

Parent Observation & Reflection Guide

Foundations of Speech & Language Development: Building Skills Layer by Layer

Parent Observation Guide (0–7+ years)

How to Use This Guide

This guide is a Parent Observation & Reflection Tool designed to help you notice and reflect on your child's growth in speech, language, play, and cognition. It is **not a diagnostic tool**, but a way to:

1. Observe and Reflect
 - Record what your child does naturally in everyday life.
 - Focus on progress and process, not comparing milestones or counting words.
2. Understand Layered Development
 - Each age section represents a foundational layer of skills, from early communication and play to advanced reasoning.
 - See how skills build on one another over time.
3. Start Conversations with Professionals
 - Bring your reflections to your child's pediatrician or SLP.
 - Helps professionals understand strengths, interests, and areas to support.
4. Supplement with ASHA & CDC Guidelines (Optional)
 - [CDC Developmental Milestones](#)
 - [ASHA Speech & Language Milestones](#)
 - Use these if you want structured milestone tracking, but remember every child develops at their own pace.

Tips for Reflection:

- Observe in natural settings like play, routines, and social interactions.
- Note specific examples in the Parent Reflection / Notes column.
- Revisit over time to notice patterns, progress, and emerging skills.

This guide helps you see your child's growth, engage in their development, and start meaningful conversations with professionals.

0-12 Months | Foundation Layer

Domain	What you might notice	Parent reflection prompts	Comments
Speech	Your baby may coo, babble, or experiment with sounds. Some children may say their first words by the end of the first year.	Which sounds or early words have you noticed?	
Receptive Language	Responds to familiar voices, reacts when called by name, shows interest in songs, rhythms, and routines.	How does your baby respond to voices, sounds, or routines?	
Expressive Language	Uses gestures such as pointing, waving, clapping, reaching to communicate, or imitating sounds.	What gestures or imitations have you noticed?	
Play	Engages in sensory play (exploring textures, mouthing toys), functional play (using objects as intended), and enjoys cause-effect toys.	Which activities or toys have captured your baby's attention?	
Cognition	Explores objects, demonstrates object permanence, begins cause-effect understanding, and problem-solving using means-end strategies (using a tool to achieve a goal).	What problem-solving or exploratory behaviors have you noticed?	

When to seek guidance

- Limited vocalizations, babbling or gestures
- Minimal exploration or curiosity
- Rare response to voices, sounds, or social cues

1- 3 years | Emerging Communication and Play

Domain	What you might notice	Parent reflection prompts	Comments
Speech	Vocabulary is growing; some children combine 2–3 words (“more juice,” “go car”).	Which new words or combinations have you noticed?	
Receptive Language	Follows simple 2-step directions, understands basic questions, recognizes familiar objects and routines.	How does your child respond to instructions or questions?	
Expressive Language	Combines gestures and words, asks “what” and “where” questions, labels objects and experiences.	Which communication moments have you noticed?	
Play	Engages in sensory play, functional play, single-step pretend play and some multi-step pretend play.	What types of play has your child enjoyed?	
Cognition	Explores problem-solving (puzzles, stacking blocks), understands cause-effect and means-end relationships, begins planning actions.	What problem-solving or exploratory behaviors have you noticed?	

When to Seek Guidance

- Limited gestures or words, minimal imitation
- Minimal pretend or functional play
- Difficulty following simple instructions

3-5 years | Expanding, Language, Play and Cognition

Domain	What you might notice	Parent reflection prompts	Comments
Speech	Speech mostly intelligible; uses longer sentences (3–5 words).	Which new sentences or questions have you noticed?	
Receptive Language	Follows multi-step directions, understands “why” and “how” questions, grasps more abstract concepts.	How does your child respond to explanations or directions?	
Expressive Language	Uses correct grammar, tells short stories with beginning, middle, and end, sequences events, labels emotions.	Which stories, explanations, or conversations have you noticed?	
Play	Engages in imaginative role play, multi-step pretend play, cooperative play, rule-based games, sensory and functional play.	What types of play have you observed?	
Cognition	Problem-solving using planning, early math concepts, categorization, understanding complex object permanence, cause-effect reasoning, simple puzzles.	What problem-solving or planning behaviors have you noticed?	

When to Seek Guidance

- Limited sentence use or difficulty expressing ideas
- Minimal pretend or cooperative play
- Difficulty following multi-step directions

5-7 years | Early school-age years

Domain	What you might notice	Parent reflection prompts	Comments
Speech	Speech is clear, uses full sentences, asks questions, retells events or stories.	Which type of sentences, questions, or stories have you noticed?	
Receptive Language	Understands more complex instructions, grasps nuances in conversation, follows multi-step classroom directions.	How does your child respond to instructions or explanations?	
Expressive Language	Uses descriptive language, participates in conversations, tells structured stories with characters, problem-solving, and emotional content.	What narratives or explanations have you noticed?	
Play	Engages in role play, cooperative play, rule-based games, multi-step pretend scenarios, creative problem-solving.	Which types of play have you observed?	
Cognition	Applies reasoning to solve problems, plans steps to achieve goals, uses early reading skills, understands cause-effect and sequences.	What problem-solving or planning behaviors have you noticed?	

When to Seek Guidance

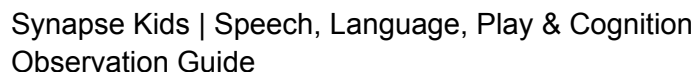
- Persistent difficulty with language or social play
- Struggles with problem-solving or following instructions
- Limited engagement with peers or structured play

7+ years | Advanced Skills

Domain	What you might notice	Parent reflection prompts	Comments
Speech	Fluent speech, appropriate prosody, can explain ideas clearly and with detail.	Which examples of ideas or explanations have you noticed?	
Receptive Language	Understands complex concepts, multi-step instructions, figurative language, and abstract ideas.	How does your child respond to complex instructions or explanations?	
Expressive Language	Uses structured narratives, academic vocabulary, logical sequencing, storytelling with characters, problem-solving, and emotional content.	Which narratives or problem-solving explanations have you noticed?	
Play	Participates in cooperative group play, role-play with rules, problem-solving games, creative play (Lego etc)with peers.	What types of play or social interactions have you noticed?	
Cognition	Solves multi-step problems, plans and predicts outcomes, uses abstract reasoning, applies cause-effect and sequence understanding in daily tasks and academic work.	How does your child plan daily tasks, school work? What strategies have you noticed?	

When to Seek Guidance

- Difficulty communicating ideas or participating in peer interactions
- Struggles with multi-step tasks, problem-solving, or planning
- Limited engagement in complex play or academic tasks



Use this space to capture anything else you notice about your child that may be helpful for your pediatrician, SLP, or other professionals. Consider:

- Parent Notes / Observations:**

[illegible]

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