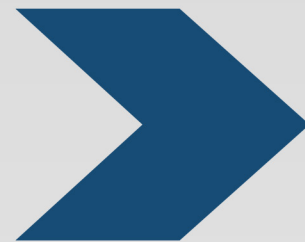


EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE A TODDLER WHO IS A LATE TALKER

BY BROOKLYN LETTERS





Hearing your child talk for the first time is one of the most magical moments of parenthood. It is also a significant milestone in your child's growth and development. But when a toddler shows signs of limited or delayed speech and vocabulary, it naturally becomes a concern for parents. So what can you do when you notice that you have a late talker child? That's where a speech-language pathologist comes in.



A speech-language pathologist's (SLP) job is to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat communication and swallowing disorders in children and adults. These problems include:

- **Speech sounds (enunciation)**
- **Language (expressive, receptive (auditory))**
- **Literacy and its connection to Language**
- **Social communication**
- **Voice**
- **Fluency**
- **Cognitive communication**
- **Feeding and swallowing**

While late talking is more common than we think, early intervention is critical to ensure a child doesn't fall behind his peers. Below, we answer the most common questions about late talking or speech delay to help you check for warning signs and find the best support for a late talker child.



How to Tell If You Have a Late Talker

According to The Hanen Centre, a late talker is a child between 18 and 30 months with a good understanding of language and typical development in other areas (hearing, vision, motor, and cognitive skills) but has a limited spoken vocabulary compared to peers for their age. While some children manage to catch up on their own, others are not able to.

For some parents, this may not be that great of a concern. Especially since one of the things we often hear when it comes to child development is how children develop at their own pace. And while this is true to some extent, there are benchmarks that a child must meet at a specific age.

It's important to take note of your child's communication milestones as these can help you make an informed decision if you should consult with a speech-language pathologist.

These milestones are:

- 18 months – Using at least 5-10 words, such as nouns (“baby,” “cookie,”), verbs (“eat,” “go,”), prepositions (“up,” “down,”), adjectives (“hot,” “sleepy,”), and social words (“hi,” “bye,”).
- 24 months – Using at least 50 spontaneous words and combining two words generated by the child instead of “memorized” chunks or phrases (“thank you,” “bye-bye,” “all gone,”). True word combinations include “doggie gone,” “eat cookie,” or “dirty hands.”

Additionally, most experts agree that at 12 months, toddlers should already be saying at least a few single words with meaning such as “mama” and “dada,” can understand and follow simple commands such as picking up a toy.

For a more in-depth understanding of your child’s speech, language, and hearing development, check out this development chart (hearing/understanding and talking) by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

Here are my personal favorite comprehensive speech-language developmental charts (hard to come by. . .).

<https://brooklynletters.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Milestonesguide.pdf>

<http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/pdf/docs/ASHA03McLeodBI>

If you want to learn more if your child’s late talking might be a problem or if she’s a late bloomer, read this [article \(ASHA\)](#).

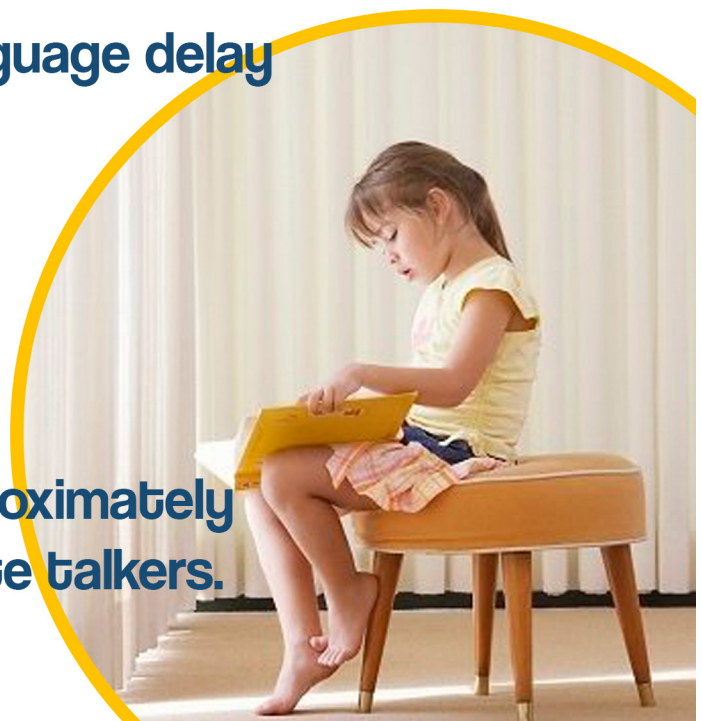
What Causes Late Talking in Children?

While developmental and physical delays (such as cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, autism, or childhood apraxia) are factors in communication disorders, the cause of late talking in children developing normally in other areas is yet to be agreed upon by experts. It's neurodevelopmental in nature, which means their linguistic neural connections are less sophisticated than peers. It's not a visible problem until it becomes an issue.

However, studies do show that a late talker child is more likely to:

- Have a family history of early language delay
- Be Male and born at less than 85 percent of their optimal birth weight or less than 37 weeks gestation

Research has also found that approximately 13 percent of two-year-olds are late talkers.





What are the Outcomes of Late Talking in Children?

An ASHA study on Late Language Emergence mentions that by late preschool and school-age, about 50 to 70 percent of late talkers are able to catch up and show normal language development. However, the study also reports that a late talker child is more prone to develop language and literacy difficulties later on.

Some of the outcomes listed by the study include:

- **At age 5, children identified as late talkers showed lower scores on complex language skills, such as narrating a simple story.**
- **At age seven, children identified as late talkers had reduced performance when it came to general language ability and grammar.**
- **At ages eight and nine, children identified as late talkers show poorer performance in reading and spelling.**
- **At age 13, children identified as late talkers had lower scores on aggregate measures on vocabulary, grammar, verbal memory, and reading comprehension.**
- **At age 17, children who were late talkers showed poorer scores on vocabulary/grammar and verbal memory factors.**



These outcomes are further supported by studies mentioned in another article published by The Hanen Centre. According to researchers, late talkers who eventually “grow out of it” have been found to show weaknesses in:

- Some language and literacy skills, including vocabulary, grammar, phonology, reading, creating stories, writing, reading, and listening comprehension, which can prevail until adolescence.
- Skills that rely on language such as social, behavioral, and executive function skills (planning, organizing, paying attention, and controlling impulsive behavior).
- Processing speech. In a study on children ages three to five years old, researchers found that those identified as late talkers don't process the speech they hear as easily as their peers do. It implies an immature or less developed speech/language processing skills, which can affect language and literacy development.



A close-up photograph of a man and a young child. The man, on the right, is looking down at the child. The child, on the left, is looking up at the man. They are both smiling and appear to be in a warm, intimate moment. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light.


When to Seek Help for a Late Talker?

Given the amount of parenting information accessible today, it's not surprising to see varying opinions on late talking. Some parents opt to go the wait-and-see route, but experts agree this might not be what is best for the child.

Early awareness and intervention are crucial to prevent late talking from affecting a child's socialization skills and school-readiness. Not to mention, preventing any continuing language disabilities.



This is even more important when your child exhibits the following risk factors:

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- **Quiet or little babbling as an infant**
 - **Has a history of ear infections**
 - **Limited consonant sounds**
 - **Does not link pretend ideas and actions together during play**
 - **Does not imitate words or sounds**
 - **Uses mostly nouns and few verbs**
 - **Difficulty interacting or playing with peers**
 - **A family history of communication, learning, and academic difficulties**
 - **Mild comprehension delay for their age**
 - **Uses few gestures to communicate**

According to experts, children with a limited vocabulary for their age and show any of the above risk factors should seek the help of a speech-language pathologist. In particular, studies suggest that the last three risk factors listed are indicators that a child may have continuing language delay.

Your child can be at risk for showing signs of a language disorder (expressive or expressive/receptive language) also known as a Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), or as the research calls it Language Impairment. Read this article to learn more about the relationship between language and learning disabilities.

How Can Speech-Language Therapy Help a Late Talker?



The first step in seeking help for late talkers is having their hearing evaluated. This is to make sure they are able to hear sounds at different volumes and pitches. Pediatricians typically perform screens. Audiologists fully evaluate your child's hearing, even if you believe your child hears everything. You don't know if your child is detecting differences in sounds.

You can then consult a speech-language pathologist to address your concerns about your child. During your session, the SLP will:

- Begin by discussing your concerns
- Assess your child's ability to understand, speak, and use gestures
- Assess your child's ability to understand, speak, and use gestures



Providing your child with the best support starts with finding the right professionals that can create a custom program for your child.

Brooklyn Letters is a New York-based private speech-language therapy and tutoring company fully committed to providing fun, individualized, and dynamic tutoring, coaching, and therapy sessions for children and teens. We are Late

Brooklyn Letters treats all kinds of speech and language delays and learning difficulties, specializing in evaluating and treating babies through adolescents.

Our services include:

- **Online Services**
- **Pronunciation (all ages)**
- **Early Childhood Expressive Language**
- **School Age Expressive Language**
- **Social Skills**
- **Listening Difficulties (auditory and language processing)**
- **Stuttering**
- **Picky Eaters and Early Childhood Feeding**
- **Bilingual Services**



Brooklyn Letters offers in-home and online literacy (Orton-Gillingham Approach), math tutoring services, and speech, language, and feeding therapies in the New York City metro area seven days a week.

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