

Speech and language development checklists

Adapted from Communication Trust “Universally Speaking”

7–11 years

By age 9

Attention, listening and understanding:

- Listen to information, work out which elements are key and make relevant, related comments, e.g. *“So, we need to go home and ask people of different ages what telly was like when they were young and work out how things have changed. I can ask my granny, my dad and my big sister”.*
- Identify clearly when they haven’t understood and be specific about what additional information they need, e.g. *“So what do we use to measure liquid again? Is it millimetres or millilitres?”*
- Infer meanings, reasons and make predictions, e.g. *“Now, class 4, I’m going to count to 10” [Mrs Jones is getting cross, if we don’t stop messing around, someone will end up having to go and see the head teacher]*

Vocabulary:

- Use a range of words related to time and measurement, e.g. *“Next Friday we’re going on our school trip. Mrs Malaki says we’ll be about an hour on the coach – that’s not too bad is it mum?”*
- Use a wide range of verbs to express their thoughts, or explain cause and effect, eg. *“I think that’s a great idea”, or “If you hold the bowl still, I’ll be able to pour the mixture in”.*
- Join in discussions about a visit or activity using topic vocabulary, e.g. *“Tutankhamen was about the same age as me when he became a pharaoh. He was buried in the valley of the kings with loads of treasure. Do you believe the mummy’s curse?”*

Speech sounds:

- Overall, speech is consistently clear and easy to understand. There may still be occasional errors with complex words, particularly if they have 3+ syllables or are unfamiliar and complex (e.g. technical language).

Sentence building and grammar:

- Use a whole range of regular and irregular grammatical word endings, with few errors being made, E.g. fought, fell, brought, geese, fish.
- Use complex grammar and sentences effectively to communicate in different ways to clarify, summarise, explain choices and plan, e.g. *“We decided that Jenny would go first because she’s the fastest and would get us a good start. Me and Jack will go in the middle and Waleed will go at the end because he does loads of sport and is really fit”.*
- Uses intonation linked to grammar to help make sense of information, e.g. *“Helpful?”, she cried, “you must be joking!”*

Storytelling and narrative:

- Tell stories that have a good structure with a distinct plot. They usually include an exciting event with a clear resolution and end point. This is reflected in their writing.
- Put interest into their voices to make storytelling exciting and come to life.
- Add detail or leave information out according to how much is already known by the listener.
- Understand the interests of the listener, e.g. *“Guess who I saw yesterday...”*

Conversations and social interaction:

- Understand conversation rules – when to talk and when to listen. They also understand when people may need more or fewer details, depending on the situation.
- Use formal language when appropriate in some familiar situations, e.g. Showing a visitor around school.
- Keep conversations going with a range of people in different situations, by making relevant comments or by asking questions.
- Use language for a range of different reasons. This is important for building friendships, E.g. Complementing or criticising, clarifying and negotiating.

By age 11

Attention, listening and understanding:

- Begin to appreciate sarcasm when it's obvious, e.g. *“My best vase, broken, now that was really clever”*.
- Understand different question types:
Open questions – *“Can you tell me all about your visit to the museum?”*
Closed questions – *“Did you enjoy your trip to the museum?”*
Rhetorical questions – *“Wasn't that a lovely trip to the museum?”*
- Understand and enjoy simple jokes and recognise simple idioms, but can't really explain why they're funny or what they mean, e.g. Doing something 'at the drop of a hat'.

Vocabulary:

- Continue to grow vocabulary, using a wider range and more varied vocabulary to describe actions and feelings.
- Use sophisticated words but meaning might not always be accurate, e.g. *“I had to co-operate really hard to get the work done”*.
- Know that words can have two meanings, uses them appropriately but can't always explain how they're connected, E.g. 'Watch' (the TV and on your wrist) or 'bark' (like a dog and on a tree).

Sentence building and grammar:

- Use long and complex sentence structures including more sophisticated connectives to join ideas together in conversation, e.g. 'meanwhile', 'therefore' or 'yet'.
- Use average sentence length of 7-10 words in conversation, though can be shorter (and also may be longer in storytelling).
- Use questions to help conversations flow.

- Explain some rules of grammar and know when a sentence is not grammatically correct.

Storytelling and narrative:

- Tell elaborate entertaining stories which are full of detailed descriptions.
- Use everyday language that is detailed and about experiences that may have happened some time ago or are planned for the future.
- Incorporate a subplot in telling stories and recalling events, before resolving the main storyline.

Conversations and social interaction:

- Communicate successfully, able to share ideas and information, give and receive advice, offer an opinion and take notice of the opinion of others.
- Negotiate an agreement explaining other options and possible outcomes.
- Manage and organise collaborative tasks with little adult supervision.
- Realise when people don't fully understand and try to help them.
- Enjoy organising group games and can explain the rules effectively.