











Language Development

M I L E S T O N E S

Age	Phonology	Semantics	Grammar	Pragmatics	Metalinguistic Awareness
Birth–1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Categorical speech perception is present. ■ Speech sounds become organized into phonemic categories of native language. ■ Intonation and sound patterns of babbling begin to resemble those of native language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preference for sound pattern of native tongue is evident. ■ Sensitivity to stress patterns and phoneme sequences in words of native language develops. ■ Preverbal gestures develop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sensitivity to natural phrase units develops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Joint attention with caregiver is established. ■ Ability to engage in vocal exchanges and turn-taking games develops. 	
1–2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Systematic strategies to simplify word pronunciation appear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ First words are produced; vocabulary builds to several hundred words. ■ Object words are emphasized first; action and state words follow soon after. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two-word utterances, in the form of telegraphic speech, appear. ■ First grammatical morphemes are added. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conversational turn-taking and topic maintenance are present. 	
3–5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pronunciation improves greatly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Word-coinage forms expand. ■ Metaphors based on concrete, sensory comparisons appear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sentences clearly reflect an appreciation of adult grammatical categories. ■ Grammatical morphemes continue to be added in a regular order. ■ Many complex grammatical structures are added. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conversational strategies, such as the turnabout, appear. ■ Grasp of illocutionary intent is present. ■ Ability to adjust speech in accord with social expectations develops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The beginnings of metalinguistic awareness emerge. 
6–10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pronunciations signaling subtle differences in meaning are mastered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At school entry, vocabulary includes about 10,000 words. ■ Meanings of words are grasped on the basis of definitions. ■ Appreciation of multiple meanings of words enhances understanding of metaphors and humor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A few complex grammatical structures, such as the passive voice and infinitive phrases, continue to be refined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advanced conversational strategies, such as shading, appear. ■ Understanding of illocutionary intent expands. ■ Referential communication in unfamiliar, highly demanding contexts improves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Metalinguistic awareness develops rapidly. 
11 years–adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Changes in syllabic stress after certain difficult words take on endings are mastered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Vocabulary builds to over 40,000 words and includes many abstract terms. ■ Understanding of subtle, nonliteral word meanings, as in irony and sarcasm, improves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Refinement of complex grammatical structures continues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Referential communication—especially detection of unclear messages received—continues to improve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Metalinguistic awareness continues to be refined. 