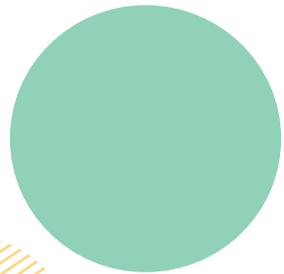




Speech and Hearing BC

# WORDS MATTER

*What you need to know about your child's early speaking, reading and writing development.*



## Inside:

- The vital connection between speech, language and literacy.
- Ideas for improving early speech and language development.
- Tips for improving reading comprehension.
- Key developmental milestones.
- How to get help when you need it.

# Speaking, Reading, Writing: Early Development and Later Success

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Speaking, reading and writing are interconnected – and your child's ability in one area directly affects their ability in others.

Supporting your child in their understanding and use of oral language from an early age can help build strong foundations for developing reading and writing skills in later years. The more your child is supported in speech and language when they are young, the greater their reading comprehension is as they grow older.

Children who do not receive early support are often at a disadvantage in later years. Those with spoken language problems frequently have difficulty learning to read and write. Children with reading and writing problems often struggle with spoken language.

The National Early Literacy Panel shared several studies that early development can predict later achievement. Young children who demonstrate early speaking abilities often do better in learning to read in their first three grades. What's more, 74% of children who perform poorly in Grade 3 continue to do so in secondary school - showing, once again, the importance of preparing children in their early years.

Being aware of your young child's development in speech, reading and writing – and receiving assistance when required – will set them up for success in school in later years.

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**ONLY 71% OF BC CHILDREN ARRIVE  
AT KINDERGARTEN MEETING ALL OF  
THE DEVELOPMENTAL BENCHMARKS  
THEY NEED TO THRIVE BOTH NOW  
AND INTO THE FUTURE.**



## SPEECH AND LANGUAGE MILESTONES

Oral language is the foundation for reading and writing. Ensuring your child is developing their speech and language is an important step for future literacy skills.

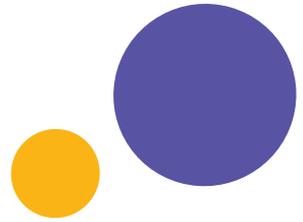
By the following ages, normal development suggests your child will:



## LITERACY MILESTONES

- 1 Year Show an interest in picture books.
- 2 Years Know the right way to hold a picture book, and turn pages.
- 3 Years Understand that print words have a function – in books, on signs etc.
- 4 Years Think of simple rhymes (e.g. fit and hit).
- 5 Years Know all the letters of the alphabet.

# How You Can Support Your Child's Development



## READ WORDS IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Children begin to read by seeing words in their environment. Point out signs and common words in their world, not just in books. For example, say 'stop' and 'exit' when driving or read out the names of shops on the street. Reading both books and everyday pieces of text together is one of the most effective ways to promote literacy.



## SPEAK OFTEN TO YOUR CHILD

Just as reading words in your environment is important, so too is speaking often to your child. Point to objects around you and your child, and name them. For example, name items in your home, or at the park.

## TAKE A 'PICTURE WALK'

One of the earliest methods to support literacy is to 'walk' through the pages of a book, naming objects in each picture. This can be done before words are understood to be symbols.



## ASK QUESTIONS

Before reading a book, ask your child to predict the story based on the title. After reading, ask questions about the story, the characters, and how your child feels about the story. This greatly supports critical thinking and comprehension.



## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LOCAL RESOURCES

Attend free public library story time sessions or local Strongstart programs for stories, music and playtime with peers.



## ANSWER QUESTIONS IN-DEPTH

Say as much as possible to your child, especially when a question is asked. For example, if they ask, “What are those?” in a grocery store, saying, “They are grapes. They are round and purple, and they taste sweet when you eat them. Look at these strawberries, which are tasty and have seeds, too. What else should we buy?” is more helpful for development than simply answering, “Grapes.”



## USE AS MUCH VOCABULARY AS YOU CAN

A world famous study showed that some children heard thirty million fewer words by their 4th birthday than others. They were less prepared when they entered school, had smaller vocabularies, were weaker readers, and received lower test scores. Saying as many words to your child during their early years creates a strong foundation for future learning.



## PLAY “I SPY”

Helping children to identify how words relate to our world helps them to use them more often. Use a letter’s sound rather than the name of the letter when playing. For example, say, “I spy something beginning with ‘sss.’” (not ‘S’).



## WRITE DOWN STORIES

When your child is 3-5 years old, ask them to tell you a story and write it down for them. Making the connection between spoken and written words teaches your child about how speaking, reading and writing are interconnected.

# Warning Signs

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Children with speech or language disorders are more likely to have difficulties with reading and comprehension in later years. Early intervention is important to help your child succeed in school.

Do any of the following apply to you or your child? If so, consider consulting a Speech-Language Pathologist for assessment.

- Has experienced multiple ear infections (hearing directly affects speech development);
- Has delayed speech and/or language, based on key developmental milestones;
- Does not receive regular communication with adults;
- Would rather 'show' you than tell you about something;
- Has difficulty saying sounds in the correct order in words;
- Leaves sounds out of words or drops word endings.



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**MONITORING YOUR CHILD'S EARLY  
DEVELOPMENT CAN HELP TO ENSURE  
THEIR SUCCESS IN LATER YEARS.**



## How To Receive Help

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If you think your child's speech and reading is developing slower than average, or you see multiple 'warning signs', there is a range of options for receiving help. Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are registered, highly trained professionals that specialize in working with people of all ages to help with improving communication abilities. They play a critical role in the development of literacy in children.

SLPs can diagnose and treat communication disorders relating to poor hearing, language delay, speech impairments, reading difficulties or writing challenges.

The first step in treating a communication disorder is assessment: diagnosing a problem as early as possible is essential. After assessment, the SLP will develop an action plan with you.

Audiologists are also registered and expertly trained professionals who specialize in diagnosing and treating hearing impairments and auditory disorders. They can determine if problems with hearing or auditory processing are contributing to a person's difficulty in learning language or communicating.

Some services are government funded and available free of charge and others you will need to pay for. Funding may be available for your family. To find out more about how these professionals can help you, and to find someone within your community, visit [speechandhearingbc.ca](http://speechandhearingbc.ca).



Produced by Speech and Hearing BC

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**THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE  
IS YOUR BRIDGE TO THE  
REST OF THE WORLD.**

Speech and Hearing BC is a not for profit organization with more than 1200 member speech-language pathologists and audiologists in British Columbia.

Our vision is that everyone in British Columbia is empowered to communicate effectively with easily accessible, professional support from speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

*Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists are registered by the College of Speech and Hearing Health Professionals of BC.*



**Speech and Hearing BC**

For parent resources and further information about speech, hearing, reading and writing development, visit [speechandhearingbc.ca](http://speechandhearingbc.ca).