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| **Normal Development**   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Preschoolers** | **Kindergarteners** | **Students in Grades 1 & 2** | **Students in Grades 3, 4, & 5** | | * Comprehend approximately 1200 to 2000 words * Can be understood about 80% (or more) of the time * Produce short sentences (4-5 words) that often have grammar and/or word order errors * Talk about the “here and now” (what they are seeing, hearing and feeling in the present) * Cannot accurately describe what happened during an event (e.g., a fall on the playscape); their descriptions have a story-like quality * May resort to 1-2 word phrases when hurt or confused * Produce rapid topic shifts in their conversations, making it difficult at times to follow their train of thought * Interrupt frequently (or yell) to capture a turn in the conversation * Enjoy “playing” with language (e.g., singing, rhyming, etc.) * Use language to take roles during play; use play to re-enact a troubling event (e.g., peer conflict, a bee sting) | * Comprehend approximately 2500-2800 words * Use about 1500 to 2000 words * Can be understood about 90% (or more) of the time * Engage in extended conversations using multi-word sentences (5 to 8 words); a few grammar errors persist (e.g., *“I breaked it.”*) * Can talk about what happened yesterday or what may occur tomorrow * Can handle conversations involving two partners, but struggle with three-party interactions * Relate simple stories about their personal experiences from the recent past (e.g., an illness); however, their stories lack detail and do not take into account the listener’s need for background information * Use subtle and various ways of requesting (e.g., *“I just love orange juice.”)* * *Use highly imaginative language and frequently take on the role of a fictional character during play* | * Comprehend approximately 13,000 words * Can be understood 95-100% of the time * Use adult-like grammar and word order in their oral language * Have learned the “rules” of conversational etiquette (e.g., *Excuse me,”*, etc.) * Can initiate and sustain conversations over multiple turns (5 or more) with two or more partners (e.g., recess or cooperative group exchanges) * Produce stories that “center” around a theme and contain a logical “chain” of events * Become more explicit in their language when they perceive that the listener is not understanding * Follow spoken and unspoken rules about communication and behavior in school, including when to talk, when not to talk and how to speak to adults vs. peers * Use language to learn about the world (e.g., *“Why can I hear my voice when I put my hands over my ears?”*) | * Comprehend approximately 20,000 to 40,000 words * Formulate descriptions of events that are increasingly more precise * Understand and produce simple figurative language, including similes, metaphors and idioms (e.g., *“It’s raining cats and dogs.”  “She eats like a bird.”  “We’ll play it by ear.”*) * Appreciate the humor in jokes that rely on words with multiple meanings * Are conversationally competent; can use language to manipulate the behaviors, feelings and attitudes of other people; can transition from one topic to a related or new topic with ease * Can adjust vocabulary and modify language style (e.g., the rate of speech or the complexity of the message) to accommodate listeners of varying ages, backgrounds and genders * Can discuss abstract concepts and ideas that are not within their personal experience (e.g., how blood circulates through the chambers of the heart; what Eskimo children eat and how they travel to school, etc.) |   Adapted from Typical Speech and Language Development:  A Checklist for School Nurses  Donna D. Merritt, Ph.D., CCC     SERC  [http://www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org/)   |  | | --- | |  | |