggles, cries
- ☐ Is able to drink well form a bottle or breast
- ☐ Watches your face with interest when you talk

6 - 11 months

- ☐ Demonstrates understanding of "no, no"
- ☐ Demonstrates attempts to say sounds and words i.e. 'baba, nana"
- ☐ Tries to communicate by actions or gestures.
- ☐ Begins to try to repeat your sounds

12 - 17 months

- ☐ Will attend to a book or toy for about two minutes.
- ☐ Follows and understands simple directions/statements accompanied by gestures e.g. 'give me'
- ☐ Answers simple questions nonverbally. i.e. "Where's your nose?"
- ☐ Will point to objects, pictures, and family members.
- ☐ Says some words i.e. to label an object or person (pronunciation may not be clear).
- ☐ Tries to imitate simple words.

18 - 23 months

- ☐ Enjoys being read to.
- ☐ Follows simple commands without gestures.
- ☐ Can ask for a simple item i.e. biscuit or toy
- ☐ Understands simple verbs such as "eat," "sleep."
- ☐ Correctly pronounces most vowels and n, m, p, h, especially in the beginning of syllables and short words. Also begins to use other speech sounds.
- ☐ Says some two word sentences such as "all gone"; "me go"; "more drink"
- ☐ Understands more words that can say

2 - 3 years

- ☐ Knows about 50 words at 24 months.
- ☐ Can demonstrate some spatial concepts such as "in", "on", "under"
- ☐ Knows pronouns such as "you," "me," "her."
- ☐ Knows descriptive words such as "big," "happy."
- ☐ Says around 40 words at 24 months.
- ☐ Speech production is becoming more accurate but some ending sounds may still be omitted
- ☐ Answers simple questions e.g. "Which is the big car?"; "What's your name?"
- ☐ Begins to use more pronouns such as "you," "I."
- ☐ Combines words in two to three word phrases.

3 – 4 years

- ☐ Is able to follow two related directions e.g. "get the cup and bring to me"
- ☐ Is able to group objects such as foods, clothes, etc.
- ☐ Is able to identify colours
- ☐ Demonstrates use of most speech sounds but may still distort some of the more difficult sounds such as l, r, s, sh, ch, y, v, z, th.
- ☐ Uses consonants in the beginning, middle, and ends of words. Some of the more difficult consonants may be distorted, but attempts to say them.
- ☐ Strangers are able to understand much of what is said.
- ☐ Can answer simple questions that describe the use of objects such as "fork," "car," etc.
- ☐ Asks many questions e.g. "What?", "Where?", "Why?"
- ☐ Uses sentences that are usually three and four words long
- ☐ Uses verbs that end in "ing," such as "walking," "talking."
- ☐ Answers simple questions such as "What do you do when you are hungry?"

4 – 5 years

- ☐ Demonstrates understanding of spatial concepts such as "behind," 'next to', 'top', bottom'.
- ☐ Understands complex questions such as "What do you do when you're thirsty?"
- ☐ Speech is intelligible but may make mistakes pronouncing long, difficult, or complex words such as "hippopotamus."
- ☐ Says about 200 - 300 different words.
- ☐ Uses some irregular past tense verbs such as "ran," "fell."
- ☐ Describes how to do things such as making a sandcastle.
- ☐ Is able to give the meanings of words.
- ☐ Answers "why" questions.
- ☐ Most speech sounds are accurate although some of the more difficult sounds such as l, r, s, sh, ch, y, v, z, th. Have still not yet fully mastered (The 'r', 'y' and 'l' can come as late as 8 years old).

5 years

- ☐ Understands more than 2,000 words.
- ☐ Demonstrates understanding of time i.e. what happened first, second, third, etc.
- ☐ Is able to carry out a series of three directions.
- ☐ Readily engages in conversation.
- ☐ Sentences can be 8 or more words in length.
- ☐ Will use compound and complex sentences.
- ☐ Uses imagination to create stories.