

What Should Your Grandchild Be Communicating?

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You have the opportunity to watch your grandchild grow, explore and discover the world around them. You can be one of your grandchild's first teachers just by listening, playing and, of course, having fun! Here are some general ideas about what you should be observing in your grandchild during their preschool years (ages two to six years). There may be some variation in when your grandchild demonstrates these skills as children develop at different rates.

Communication of the Two Year Old

- Understands simple questions ("Where is the dog?") and commands ("Put your shoes on.")
- Identifies body parts
- Talks in two and three word sentences ("Me want cookie.")
- Has around 300 words in their vocabulary
- Stays with one activity for 6-7 minutes (listening to a story with pictures)

Here's What You Can Do...

- Share a colourful picture book by talking about what you see
- Repeat new words and use simple sentences ("Shoe on.", "Look! Blue truck.", "Want hug?")
- Talk about the activities you are doing together
- It's great to ask questions, but children learn more if you comment on things around you (You see an airplane; instead of saying "What is it?" you could say, "I see an airplane.")

Communication of the Three Year Old

- Begins to understand location words (on, under, behind)
- Identifies colours
- Talks in three to four word sentences ("Pick me up Grandpa.")
- Has around 1000 words in their vocabulary
- Stays with one activity for 8-9 minutes
- Can clearly say these sounds: m, n, ng, p, b, h, w, k, and g



Here's What You Can Do...

- Encourage your grandchild to tell stories and listen (ask your grandchild "What do you see?" when you are at the zoo)
- Model or repeat back what they are saying (if your grandchild says, "I like elephant! Elephant big!" you can say, "I like elephants too!")
- Add on to what they are saying by emphasizing words that they missed ("That's right, elephants are big") or by adding new ideas ("Elephants are grey")
- Sing favourite songs together (you can learn some actions to go along with these songs by getting books or videos from the library, just ask your local librarian)

Communication of the Four Year Old

- Asks lots and lots of questions
- Identifies simple shapes (triangles, circles and squares)
- Talks in at least four to five word sentences ("I don't want night-night")
- Has around 1500 words in their vocabulary
- Stays with one activity for 11-12 minutes
- Can clearly say these sounds: t, d, y

Here's What You Can Do...

- Read longer stories together and make up your own stories too
- Accept that your grandchild's pronunciation may not be perfect yet
- Help your grandchild group objects together, talk about their categories ("Lets go on a bug hunt in the backyard. How many bugs can we find? I found a butterfly!")



Communication of the Five Year Old

- Understands opposites (big/little, hot/cold, hard/soft) and same versus different
- Counts up to ten
- Talks in at least five to six word sentences ("Grandma, yesterday we went to the zoo")
- Has around 2000 words
- Stays with one activity for 12-13 minutes
- Can clearly say most sounds but may still be having some difficulty with: r, th, l, ch and j

Here's What You Can Do...

- Remember that your grandchild will understand more than they can say
- Continue to comment on what is going on around your grandchild but also add some Wh-questions (who, what, when, where, why and how)
- Encourage your grandchild to tell you about events that have already happened (their day at school or their weekend)

Communication of the Six Year Old

- Names days of the week in order; counts to 30
- Tells a story with four to five parts
- Understands the meaning of yesterday, today, tomorrow
- Uses adult-like grammar when talking ("I brushed my teeth", "We are sleeping", "I see two dogs")
- Correctly produces speech sounds

Here's What You Can Do...

- Create quiet times together with your grandchild to just sit and talk, they will cherish these special times just as much as you do
- Let your grandchild watch a special video or television program and have them re-tell the story to you or act it out
- Participate in activities together that involve a step-by-step sequence (crafts or baking cookies)
- Encourage your grandchild to 'read' to you by telling you what is happening in the pictures using their own words

Just remember that the most important thing is to have fun while interacting and learning with your grandchild. These are just some ideas to consider, add your own special touch! If you have any questions or concerns about your grandchild's communication development, contact a speech-language pathologist in your community.

Speech-language pathologists and audiologists may provide services in medical, educational and community settings. Services may be funded by the government or provided on a fee-for-service basis by a private speech-language pathologist or audiologist.

Contact the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (ACSLPA) at www.acslpa.ab.ca. Visit their home page, click on 'Services' and search by city (Calgary) for a comprehensive list of public agencies in Calgary that employ speech-language pathologists. ACSLPA may also be contacted by phone at:

- 800.537.0589 (toll free within Alberta)
- 780.944.1609

A list of private practice speech-language pathologists is available from the Alberta Speech-Language Association of Private Practitioners (ASAPP). Visit their website at www.asapp.ca for more information, or to obtain a roster of private practitioners. You may also contact ASAPP at 780.988.2217 or email at info@asapp.ca.