

Speech and language development checklists

Adapted from Communication Trust “Universally Speaking”

14–18 years

By age 18

Understanding of spoken language and verbal reasoning:

- Confidently follow complex directions.
- Know when and why they don't understand and ask for help with what they're struggling with, E.g. “I understand you mix the ingredients together, just not sure what they mean by ‘fold’”.
- Be more skilful in discussions and use a range of arguments to persuade others.
- Pick out themes in discussions and understand when meaning is inferred and not obvious, E.g. “I thought he was quite arrogant as he always talks about all these things he can do, but I think he's just busy and trying to impress Laura, you can tell he really likes her”.

Vocabulary:

- Understand well the words that are used in questions in exams and the classroom. They'll know what these words are asking them to do, E.g. evaluate, compile, find themes.
- Use a good range of more difficult words and phrases to describe, E.g. exhausted, meandered, noxious, incessant.
- Understand more subtle differences between similar words, E.g. severe, considerable.

Sentence structure and narrative:

- Talk using sentences with an average length of 9-13 words, though during conversation and discussion shorter phrases are usually used.
- Use more advanced ‘connecting’ words to make complex sentences, E.g. provided that, similarly, conversely, moreover.
- Tell long and complex spoken stories ensuring the ‘thread’ of the story is understood throughout.

Social interaction:

- Use their language imaginatively for social interaction, E.g. “That's so many colours of wrong”.
- Stay on one conversational topic for long periods and move sensibly from one topic to another.
- Switch easily between informal and formal styles of talking, E.g. “Yeah, whatever, you numpty...Oh evening Mr Johnson, how are you?” To friend: “That's our neighbour, what's he doing here?”
- Understand sarcasm by the situation and without the need for a sarcastic tone of voice. Can use sarcasm in humour, E.g. a sarcastic comment for someone who can't sing might be “What a great singing voice you have, you should enrol on X factor”.

- Take part in group social interactions, knowing appropriate times to join in conversations.