

EYFS Communication and Language progression - Listening, attention and understanding

Birth - 12months

Turns toward a familiar sound. Locating the sources of a familiar person's voice, such as their key person or parent.
 Reacts in interaction with others by smiling, looking, copying facial expressions and moving.
 Recognise and are calmed by a familiar and friendly voice.
 Looks intently at a person talking, but stops responding if speaker turns away.
 Listens to familiar sounds.
 Lifts arms in anticipation of being picked up (gesture linked with communication).

Observation check point: Around 6 months, does the baby respond to familiar voices, turn to their own name and 'take turns' in conversations with babbling?

How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:

Adults: Use eye contact, facial expressions, and lively tones; play simple turn-taking games (peek-a-boo, rhymes).

Environment: Calm, predictable routines; quiet spaces with familiar songs/rhymes.

12-18 months

Moves whole body to sounds they enjoy, such as music
 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.
 Understand frequently used words such as bye-bye and single words in context (milk, cup)

Observation check point: Around 12 months, does the baby 'take turns' by babbling and using single words? Does the baby point to things and gestures to show things to adults and share interests?

Around 12 months, can the baby choose between two objects: "do you want the ball or car?"

How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:

Adults: Repeat words/rhymes; join in play to extend focus.

Environment: Simple sound-making toys/instruments; minimise distractions.

18-24 months

Listens to and enjoys rhythmic patterns in rhymes and stories, trying to join in with actions or vocalisations
 Enjoys rhymes and demonstrates listening by trying to join in with actions or vocalisations
 Pays attention to own choice of activity, may move quickly from activity to activity
 Recognise and point to objects if asked about them
 Listen and respond to a simple instruction showing understanding through action e.g. 'give to Mummy'

Observation check point: Around 18months, is the toddler listening and responding to a simple instruction like, "Adam put on your shoes"?

Around 18 months, does the toddler understand lots of different single words and some two-word phrases such as "give me" or "shoes on"?

How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:

Adults: Encourage joining in with rhymes; name and talk about everyday sounds.

Environment: Books and resources with rhythmic sounds; opportunities to explore real-life noises indoors/outdoors.					
2-3 years					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows interest in play with sounds, songs and rhymes. Generally focus on an activity of their own choice and find it difficult to be directed by an adult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to other people's talk with interest but easily distracted. 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"> Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds, e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door. Identify familiar objects and properties for practitioners when they are described (e.g. blue car / Katie's coat). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop pretend play (e.g. putting baby to sleep). Continue with recognition of familiar sounds and objects, reinforcing comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories. Listen to simple stories and understand what is happening with help of pictures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and act on longer sentences (e.g. find your coat). Understand simple questions (e.g. who, what, where).
Observation check point: By 2 years old is the child showing an interest in other children playing and sometimes joins in? Around 2 years, can the child understand many more words than they can say - between 200-500? Around 2 years, can the child understand simple questions e.g. "where's your hat?"					
How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:					
Adults: Model listening; use repetition and intonation when telling stories/singing.					
Environment: Puppets/props to support stories; quiet areas for listening without distractions.					
3-4 Years					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
<p>Can still listen or do, but can change their own focus of attention (early stage).</p> <p>Developing attention control - beginning to manage distractions.</p>	<p>Listens to others in one-to-one or small groups, when conversation interests them.</p>	<p>Listens to familiar stories with increasing attention and recall.</p>	<p>Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories.</p>	<p>Understand a question or instruction that has two parts (e.g. "get your coat and wait at the door")</p>	<p>Understand "why" questions (e.g. "Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?")</p>
Observation check point: By 3 years old, can the children shift from one task to another if you get their attention, using the child's name to help. Around 3 years, can the child show they understand action words by pointing to pictures in a book to respond to a question e.g. who is jumping? Note: watch out for children whose speech is not easily understood by unfamiliar adults. Monitor their progress, is health visitor involved? Follow the SEND steps document to follow up concerns.					

How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:					
Adults: Encourage turn-taking in talk; support listening through role play and stories.					
Environment: Story/rhyme spaces; planned activities that highlight different sounds.					
4-5 Years - Year R					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Understand how to listen carefully and why listening is important Skill focus: Establishing listening behaviours and routines.	Engages in story time / listens carefully to songs and pays attention to how they sound. Skill focus: Beginning sustained attention in structured activities (stories, songs).	Listens to and talks about stories to build familiarity and understanding. Skill focus: Developing comprehension while maintaining attention.	Retells the story once they have developed deep familiarity (some repetition, some own words) Skill focus: Linking listening to recall and expressive retelling.	Learns rhymes, poems, and songs / engages in non-fiction books Skill focus: Active participation and applying listening across genres (fiction & non-fiction).	Listens to and talks about selected non-fiction to develop deep familiarity. Skill focus: Sustained listening and applying listening to rhymes, poems, and especially non-fiction with depth.
Observation checkpoint on entry/baseline: Can the child answer simple why questions?					
How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:					
Adults: Support children to manage listening behaviours; ask purposeful questions to extend attention.					
Environment: Flexible listening spaces (carpet, outdoors, listening stations); wide range of stories, songs, and poems.					
ELG					
Children at the expected level of development will: · Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions. · Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding. · Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.					

EYFS Communication and Language progression - Speaking

Birth - 12months

Communicates needs and feelings in a variety of ways (crying, gurgling, babbling, squealing).
 Makes own sounds in response when talked to by familiar adults.
 Begin to babble using sounds like 'mama'.

Observation check point: Is the baby using babbling to communicate with adults?

How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:

Adults: Respond promptly to babies' sounds and expressions; copy babbling in turn-taking games.
Environment: Calm, familiar routines with comforting sounds and home languages

12-18 months

Practises and develops babbling (baba, nono, gogo) → enjoys babbling and experiments with sounds.
 Points and looks to share requests/interest → uses pointing with eye gaze or hands to make requests.
 Frequently imitates words and sounds.

Observation check point: Around 12 months, is the baby beginning to use single words like 'dada', 'tete (teddy)'? Around 15months, can the baby say around 10 words although they may not all be clear?

How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:

Adults: Repeat back babies' word attempts clearly; value and encourage early words and sounds.
Environment: Safe spaces to experiment with sounds, and sensory/movement opportunities to spark vocal play.

18-24 months

Uses single words for a range of purposes → beginning to put words together, experimenting with tone.

Observation check point: Around 18 months, is the toddler using adult-like speech patterns (jargon) and at least 20 clear words?

How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:

Adults: Model short sentences by expanding on children's words (e.g. "car" → "blue car").
Environment: Stories, songs, and repetitive rhymes with simple structures to build vocabulary.

2-3 years

Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Uses language to share feelings, experiences, and thoughts.	Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating.	Start to develop conversation, often jumping from topic to topic.	Begin to use simple questions in conversation	Use the speech sounds p, b, m, w consistently in words Uses longer sentences (e.g. "Mummy gonna work").	Still learning to pronounce l/r/w/y, f/th, s/sh/ch/j/dz, multisyllabic words (e.g. banana)

Observation check point: Around their 2 nd birthday, can the child use up to 50 words? Is the child putting 2 or 3 words together e.g. "more milk"?					
How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:					
Adults: Follow children's lead in talk; introduce and model new words in play.					
Environment: Props, pictures, and role-play resources to extend talk and help children use new vocabulary.					
3-4 Years					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Sing a large repertoire of songs, know many rhymes, talk about familiar books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to use language in recalling past experiences. • Can retell a simple past event in correct order (e.g. went down slide, hurt finger). 	Uses talk to organise themselves and their play (e.g. "let's go on the bus")	Can start a conversation with an adult or friend and continue for many turns.	Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g. and, because). Questions why things happen (debate) and gives explanations (who, what, when, how).	Beginning to use a range of tenses (play, playing, played). Continues to make some errors (e.g. runned). Learns and applies new vocabulary rapidly.
Observation check point: Around their 3 rd birthday, is the child using around 300 words? Is the child linking up to 5 words together? Is the child attempting plurals and prepositions although not always correct to begin with? Can they follow instructions e.g. "can you wash dolly's face?"					
How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:					
Adults: Encourage longer sentences by asking open questions and supporting retelling of past events.					
Environment: Story-rich areas, small-world play, and role-play setups to support narrative and sequencing.					
4-5 Years - Year R					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring meanings and sounds.	Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention (using well-formed sentences). Uses language to imagine and recreate roles/experiences in play.	Extends vocabulary, exploring sounds/meanings. Uses talk to organise and clarify ideas.	Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events.	Introduces a storyline or narrative into play. Describe some events in detail	Connect one idea or action to another using a range of connectives; use new vocab in different contexts
Observation checkpoint on entry/baseline: Is the child using six word sentences? Can the child use joined up phrases with words like 'because'? Can the child answer simple why questions? Is the child attempting to use future and past tense?					
How adults/environment can facilitate mark-making development:					

Adults: Support children to use connectives (and, because); encourage explanations and detailed descriptions.

Environment: Opportunities for collaborative play, storytelling, and using new vocabulary across contexts (fiction, non-fiction, everyday talk)

ELG

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary.
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate.
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.