



## HIGH 5 COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

Emily Goudreault, M.A., CCC-SLP • Speech-Language Pathologist

www.high5communicationresources.com

emily@high5cr.com • 970.988.6718 (cell) • 616.366.4231 (office + fax)

SPEECH + LANGUAGE THERAPY • INFANT + TODDLER ENRICHMENT • FEEDING THERAPY

# RED FLAGS FOR SPEECH/LANGUAGE DELAYS

Every child develops differently and at different rates – and that is great! However, there are some very important skills that need to develop in order for a kiddo to grow and thrive as s/he continues to develop. These foundational skills are crucial for speech and language development and if not observed by certain ages, we see this as a **red flag** that **may indicate** your child should be **evaluated by a speech-language pathologist**.

**A note on the “wait and see” approach:** It is a **MYTH** that you should just “wait and see” if your child is a “late talker.” The “wait and see” approach can be appropriate in some circumstances, and a speech-language pathologist may even recommend this upon screening your child – however, I **STRONGLY** encourage you to have your child screened or evaluated by a speech pathologist if you have **ANY** concerns with his/her development at **ANY AGE**. The SLP can determine if the “wait and see” approach is appropriate for your child or not.

→ **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL AGE 2** if you have concerns at 16 or 18 or 21 months! If you have concerns at 18 months, get your child scheduled for a screening at 18 months – it can’t hurt! The advice to “wait until 2 years” is not appropriate for every child and can, for many children, actually be detrimental to their development and their progress in therapy. As I always say: **DON’T WORRY...BUT DON’T WAIT.**

**A note regarding pediatricians:** Pediatricians are wonderful medical professionals. I highly value them and frequently refer out for their medical advice. However, most pediatricians have **MINIMAL** training in speech & language development. They are trained to diagnose and treat *medical issues*, not speech & language issues. If your gut tells you something is going on with your child, I generally advise caregivers to **follow their gut** and get your child seen by a speech-language pathologist sooner rather than later – it can’t hurt!!

With that...here are some **RED FLAGS** that may indicate your child should be assessed by a speech-language pathologist.

If your child is demonstrating any 1 of the Red Flags listed for their age, please see the resources at the end of this document, or contact Emily.

6  
MONTHS

- No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions
- Does not yet laugh or squeal
- Does not yet look toward new sounds

9  
MONTHS

- Is still making only vowel sounds, with no speech-like consonants (e.g. “aaa” instead of an occasional “mmm” or “bah” or “duh.”)
- No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles, or other facial expressions

12  
MONTHS

- Not yet babbling with changes in tone (e.g. “dadada,” “bababa” or “deedee”)
- Not yet consistently respond to her/his name
- Not yet pointing, sharing, reaching, waving “bye bye” or shaking head for “no”
- Not yet communicating interests/needs through eye gaze or gestures like pointing or reaching
- Not yet babbling or cooing during play (note: babbling is vocalizations with consonants + vowels like “mamamama” and cooing is only vowel sounds like “aaaahhhh”)
- Not yet imitating gestures or actions
- Not yet understanding common words such as “bye”, “no”, “give me,” etc.
- Has infrequent eye contact or little interest in interaction with familiar caregivers



- Not yet using 3-5 signs and/or verbal words (note: pronunciation does not have to be perfect)
- Not yet making any animal noises
- Not yet pointing to things of interest as if to say “Look at that!” and then looking right at you (e.g. pointing at a car driving by, pointing at a dog outside the window, etc.)
- Not yet understanding and responding to words like “no” and “up”
- Not yet pointing to objects or pictures when asked “Where’s the...?”
- Not yet imitating gross motor movements like clapping or stomping feet



- Not yet using 15-20 signs and/or verbal words like “mama,” “more,” or “up” (note: pronunciation does not have to be perfect)
- Not yet imitating words consistently
- Not yet using at least 3-4 consonants (for example: p, b, d, t, m, n)
- Not yet pointing to 2-3 major body parts such as head, nose, eyes, feet, mouth, ears, tummy
- Not yet understanding simple commands like “come here”, “stop”, “don’t”, “give me the \_\_\_\_\_” or “touch your nose”
- Doesn’t respond with a word or gesture to a question such as “what’s that? Or “where’s your shoe?”
- Not yet understanding names of common objects
- Not yet playing “pretend” with items (e.g. talking on toy phone, feeding a doll)
- Not yet playing closely to other children



- Not yet using 50-100 signs and/or verbal words (note: pronunciation does not have to be perfect)
- Not yet consistently combining 2 verbal words and/or signs together like “Daddy go,” “more milk” or “shoe on” (note: rote 2-word phrases like “thank you” and “Mickey Mouse” count as 1 word)
- Not yet using at least 1-3 new words a week
- Not yet imitating verbal words consistently and frequently
- Not yet asking short questions such as “what’s that?”
- Speech is not at least 50% understandable to caregivers (doesn’t mean speech has to be perfect – just has to be understood by familiar listeners)
- Not yet playing pretend with toys, such as feeding dolls or making a toy person drive a toy car
- Not yet following simple 2-step commands such as “Get the ball and put it on the table”
- Not yet responding to simple questions (“Where’s the ball?”)
- Not yet pointing to objects or pictures of items in books consistently when asked
- Not yet understanding the function of common objects such as a cup, fork, brush, etc



- Not yet using 300 verbal words
- Not yet using action words like “run”, “eat”, “fall”
- Not yet using some adult grammar, such as “two babies” and “doggie sleeping”
- Says only 1-2 words at a time (e.g., “Kick ball” instead of “I kick ball to daddy”) and is not combining words into at least 3-4 word sentences (e.g., “I want big apple” or “my truck is broken”)
- Not yet asking questions
- Not yet accurately and consistently answer yes/no questions
- Speech is not **at least** 75% or more understandable ((doesn’t mean speech has to be perfect – just has to be understood)
- Strangers understand less than half of what child says
- Child is leaving the beginning sounds or ending sounds off of most words
- Not yet answering simple who, what and where questions like “who is that” or “where is the truck” or “what is she doing?”
- Experiencing stuttering behavior for more than 6 months
- Not yet playing with other children
- Not yet initiating conversations, speaks only when spoken to, or only repeats what others say



- Not yet consistently using complex sentences with 4+ words
- Having difficulty with grammar or pronoun use. Examples: puts words in the wrong order in sentences, uses pronouns incorrectly (I, you, me, your, my, etc.) and/or leaves out little words (in, the, of) and word endings (-ing, -ed,-s)
- Talks only about the “here and now” rather than events in the past and future, objects/people that are not present, etc.
- Not yet able to listen to 2-3 lines of a story and answer simple questions about it
- Not yet able to tell a story with a beginning, middle and end
- Speech is not 90-100% understandable to strangers despite age-appropriate articulation errors (may not yet be able to say “r”, “l”, “ch”, “th” or “sh” yet)
- Not yet asking a variety of questions to gain information (who, what, where, why and when)
- Not yet able to tell a simple story on topic
- Not yet following simple 3- step directions
- Has difficulty answering simple who, what, where and why questions
- Not yet able to name a few letters, numbers, and rhyming words



- Uses only 3-4-word sentences to talk about “here and now”
- Not yet using complete sentences that are grammatically correct and that give lots of detail
- Not yet answering how and why questions or questions about past or future events
- Speech is not 95-100% understood by most listeners despite age-appropriate articulation errors (may not be able to say “r”, “ch”, “th” or “sh” yet)
- Talks a lot, but does not engage in reciprocal conversation and/or make comments relevant to the situation
- Cannot answer “how” and “why” questions, or questions about past or future events

## **OVERALL WARNING SIGNS**

- ANY loss of speech or babbling or social skills at ANY age •
  - ANY child that appears unable to hear •
  - ANY swallowing difficulties •
- Toddler or preschooler that never/rarely gestures or imitates •
- Toddler or preschooler that appears to not understand speech •
- Difficulty developing words beyond repeating others over and over •
- NOTE: Chronic ear infections put a child at high risk for speech/language delays •

## **RESOURCES IF YOUR CHILD IS DEMONSTRATING 1 OR MORE RED FLAGS FOR THEIR AGE**

1. You may contact speech-language pathologist Emily Goudreault to schedule an in-person or virtual screening, 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion or formal evaluation if you have any concerns: [emily@high5cr.com](mailto:emily@high5cr.com), 970.988.6718. In-person and virtual screenings may also be scheduled on her website at [www.high5cr.com](http://www.high5cr.com).
2. Early Intervention: Every state has a federally-funded Early Intervention program for children ages birth-3 years that is typically operated by the state’s public school system.

If a child is demonstrating a significant enough delay in any developmental domain (e.g. language, gross motor, fine motor, social/emotional, cognitive) or has a medical diagnosis related to development (e.g. autism, hearing loss, Down syndrome), therapy or some kind of support services through Early Intervention are free to the family. Screenings/evaluations are also free.

If you are in Michigan, that program is called EarlyOn Michigan. You may self refer (no medical referral necessary) at [www.1800EarlyOn.org](http://www.1800EarlyOn.org) or call 1-800-Early-On. For information about other states’ Early Intervention programs, [check here](#) or look for the CDC’s guide to Early Intervention Contact by State.