

Developmental Milestones of Vocabulary

Age	Skills
0-12 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children are learning to discriminate the sounds in words• By 12 months, children understand on average 50 words, mostly nouns and verbs.• Toddlers understand new words every month, as a result of being able to explore their environment, hearing words being used, and direct teaching by parents/caregivers.
13-15 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On average, 70 -150 word meanings are understood.• More words are <i>understood</i> than are <i>spoken</i> by toddlers, mostly nouns and verbs.• New words are being understood at a faster rate.
16-18 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children are adding approximately 70 new word meanings every month.• Children are saying on average 50 words at this time.• By 18 months, a child understands approximately 350 words, mainly nouns and verbs.• Children are still adding approximately 70 new words every month.• By 24 months, children understand approximately 600-700 words.
19-24 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some new words now include adjectives.• Children are beginning to combine 2 words (e.g., “Daddy go” or “More juice”)• They now understand 2-3 word phrases (e.g., “Get your coat” and “Wave goodbye”)
25-36 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children are now understanding early prepositions/spatial relationships (e.g., under, there) and more adjectives (e.g., big, small, heavy, long). Many adjectives describe relationships between objects (e.g., empty vs. full).

37-60
Months

- Many children begin to learn higher level words (Tier 2 words) in addition to the familiar/beginning words learned so far (Tier 1 words). Tier 2 words that are more than just synonyms and need direct teaching from adults (e.g., clever, weather, amazing). Reference: Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing Words to Life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press
- By 5 years of age, we begin to see a gap developing between children with typically developing vocabulary compared to those with below-average progress. This gap will continue to widen as children progress in school. Early intervention and prevention is key to preventing this gap from occurring.
- Typically developing children will continue to add approximately 70 new word meanings to their vocabulary each month.

Biemiller, A. (2009). Vocabulary Development: Developmental Milestones. In L.M. Phillips (Ed.), *Handbook of language and literacy development: A Roadmap from 0 – 60 Months*. [online], pp. 1-2. London, ON: Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network. Available at: Handbook of language and literacy development. www.theroadmap.ualberta.ca/vocabularies/taxonomies