



# Speech Development Norms and Disorders of 3 – 4 Years Old Toddlers

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Speech development at the age of 3 has a particularly wide range for different toddlers of the same age. Some toddlers do not have any difficulties in the process of mastering speech. They take an interest in the sound analysis of the word. Other toddlers have just started to make up phrases more or less correctly. Their speech is very far from being perfect.

However, if your toddler is 3 years old, it is necessary to pay attention to the norms of speech development. These norms are identified by modern pedagogical and speech therapy researchers.

By this age, the toddler:

1. should know and pronounce his own first and last name;
2. can say the names of close relatives and friends;
3. speaks in simple sentences, gradually passing on the ones that are more complex;
4. begins to use general concepts (to distribute objects into groups in his speech): tableware (a saucepan, spoon, plate, cup), clothes (a dress, jacket, skirt, jeans);
5. uses adjectives (to find properties of an object): glass glass, wooden chair, sour lemon;
6. names actions: a girl is crying, a dog is barking, birds are flying;
7. repeats (retells) what he has heard (sometimes inaccuracies and /or a distorted order and distorted details are allowed);
8. begins to modulate the volume, i.e. can speak both loudly and quietly, can get on a whisper;
9. toddler's vocabulary consists of 1500-1900 words.

If the toddler's speech development corresponds to the age norm the following features of the speech activity occur in a toddler after 3 years:

- Onomatopoeic words and light versions of words are almost not used.
- Conjunctions (and, but, after, before) and the main parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns) begin to be used.
- Sound pronunciation has not been perfectly put yet. There are practically no sibilants in the toddler's speech. Differentiation of sounds is still difficult.
- Words with a complex syllabic structure (from 3 or more syllables) can be pronounced incorrectly by toddlers.

- Not only words of everyday topics appear in the vocabulary but also evaluative words (good - bad, boring - happy). The usage of synonyms is observed (cheerful - joyful, sad - sullen).
- If the development of sound perception is normal the toddler notices incorrect pronunciation of other toddler`s speech. Even if he pronounces these sounds incorrectly.
- If the toddler has a positive attitude to books, he likes to listen to fairy tales and poems.
- The toddler understands the content of a series of simple plot pictures well. Mainly, he can only list the objects depicted in it and the actions performed by the characters of the picture. For example, "There's a bunny. It's eating a carrot. His mum is there. She is sitting and watching."
- Speech is still situational ("Give me that", "My car is there", etc.)



## Deviations in the speech development of a 3 – 4 years old toddler.

What should special attention be paid to at this age period?

If the toddler's speech development is accompanied by motor and behavioral disorders, then the presence of these manifestations indicates a possible delay in speech development.

What deviations from the norm of motor (behaviour) skills development may be observed?

- Toddlers are awkward, their movements are not coordinated. They do not keep their balance well.
- Toddlers are inattentive, constantly distracted.
- Frequent manifestations of hyperactivity, or, vice versa, lethargy are observed.
- There is a noticeable lag in fingers fine motor skills. Precise movements with small toy details and board [games](#) details are not available. Toddlers do not like to dress, button up, cannot control the force of push on a pencil while drawing.
- The toddler keeps his balance with difficulty while walking and running. The toddler cannot step over an object, catch a ball. The toddler does not keep his balance standing on one leg on the smaller area of a support.

N.B. Parents can diagnose speech development delay on their own.

# How to diagnose speech development delay in toddlers?



The main method of diagnosing speech development delay at home is to observe your toddler's speech. While observing the toddler, it is necessary to note how his vocabulary is developed, how many words he uses. Game situations are created to do this. While playing toddlers are encouraged to name objects and toys. Short performances with his toys are played out by toddlers. It is necessary to analyze carefully how the toddler makes up phrases, how many words they consist of.

To assess toddler's understanding of adult speech, you can offer him, for example, the following activities:

- Show your body parts, body parts of a doll, toy and animals.
- Show in a series of plot pictures what their characters are doing. For example, who is swimming, who is watering flowers, who is feeding a cat, who is reading a newspaper.
- Give simple instructions that consist of at least two steps. For example, at first take a book from the shelf and then put it on the table.
- Ask what these or those objects are used for. For example, "show me what you draw with, what you wipe your hands with, what you brush your teeth with".
- Read a short text and ask questions on the content.

The following problems may occur:

- The toddler speaks too fast or, vice versa, too slowly (as if deliberately draws).
- Your toddler's speech is indistinct. Phrases consist of 1-2, less often of 3 words. Phrases contain only nouns and verbs ("telegraphic" style of speech)
- Your toddler does not follow simple verbal instructions (for example, open a chest of drawers and take socks, go to the hallway and bring a scarf).

It is also necessary to pay attention to:

- If a toddler makes up a simple but complete sentence (with subjects, predicates and secondary parts of a sentence).
- If the toddler says "ma" instead of "mum" or refers the word "mum" to other people.
- If the toddler uses words-fragments, i.e. the words in which only parts of the word are preserved: "towel"- "tol", "children" – "chiln", etc.
- If the toddler "swallows" endings of words.
- If the toddler doesn't make up his own sentences, only repeats phrases after adults.

If the toddler's speech and motor skills deviate from the norm, you should consult a specialist and be in-depth examined. If there is a necessity, you should start the remedial work with a speech therapist, speech pathologist, psychologist.

In the next article, we will tell you what parents can (and should) do to prevent and overcome speech development delay.

## About the author

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