

# First 100 Words & Early Two-Word Combinations

*A research-informed overview of early expressive language development  
(Based on ASHA guidance, Rossetti, REEL-3, MacArthur-Bates CDI, and early language research)*

## First 100 Words: Common Early Vocabulary Categories

### People and Social Partners

Mama	dada	mommy	daddy	baby
Me	you	Mine	Grandpa	Grandma

### Social words & Daily routines

Hi	Bye-bye	yes	No	Please
Thank you	Okay	All done	Uh-oh	Again

### Action words/ Verbs

Go	Stop	Eat	Drink	Play
help	Want	See	Like	Look
Open	Close	Push	Pull	throw
Cash	Jump	Run	Sleep	wash

### Everyday Objects\* *this is personal category and varies accordingly to each family*

clothes/ dress	Book	Toy	Table	door
cup	Spoon	Bottle	Hat	Shoe
sock	Bed	blankie/ blanket	Chair	TV
phone/ipad	Pizza	diaper	plate	Cookie
Apple	Banna	Juice	Milk	water

## Animals and Toys

Cat	Dog	Cow	Goat	pig
chicken	Bunny	Sheep	bird	Fish
Doll	Baby	Puzzle	book	Teddy
phone	Slide	Swing	Blocks	Bubble
Ball	Car	Truck	Train	song /music

## Descriptor, Location and function words

More	Big	Hot	Up	Down
In	out	On	Off	Here
there	This	That	All gone	Help

## How to Use This Handout

This handout is a **reference guide**, not a checklist. Children do not learn words in a fixed order, and vocabulary growth looks different for every child depending on routines, play, interaction, culture and exposure.

Use this handout to:

- Understand the **types of words** children commonly learn early
- Notice how **meaning and intent** develop before sentence structure
- See how single words naturally expand into **two-word combinations**
- Support conversations with your pediatrician or speech-language pathologist if you have questions

For milestone timelines, you may also refer to **CDC and ASHA developmental milestone checklists**.

## Early Two-Word Combinations: Meaning Before Grammar

As vocabulary grows (often around 50–100 words), children begin combining words to express **relationships, actions, and intent**. These combinations reflect early grammar development.

Combination Type	What the child is expressing	Example
Agent + Action	Who is doing something	<i>Mommy go, daddy work, dog run</i>
Action + Object	What is happening to what	<i>eat cookie, throw ball</i>
Agent + Object	Who has or wants something	<i>mommy shoe/ baby toy</i>
Action + Location	Movement or action in space	<i>go park, sit chair</i>
Entity + Location	Where something is	<i>cup table, dog bed</i>
Attribute + Object	Describing something	<i>big ball, hot milk</i>
Recurrence+ Object	Wanting more or repetition	<i>more juice, again play</i>
Negation + Object	Refusal / non-existence	<i>no cookie, all gone milk</i>
Possessor + Object	Ownership	<i>my toy, daddy car</i>

### How to Use This Two-Word Combination List

This list highlights **common meaning-based word combinations** children use as they move from single words to early phrases. These combinations reflect **what the child is trying to communicate**, not grammatical correctness

### Key Takeaway

Two-word combinations signal an important shift in language development:  
**words are no longer used in isolation, but to express relationships and ideas.**

Early language develops **layer by layer**:

**interaction** → **single words** → **meaning-based combinations** → **grammar**. A child does not need “perfect speech” or a specific number of phrases to be developing appropriately. What matters most is whether language is being used **purposefully to communicate**.

## References (select)

### First Words & Early Vocabulary

- Fenson, L., Marchman, V. A., Thal, D. J., Dale, P. S., Reznick, J. S., & Bates, E. (2007). *MacArthur-Bates communicative development inventories: User's guide and technical manual* (2nd ed.). Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Rescorla, L. (1989). The language development survey: A screening tool for delayed language in toddlers. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 54(4), 587–599.
- Rossetti, L. M. (2006). *The Rossetti Infant-Toddler Language Scale*. LinguiSystems.
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *How does your child hear and talk?* <https://www.asha.org>

### Two-Word Combinations & Early Syntax

- Brown, R. (1973). *A first language: The early stages*. Harvard University Press.
- Owens, R. E. (2020). *Language development: An introduction* (10th ed.). Pearson.
- Paul, R., & Norbury, C. (2012). *Language disorders from infancy through adolescence* (4th ed.). Elsevier.

Synapse Kids LLC