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| **Normal Development**

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| **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.)
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Adapted from Typical Speech and Language Development:  A Checklist for School NursesDonna D. Merritt, Ph.D., CCC     SERC  [http://www.ctserc.org](http://www.ctserc.org/)

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