

Benchmarks for preschool oral language

What are some of the oral language skills you expect children in your classroom to have mastered by the end of preschool? How do you know if they aren't developing as expected? Benchmarks for preschool language related to phonology, syntax, semantics, and listening comprehension can be applied to better gauge where children are and what kind of support they need. Teachers can assess children's oral language skills using these benchmarks both informally and formally.

By the end of preschool, children are expected to:

1. Phonology (the sound system of language)

- Speak clearly most of the time with appropriate tone and inflection
- Pronounce most phonemes (sounds) about 80% of the time

2. Syntax (grammar and the order of words in sentences)

- Make five-word sentences
- Engage in adult-like speech
- Approximate syntax rules

3. Semantics (word meanings)

- Play with words
- Appropriately use new words in conversations
- Use language for a variety of purposes, such as retelling experiences or stories, making up stories, and providing descriptions
- Ask questions and ask for assistance
- Participate in group discussions, including initiating conversations
- Take turns speaking and be able to respond when spoken to

4. Listening Comprehension

- Follow single and multiple step directions
- Listen to and retell stories and songs
- Focus on speaker during conversation and demonstrate their understanding of messages in conversations