



TODDLER

Toddler Language Development: Celebrate vs Ask for Help

Understanding your toddler's language milestones is essential for encouragement. This guide helps you celebrate progress while recognizing when to seek support for your child's communication skills. Keep this handy as you navigate this exciting journey!

A free guide from maternity.app

Your toddler's language development is an exciting journey, filled with milestones. Recognizing these milestones can help you celebrate their growth and understand when to seek help.

Celebrate key language milestones.

Every child develops at their own pace. Here are some important ages and milestones to watch for:

- **12 Months.** Your baby points to objects, responds to their name, imitates sounds, and says 1 or 2 simple words like "mama" or "dada."
- **18 Months.** Your toddler purposely uses at least 10–20 individual words and can follow simple, single-step commands without gestures.
- **24 Months.** They string 2-word phrases together (e.g., "more milk"), maintain a vocabulary of 50+ words, and are understood by familiar caregivers about 50% of the time.
- **36 Months.** They speak in 3 to 4-word sentences, ask "why" questions, and are easily understood by strangers most of the time.

Language milestones checklist.

- ☐ Celebrate at 12 Months: Recognize pointing and responding to their name.
- ☐ Celebrate at 18 Months: Ensure they use 10–20 words correctly.
- ☐ Celebrate at 24 Months: Confirm they can form 2-word phrases.
- ☐ Celebrate at 36 Months: Note their ability to form 3 to 4-word sentences.
- ☐ Ask for help if they don't respond to their name by 12 months.
- ☐ Ask for help if they use fewer than 6 words by 18 months.
- ☐ Ask for help if they cannot string 2 words together by age 2.
- ☐ Ask for help if they experience a sudden loss of verbal skills.

Understanding receptive and expressive language.

Pediatric speech-language pathology explains that language has two main parts: receptive language (understanding) and expressive language (speaking). Receptive language develops faster, which means your toddler might understand more than they can say.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

If your toddler does not respond to their name by 12 months, has fewer than 6 words by 18 months, cannot string 2 words together by age 2, or experiences a sudden loss of previously mastered verbal skills, reach out for help.

You're doing an amazing job navigating this journey with your child. Remember to celebrate their milestones while being mindful of when it's time to ask for help!