LANGUAGE MILESTONES

RECEPTIVE

EXPRESSIVE

12 months

RECEPTIVE
- Understands roughly 10 words
- Can recognise gestures such as 'hi' and 'bye'
- Responds to their name
- Recognises a few familiar people and objects (e.g. parents, teddy, milk)
- Makes eye contact

EXPRESSIVE
- Continues to communicate through babbling
- Produces sounds, gestures and a few words
- Will imitate different sounds and noises

18 months

RECEPTIVE
- Understands up to 50 words and familiar short phrases (e.g. 'time for sleep')
- Follows simple instructions (e.g. 'get the book')
- Points to familiar objects when named
- Points to some pictures in a book when named

EXPRESSIVE
- Can say 6 to 20 single words
- Copies words and noises heard
- Names a few body parts
- Uses objects for pretend play (e.g. holds hand as a phone and says 'hello?')

2 years

RECEPTIVE
- Follows simple 2 part instructions ('get the book and the car')
- Identifies body parts and pictures when named
- Can respond to wh-questions (e.g. 'what' and 'where')
- Uses objects appropriately in play (e.g. brush dolly's hair with comb)

EXPRESSIVE
- Can say more than 50 single words
- Can combine two words together (e.g. 'no milk')
- Uses action words (e.g. 'run', 'jump')
- Uses grammatical endings in words (e.g. toys, jumping)
- Uses tone of voice when asking a question (e.g. 'mummy here?')
- Can produce most vowel sounds
- Can produce the sounds: m, n, p, b, k, g, h, w, t, d

3 years

RECEPTIVE
- Can follow two part instructions (e.g. 'give me the brush and sit down')
- Can sort items into groups/categories (e.g. food, toys)
- Understands spatial concepts (e.g. 'in', 'out', 'off', 'on')
- Can recognise some colours

EXPRESSIVE
- Combines four to five words into sentences
- Asks and responds 'what', 'where' and 'who' questions
- Can talk about an event that has happened (may use incorrect past tense e.g. 'goed')
- Can have a conversation (may have difficulty taking turns or staying on topic)
- Speech is understood by unfamiliar listeners 75-100% of the time

4 years

RECEPTIVE
- Understands some numbers
- Understands quantity concepts (e.g. some, all, most)
- Identifies and labels colours
- Can make inferences (e.g. predict what will happen next in a book)

EXPRESSIVE
- Produces sentences with 5 or more words
- Produces grammatically correct sentences (may make errors with irregular past tense (e.g. 'eated')
- Can understand and respond to most questions asked
- Uses words such as 'and', 'but' and 'because' to make longer sentences
- Can describe recent events (e.g. night time routine)
- Can describe how an object works
- Asks lots of questions
- Uses personal pronouns (e.g. he/she, me/you) and negations (e.g. don't/can't)
- Can count to five and name some colours
- Can produce the following sounds in words: m, n, p, b, h, w, t, d, k, g, y, f, l, s, z, sh, ch, j

5 years

RECEPTIVE
- Can understand and follow three part instructions (e.g. brush your teeth, put on your shoes and wait at the door')
- Can understand words related to time (e.g. 'now', 'later', 'before', 'after')
- Starting to recognise some letters, sounds and numbers

EXPRESSIVE
- Vocabulary consists of 1500 words
- Uses grammatically correct sentences
- Asks a wide variety of questions
- Can tell and retell a simple, short story heard, with a beginning, middle and end
- Uses past and future verbs correctly (e.g. 'went' and 'will go)
- Takes turns in longer conversations
- Able to be understood easily by listeners
- Uses all speech sounds correctly in conversation (except for the 'th' sound)
- Can rhyme words (e.g. 'mat' and 'cat')
- Recognises words which start or end with the same sound

6 years

RECEPTIVE
- Follows instructions independently (within and outside of the classroom)
- Can predict and inference (read between the lines)
- Can listen and follow a story without visual supports

EXPRESSIVE
- Able to retell a story without prompting
- Is inquisitive and asks lots of questions
- No grammatical errors
- Expresses emotions using words
- Can maintain a conversation with appropriate topics and turn taking skills
- Produces all speech sounds clearly in conversation (except 'th')
- Is engaged and progressing with reading, writing and spelling skills

STEP BY STEP LEARNING

Owens, R.E. (2001) Language Development: An Introduction (5th Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Paul, R. (2001). Language Disorders from Infancy through Adolescence: Assessment and Intervention(2nd Ed.). St Louis, Missouri: Mosby, Inc.

Zimmeramn, I.L. Steiner, V.G. & Pond, R.E. (2002). Preschool Language Scale – Fourth Edition – Australian Language Adaptation (PLS-4).