







Communication and Language: Listening and attention





	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	Enabling Environments: what adults could provide
 Birth - 11 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns toward a familiar sound then locates range of sounds with accuracy. • Listens to, distinguishes and responds to intonations and sounds of voices. • Reacts in interaction with others by smiling, looking and moving. • Quietens or alerts to the sound of speech. • Looks intently at a person talking, but stops responding if speaker turns away. • Listens to familiar sounds, words, or finger plays. • Fleeting Attention – not under child's control, new stimuli takes whole attention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being physically close, making eye contact, using touch or voice all provide ideal opportunities for early conversations between adults and babies, and between one baby and another. • Encourage playfulness, turn-taking and responses, including peek-a-boo and rhymes. • Use a lively voice, with ups and downs to help babies tune in. • Sing songs and rhymes during everyday routines. • Use repeated sounds, and words and phrases so babies can begin to recognise particular sounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share stories, songs and rhymes from all cultures and in babies' home languages. • Display photographs showing how young babies communicate. • Share favourite stories as babies are settling to sleep, or at other quiet times. • Plan times when you can sing with young babies, encouraging them to join in. • Create an environment which invites responses from babies and adults, for example, touching, smiling, smelling, feeling, listening, exploring, describing and sharing.
 8-20 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves whole bodies to sounds they enjoy, such as music or a regular beat. • Has a strong exploratory impulse. • Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing for short periods. • Pays attention to dominant stimulus – easily distracted by noises or other people talking. 		
 16-26 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to and enjoys rhythmic patterns in rhymes and stories. • Enjoys rhymes and demonstrates listening by trying to join in with actions or vocalisations. • Rigid attention – may appear not to hear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage young children to explore and imitate sound. • Talk about the different sounds they hear, such as a tractor's "chug chug" while sharing a book. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect resources that children can listen to and learn to distinguish between. These may include noises in the street, and games that involve guessing which object makes a particular sound
 22-36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories. • Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds, e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door. • Shows interest in play with sounds, songs and rhymes. • Single channelled attention. Can shift to a different task if attention fully obtained – using child's name helps focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage repetition, rhythm and rhyme by using tone and intonation as you tell, recite or sing stories, poems and rhymes from books. • Be aware of the needs of children learning English as an additional language from a variety of cultures and ask parents to share their favourites from their home languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep background noise to a minimum, e.g. use music or radio briefly only for particular purposes. • Use puppets and other props to encourage listening and responding when singing a familiar song or reading from a story book. • Encourage children to learn one another's names and to pronounce them correctly. • Ensure all staff can pronounce the names of children, parents and other staff members. Make sure that shortened names and nicknames are not substituted instead.

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.

Communication and Language: Listening and attention



	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	Enabling Environments: what adults could provide
 30-50 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to others one to one or in small groups, when conversation interests them. • Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. • Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. • Focusing attention – still listen or do, but can shift own attention. • Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model being a listener by listening to children and taking account of what they say in your responses to them. • Cue children, particularly those with communication difficulties, into a change of conversation, e.g. 'Now we are going to talk about...' • For those children who find it difficult to 'listen and do', say their name before giving an instruction or asking a question. • Share rhymes, books and stories from many cultures, sometimes using languages other than English, particularly where children are learning English as an additional language. Children then all hear a range of languages and recognise the skill needed to speak more than one. • Introduce 'rhyme time' bags containing books to take home and involve parents in rhymes and singing games. • Ask parents to record regional variations of songs and rhymes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When making up alliterative jingles, draw attention to the similarities in sounds at the beginning of words and emphasise the initial sound, e.g. "mmmmummy", "shshshshadow", "K-K-K-KKaty". • Plan activities listening carefully to different speech sounds, e.g. a sound chain copying the voice sound around the circle, or identifying other children's voices on tape. • Help children be aware of different voice sounds by using a mirror to see what their mouth and tongue do as they make different sounds. • When singing or saying rhymes, talk about the similarities in the rhyming words. Make up alternative endings and encourage children to supply the last word of the second line, e.g. 'Hickory Dickory boot, The mouse ran down the...' • Set up a listening area where children can enjoy rhymes and stories.
 40-60+ months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly during appropriate activity. • Two-channelled attention – can listen and do for short span. <p>Early Learning Goal Children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play games which involve listening for a signal, such as 'Simon Says', and use 'ready, steady...go!' • Use opportunities to stop and listen carefully for environmental sounds, and talk about sounds you can hear such as long, short, high, low. • Explain why it is important to pay attention when others are speaking. • Give children opportunities both to speak and to listen, ensuring that the needs of children learning English as an additional language are met, so that they can participate fully. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose stories with repeated refrains, dances and action songs involving looking and pointing, and songs that require replies and turn-taking such as 'Tommy Thumb'. • Plan regular short periods when individuals listen to others, such as singing a short song, sharing an experience or describing something they have seen or done. • Use sand timers to help extend concentration for children who find it difficult to focus their attention on a task.




Communication and Language: Understanding

	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	Enabling Environments: what adults could provide
 Birth - 11 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stops and looks when hears own name. Starts to understand contextual clues, e.g. familiar gestures, words and sounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at the baby and say their name. Make eye contact and wait for them to react. Interpret and give meaning to the things young babies show interest in, e.g. when babies point to an object tell them what it is. Talk to babies about what you are doing and what is happening, so they will link words with actions, e.g. preparing lunch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let babies see and hear the sequence of actions you go through as you carry out familiar routines. Provide resources that stimulate babies' interests such as a shiny bell, a book or a mirror. Display lists of words from different home languages, and invite parents and other adults to contribute. Include languages such as Romany and Creole, since seeing their languages reflected in the setting will encourage all parents to feel involved and valued. When you use nursery rhymes, help children understand the words by using actions as well.
 8-20 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing the ability to follow others' body language, including pointing and gesture. Responds to the different things said when in a familiar context with a special person (e.g. 'Where's Mummy?', 'Where's your nose?'). Understanding of single words in context is developing, e.g. 'cup', 'milk', 'daddy'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use actions to support your words, e.g. waving when you say 'bye bye'. Speak clearly. Babies respond well to a higher pitched, sing-song voice. Use and repeat single words, so the baby can gradually link the word to its meaning. 	
 16-26 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selects familiar objects by name and will go and find objects when asked, or identify objects from a group. Understands simple sentences (e.g. 'Throw the ball.') 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware that young children's understanding is much greater than their ability to express their thoughts and ideas. Recognise young children's competence and appreciate their efforts when they show their understanding of new words and phrases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan play activities and provide resources which encourage young children to engage in symbolic play, e.g. putting a 'baby' to bed and talking to it appropriately. Use pictures, books, real objects, and signs alongside your words.
 22-36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies action words by pointing to the right picture, e.g., "Who's jumping?" Understands more complex sentences, e.g. 'Put your toys away and then we'll read a book.' Understands 'who', 'what', 'where' in simple questions (e.g. Who's that/can? What's that? Where is.?). Developing understanding of simple concepts (e.g. big/little). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use talk to describe what children are doing by providing a running commentary, e.g. 'Oh, I can see what you are doing. You have to put the milk in the cup first.' Provide opportunities for children to talk with other children and adults about what they see, hear, think and feel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include things which excite young children's curiosity, such as hats, bubbles, shells, story books, seeds and snails. Provide activities, such as cooking, where talk is used to anticipate or initiate what children will be doing, e.g. "We need some eggs. Let's see if we can find some in here."



Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.


Communication and Language: Understanding

	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	Enabling Environments: what adults could provide
 30-50 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands use of objects (e.g. <i>"What do we use to cut things?"</i>) Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture. Responds to simple instructions, e.g. to get or put away an object. Beginning to understand 'why' and 'how' questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prompt children's thinking and discussion through involvement in their play. Talk to children about what they have been doing and help them to reflect upon and explain events, e.g. <i>"You told me this model was going to be a tractor. What's this lever for?"</i> Give children clear directions and help them to deal with those involving more than one action, e.g. <i>"Put the cars away, please, then come and wash your hands and get ready for lunch"</i>. When introducing a new activity, use mime and gesture to support language development. Showing children a photograph of an activity such as hand washing helps to reinforce understanding. Be aware that some children may watch another child in order to know what to do, rather than understanding it themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up shared experiences that children can reflect upon, e.g. visits, cooking, or stories that can be re-enacted. Help children to predict and order events coherently, by providing props and materials that encourage children to re-enact, using talk and action. Find out from parents how children make themselves understood at home; confirm which their preferred language is. Provide practical experiences that encourage children to ask and respond to questions, e.g. explaining pulleys or wet and dry sand. Introduce, alongside books, story props, such as pictures, puppets and objects, to encourage children to retell stories and to think about how the characters feel.
 40-60+ months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds to instructions involving a two-part sequence. Understands humour, e.g. nonsense rhymes, jokes. Able to follow a story without pictures or props. Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion. <p>Early Learning Goal Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask children to think in advance about how they will accomplish a task. Talk through and sequence the stages together. Use stories from books to focus children's attention on predictions and explanations, e.g. <i>"Why did the boat tip over?"</i> Help children to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify patterns, e.g. what generally happens to 'good' and 'wicked' characters at the end of stories draw conclusions: <i>'The sky has gone dark. It must be going to rain'</i> explain effect: <i>'It sank because it was too heavy'</i> predict: <i>'It might not grow in there if it is too dark'</i> speculate: <i>'What if the bridge falls down?'</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up displays that remind children of what they have experienced, using objects, artefacts, photographs and books. Provide for, initiate and join in imaginative play and role-play, encouraging children to talk about what is happening and to act out the scenarios in character.

Communication and Language: Speaking			
	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	Enabling Environments: what adults could provide
 Birth - 11 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates needs and feelings in a variety of ways including crying, gurgling, babbling and squealing. Makes own sounds in response when talked to by familiar adults. Lifts arms in anticipation of being picked up. Practises and gradually develops speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults; says sounds like 'baba, nono, gogo'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out from parents how they like to communicate with their baby, noting especially the chosen language. Ensure parents understand the importance of talking with babies in their home language. Encourage babies' sounds and babbling by copying their sounds in a turn-taking 'conversation'. Communicate with parents to exchange and update information about babies' personal words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn and use key words in the home languages of babies in the setting. Provide tapes and tape recorders so that parents can record familiar, comforting sounds, such as lullabies in home languages. Use these to help babies settle if they are tired or distressed.
 8-20 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses sounds in play, e.g. 'brrm' for toy car. Uses single words. Frequently imitates words and sounds. Enjoys babbling and increasingly experiments with using sounds and words to communicate for a range of purposes (e.g. <i>teddy, more, no, bye-bye</i>.) Uses pointing with eye gaze to make requests, and to share an interest. Creates personal words as they begin to develop language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to 'tune in' to the different messages young babies are attempting to convey. Share the fun of discovery and value babies' attempts at words, e.g., by picking up a doll in response to "baba". When babies try to say a word, repeat it back so they can hear the name of the object clearly. Find out from parents greetings used in English and in languages other than English, and use them in the setting. Recognise and equally value all languages spoken and written by parents, staff and children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out from parents the words that children use for things which are important to them, such as 'bankie' for their comfort blanket, remembering to extend this question to home languages. Explain that strong foundations in a home language support the development of English.
 16-26 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copies familiar expressions, e.g. 'Oh dear', 'All gone'. Beginning to put two words together (e.g. 'want ball', 'more juice'). Uses different types of everyday words (nouns, verbs and adjectives, e.g. <i>banana, go, sleep, hot</i>). Beginning to ask simple questions. Beginning to talk about people and things that are not present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build vocabulary by giving choices, e.g. 'apple or satsuma?' Model building sentences by repeating what the child says and adding another word, e.g. child says 'car', say 'mummy's car' or 'blue car'. Show children how to pronounce or use words by responding and repeating what they say in the correct way, rather than saying they are wrong. Accept and praise words and phrases in home languages, saying English alternatives and encouraging their use. Encourage parents whose children are learning English as an additional language to continue to encourage use of the first language at home. Support children in using a variety of communication strategies, including signing, where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow time to follow young children's lead and have fun together while developing vocabulary, e.g. saying 'We're jumping up', 'going down'. Plan to talk through and comment on some activities to highlight specific vocabulary or language structures, e.g. "You've caught the ball. I've caught the ball. Nasima's caught the ball". Provide stories with repetitive phrases and structures to read aloud to children to support specific vocabulary or language structures.

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.

Communication and Language: Speaking			
	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	Enabling Environments: what adults could provide
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences and thoughts. • Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic. • Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait and allow the child time to start the conversation. • Follow the child's lead to talk about what they are interested in. • Give children 'thinking time'. Wait for them to think about what they want to say and put their thoughts into words, without jumping in too soon to say something yourself. • For children learning English as an additional language, value non-verbal communications and those offered in home languages. • Add words to what children say, e.g. child says 'Brush dolly hair', you say 'Yes, Lucy is brushing dolly's hair.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display pictures and photographs showing familiar events, objects and activities and talk about them with the children. • Provide activities which help children to learn to distinguish differences in sounds, word patterns and rhythms. • Plan to encourage correct use of language by telling repetitive stories, and playing games which involve repetition of words or phrases. • Provide opportunities for children whose home language is other than English, to use that language. • Help children to build their vocabulary by extending the range of their experiences. • Ensure that all practitioners use correct grammar. • Foster children's enjoyment of spoken and written language by providing interesting and stimulating play opportunities.
22-36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses gestures, sometimes with limited talk, e.g. reaches toward toy, saying 'I have it'. • Uses a variety of questions (e.g. <i>what, where, who</i>). • Uses simple sentences (e.g. 'Mummy gonna work.') • Beginning to use word endings (e.g. <i>going, cats</i>). 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g. <i>using and, because</i>). • Can retell a simple past event in correct order (e.g. <i>went down slide, hurt finger</i>). • Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences. • Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks e.g. <i>who, what, when, how</i>. • Uses a range of tenses (e.g. <i>play, playing, will play, played</i>). • Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others. • Uses vocabulary focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them. • Builds up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences. • Uses talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play, e.g. 'This box is my castle.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with children to make links between their body language and words, e.g. "Your face does look cross. Has something upset you?" • Introduce new words in the context of play and activities. • Use a lot of statements and fewer questions. When you do ask a question, use an open question with many possible answers. • Show interest in the words children use to communicate and describe their experiences. • Help children expand on what they say, introducing and reinforcing the use of more complex sentences. 	
30-50 months			

Communication and Language: Speaking			
	A Unique Child: observing what a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults could do	Enabling Environments: what adults could provide
 <p>40-60+ months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words. • Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations. • Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention. • Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events. • Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play. <p>Early Learning Goal Children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support children's growing ability to express a wide range of feelings orally, and talk about their own experiences. • Encourage conversation with others and demonstrate appropriate conventions: turn-taking, waiting until someone else has finished, listening to others and using expressions such as "<i>please</i>", "<i>thank you</i>" and "<i>can I...?</i>". At the same time, respond sensitively to social conventions used at home. • Show children how to use language for negotiating, by saying "<i>May I...?</i>", "<i>Would it be all right...?</i>", "<i>I think that...</i>" and "<i>Will you...?</i>" in your interactions with them. • Model language appropriate for different audiences, for example, a visitor. • Encourage children to predict possible endings to stories and events. • Encourage children to experiment with words and sounds, e.g. in nonsense rhymes. • Encourage children to develop narratives in their play, using words such as: <i>first, last, next, before, after, all, most, some, each, every</i>. • Encourage language play, e.g. through stories such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' and action songs that require intonation. • Value children's contributions and use them to inform and shape the direction of discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give time for children to initiate discussions from shared experiences and have conversations with each other. • Give thinking time for children to decide what they want to say and how they will say it. • Set up collaborative tasks, for example, construction, food activities or story-making through role-play. • Help children to talk about and plan how they will begin, what parts each will play and what materials they will need. • Decide on the key vocabulary linked to activities, and ensure that all staff regularly model its use in a range of contexts. • Provide opportunities for talking for a wide range of purposes, e.g. to present ideas to others as descriptions, explanations, instructions or justifications, and to discuss and plan individual or shared activities. • Provide opportunities for children to participate in meaningful speaking and listening activities. For example, children can take models that they have made to show children in another group or class and explain how they were made.

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.