

Early Talk Boost Tracker

Child's name..... Date of Tracker

Date of birth..... Age: Years Months.....Male/Female.....

Name of person completing the Tracker

Notes

Has child been screened at 2 years? Yes/No

If Yes, was development on track? Yes/No

If No, what areas were highlighted for support?

Have parents raised any concerns about their child's communication and language skills? Yes/No

What language(s) does the child speak at home?

Are they learning English as an additional language (EAL)? Yes/No

Scoring

Always (where the child consistently does this in different situations): Score 2




Sometimes (you may have observed them doing this once or twice; it's an emerging skill): Score 1

Never (where you haven't observed the child doing something): Score 0




If children can't respond or give a correct answer for four items in a row, stop and move on to the next section.


Attention and listening

Complete this section through your observations and knowledge of the child

	Attention and listening	Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
	1. Can the child join in with play in a pair or small group?	Score 2 or 1 if they will share toys or take turns with others in a pair or small group. Score 0 if they only focus on what they're interested in or only play on their own. (They may let you sit beside them but not let you join in.)			
	2. Can the child listen and respond to simple information or instructions directed to them?	Score 2 or 1 if when you say 'We need to wash our hands, it's snack time', they look up and carry out an action (even if it's not the correct one). Score 0 if they don't respond.			
	3. Does the child show an interest in music and singing?	Score 2 or 1 if they enjoy playing with musical instruments. They may join in with actions and sing the rhythm (and sometimes the words) to favourite songs. Score 0 if they don't show any interest when musical instruments are shaken or banged, or when singing starts.			



	Attention and listening	Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
A	4. Can the child shift attention between what they're doing and listen to you, as long as you help them and fully get their attention?	<p>For example: the child is playing with a car and you say 'Ayshea, it's time to tidy up'. Ayshea looks up from her play and looks at you.</p> <p>Score 2 if they always look at you when you call their name, and carry out an action (even if it's not the correct one).</p> <p>Score 1 if they respond sometimes, or if you need to repeat their name.</p> <p>Score 0 if they don't respond when you call their name, or if it's difficult to get a response.</p>			
A	5. Can the child listen with interest to a general conversation or commentary on play?	<p>For example: you're talking about the weather and if the children need coats to play outside, or you're playing alongside a child and talking about a model they're making.</p> <p>Score 2 if they consistently respond in a way that shows they're listening, even if they don't understand what's being said.</p> <p>Score 1 if they only respond sometimes.</p> <p>Score 0 if they don't respond.</p>			
A	6. Does the child respond to many familiar sounds, e.g. the telephone, the doorbell, a fire engine?	<p>Score 2 if they can listen to, recognise and respond to lots of sounds.</p> <p>Score 1 if they're able to listen to and respond to some more familiar sounds.</p> <p>Score 0 if they struggle to identify familiar sounds.</p>			




	Attention and listening	Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
	7. Can the child maintain their attention between what they're doing/looking at, and listening to you?	<p>For example: the child is playing with a teddy, and you join them. As they put the teddy to bed, you say 'Teddy's very sleepy'. The child says 'He's tired' and covers the teddy and rocks the crib.</p> <p>Score 2 if they consistently maintain their attention. Score 1 if they only do this sometimes. Score 0 if they aren't able to maintain attention.</p>			
	8. Does the child join in fully in short circle time and adult-led activities?	<p>Score 2 if they actively listen to a group story or join in singing for up to five minutes.</p> <p>Score 1 if they engage for less than five minutes or do so only sometimes. Score 0 if they aren't able to do this.</p>			
	9. Can the child wait for your attention for a short time (up to three minutes)?	<p>For example: you're speaking to another child and Tommy says your name. You say 'I'm just talking to Ayshea. I'll come and talk to you when I'm finished'. Tommy sits down next to you and plays with a car while he waits for you to finish your conversation.</p> <p>Score 2 if they can consistently do this. Score 1 if they only do this fleetingly or sometimes. Score 0 if they can't do this.</p>			



	Attention and listening	Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
	10. Does the child get involved in and stick with an activity?	<p>For example: the child has chosen a jigsaw puzzle and tries to put in the pieces; sometimes putting the pieces in straightaway and sometimes not. Or the child is in the home corner and pretends to make and serve lunch for the teddies.</p> <p>Score 2 if they persist until the activity or task is completed and/or play the same game for up to five minutes.</p> <p>Score 1 if they do some/most of the activity or task and leave.</p> <p>Score 0 if they give up and move quickly between activities and tasks.</p>			
		Total score for Attention and listening			




Language: Understanding words and sentences



Complete this section with the child

	Language: Understanding words and sentences	Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
R	<p>1. Does the child follow general instructions during daily routines and activities?</p>	<p>For example: when you ask, the child will leave a routine activity or task to complete another action: 'Jade, come and look at this puzzle with me'.</p> <p>Score 2 if they always do this.</p> <p>Score 1 if they sometimes do this.</p> <p>Score 0 if they follow an established routine and don't change it when you ask them to do something else.</p>			
R	<p>2. Does the child understand the size concepts big and little in instructions?</p> <p>Using Picture A, say: <i>Show me the big teddy.</i></p> <p>Using a big and little sheep, say: <i>Show me the little sheep.</i></p>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;">   </div> <p>Picture A Big and little sheep</p> <p>Score 2 for two correct responses.</p> <p>Score 1 for one correct response.</p> <p>Score 0 for no correct responses.</p>			

	Language: Understanding words and sentences	Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
R	<p>3. Can the child understand everyday action words?</p> <p>Using Picture B, say: <i>Show me who's eating.</i> <i>Show me who's sleeping.</i></p>	 <p>Picture B</p> <p>Score 2 for two correct responses. Score 1 for one correct response. Score 0 for no correct responses.</p>			
A	<p>4. Can the child understand in and under?</p> <p>Using the bag, the box and two animals, put one animal in the box and one under the bag. Say: <i>Show me who's under.</i> <i>Show me who's in.</i></p>	  <p>Bag Box and two animals</p> <p>Score 2 for two correct responses. Score 1 for one correct response. Score 0 for no correct responses.</p>			

	Language: Understanding words and sentences	Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
A	<p>5. Does the child understand questions that use the question words who, what and where?</p> <p>Using Picture B, say: <i>Who's this?</i> (point to the boy or girl) <i>What's the boy eating?</i> <i>Where's the girl sitting?</i></p>	 <p>Picture B</p> <p>Acceptable answers <i>Who's this?:</i> they say 'Boy'/'Girl', or someone's name. <i>What's the boy eating?:</i> they say anything to do with food (doesn't have to be the correct food item). <i>Where's the girl sitting?:</i> they point to the correct picture, or say anything to do with location, e.g. 'There'/'On the floor' (doesn't have to be the correct vocabulary).</p> <p>Score 2 for three correct responses. Score 1 for one or two correct responses. Score 0 for no correct responses.</p>			
A	<p>6. Can the child identify an object by what you do with it?</p> <p>Using a cup, a banana and a ball, put them all in front of the child and say: <i>Show me something you eat.</i> <i>Show me something you drink from.</i> <i>Show me something you throw.</i></p>	 <p>Cup, banana, ball</p> <p>Score 2 for three correct responses. Score 1 for one or two correct responses. Score 0 for no correct responses.</p>			




	Language: Understanding words and sentences	Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
G	<p>7. Does the child understand the question why?</p> <p>Using Pictures C1 and C3, say: <i>Why do you think he's sleeping?</i> <i>Why do you think he's eating?</i></p>	 <p>Pictures C1 and C3</p> <p>Acceptable answers 'Because he's tired'/'It's bedtime', etc. 'Because he's hungry'/'It tastes good'/'He likes it'.</p> <p>Note: any answer is acceptable as long it's a reason for the action, but not 'Because his pillow is blue'/'He has his eyes open', etc.</p> <p>Score 2 for two correct responses. Score 1 for one correct response. Score 0 for no correct responses.</p>			
G	<p>8. Can the child follow instructions that have three key words, including in and under?</p> <p>Using a toy sheep, a horse and another animal, say: <i>We're going to play a hiding game:</i> <i>Put the sheep in the box.</i> <i>Put the horse under the bag.</i></p>	  <p>Bag Box, sheep, horse, other animal</p> <p>The child must get all three elements of the instruction correct, e.g. sheep, in and box.</p> <p>Score 2 for two correct responses. Score 1 for one correct response. Score 0 for no correct responses.</p>			




	Language: Understanding words and sentences	Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
G	<p>9. Does the child understand his and her?</p> <p>Using Picture B, say: <i>Show me his nose.</i> <i>Show me her hair.</i></p>	 <p>Picture B Score 2 for two correct responses. Score 1 for one correct response. Score 0 for no correct responses.</p>			
G	<p>10. Can the child follow a story involving a character, setting and basic actions?</p> <p>Using Pictures C1, C2 and C3, say: <i>I'm going to tell you a story. I want you to listen so you can tell me what happened.</i> <i>Daniel woke up. He stretched and got out of bed.</i> <i>Next he got dressed. He put on his jeans.</i> <i>Last he went downstairs to breakfast. He had cereal.</i> <i>Can you show me, with the pictures, what happened first?</i> <i>What happened next?</i> <i>What happened last?</i></p>	 <p>Pictures C1, C2 and C3 The child must put the pictures in order or point to the pictures to show they understand the questions. Score 2 for three correct pictures. Score 1 for one or two correct pictures. Score 0 for no correct pictures.</p>			
		Total score for Language: Understanding words and sentences			



Language: Speaking

Complete this section through your observations and knowledge of the child

	Language: Speaking	Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
R	1. Can the child express verbally their wants, needs and thoughts?	<p>For example: does the child say phrases like 'I want milk', 'I need wee wee'; or do they say 'Mummy juice' or just 'Juice'?</p> <p>Score 2 if they always use verbal expressions. Score 1 if they sometimes use verbal expressions. Score 0 if they only use gestures and/or sounds and if they point or take your hand to show you what they want.</p>			
R	2. Can the child join words together, and speak in sentences of two to three words?	<p>For example: 'Mummy go work'/'Me drink juice'.</p> <p>Score 2 if they always use sentences of this length or longer. Score 1 if they sometimes use sentences of this length but don't use longer sentences. Score 0 if they don't use two- to three-word sentences.</p> <p>Note: this relates to spontaneous talk, e.g. during play, rather than responses to questions (which are often shorter).</p>			

Language: Speaking		Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
	3. Does the child say the names of familiar people and objects in the right situations?	<p>For example: the child says 'Dog' when they see a dog and 'Cat' when they see a cat; they can name their keyworker or a child they want to play with.</p> <p>Score 2 if they always use familiar names and can name a wide range of objects.</p> <p>Score 1 if they say one or two familiar names and can name some familiar objects, e.g. car, ball, milk.</p> <p>Score 0 if they don't say the names of people or objects, if they often use words like 'Thingy' or 'Whatsit', or use incorrect names for familiar people and objects.</p>			
	4. Does the child talk briefly about what they've said and done?	<p>For example: 'Me build castle', 'Me went to shops'.</p> <p>Score 2 if they always do this.</p> <p>Score 1 if they sometimes do this.</p> <p>Score 0 if they never do this.</p>			
	5. Can people who know the child well (e.g. parents/ keyworker) understand what they say most of the time?	<p>Score 2 if they can be understood by people who know them well most of the time.</p> <p>Score 1 if they're sometimes hard for even familiar people to understand.</p> <p>Score 0 if it's hard to understand what they say most of the time.</p> <p>Note: for more information about how children's speech sounds develop, see the Talking Point website.</p>			





	Language: Speaking	Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
	6. Does the child remember and like joining in with songs and rhymes, and repeat familiar lines in stories?	For example: the child sings along to 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star', or says 'I sent him back' when playing with puppets (remembering this from the story, <i>Dear Zoo</i>). Score 2 if they do this for all familiar songs and stories. Score 1 if they only do this sometimes or for one familiar story or song. Score 0 if they use actions only or if they don't join in.			
	7. Can the child join words together and speak in sentences of three to five words?	For example: 'I want to play with cars'/'He took my train'/' <i>The Hungry Caterpillar</i> is my favourite story'. Score 2 if they always use sentences of this length or longer. Score 1 if they sometimes use sentences of this length. Score 0 if they don't use three- to five-word sentences.			
	8. Does the child use the following word endings? -s -ing -ed	For example: 'I've got two cars'/'I'm running/walking'/'I walked/ jumped'. Score 2 if they always use these word endings. Score 1 if they use them sometimes. Score 0 if they never use them.			




	Language: Speaking	Resources needed Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
G	<p>9. Can the child tell you how an object is used?</p> <p>Using the three items, say: <i>Tell me what you do with a cup.</i> <i>Tell me what you do with a banana.</i> <i>Tell me what you do with a toothbrush.</i></p>	 Cup, banana, toothbrush The child must tell you what they do with it, rather than show you, i.e. 'Drink', 'Eat', 'Brush'. Score 2 for three correct responses. Score 1 for one or two correct responses. Score 0 for no correct responses.			
G	<p>10. Can the child join ideas together using connecting words like and?</p> <p>Using Pictures C1, C2 and C3, say: <i>I'm going to tell you a story, and I want you to listen so you can tell me what happened.</i> <i>Daniel woke up. He stretched and got out of bed.</i> <i>Next he got dressed and he put on his jeans.</i> <i>And then he went downstairs to breakfast.</i> <i>He had cereal.</i> <i>Now you tell me the story.</i></p>	 Pictures C1, C2 and C3 Score 2 if they use more than one connecting word. Score 1 if they use one connecting word. Score 0 if they don't use any connecting words.			
Total score for Language: Speaking					

Communication: Personal, social and emotional skills

Complete this section through your observations and knowledge of the child

	Communication: Personal, social and emotional skills	Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
R	1. Does the child play together with other children?	Score 2 if they always do this. Score 1 if they sometimes do this. Score 0 if they play alongside but don't join in with other children, or if they always play alone.			
R	2. Does the child say 'Bye' and other social words such as 'Hi'?	For example: the child says 'Hi' when they come in in the morning and 'Bye' when they leave. They may also say 'Please' and 'Thank you' when they ask for something. Score 2 if they always do this. Score 1 if they sometimes do this. Score 0 if they never use social words or only use gestures.			
R	3. Is the child able to control emotions, using language to sort out difficulties?	For example: the child is playing with a train when another child takes it from her. The child is upset and says 'Want train' but waits for you to resolve the situation. Score 2 if they can control their emotions while you resolve the situation. Score 1 if they're very upset and can't be easily calmed by talking. Score 0 if they snatch the toy back, scream or hit out.			

Communication: Personal, social and emotional skills		Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
	4. Does the child demonstrate understanding of the 'rules' about sharing toys?	Score 2 if they can consistently play alongside others, each having toys to play with. Score 1 if they can share some toys but not their favourites. Score 0 if they pick up all toys when another child sits down to play with them and says 'Mine'.			
	5. Does the child appear at ease when playing alongside peers in a small group?	For example: the child is relaxed when sharing cars and making up a game with others, and they all enjoy themselves. Score 2 if they always enjoy playing with other children in small groups. Score 1 if they only sometimes enjoy playing with others, or only for one favourite activity. Score 0 if they never play with other children.			
	6. Does the child show an interest in other children's play, and join in?	For example: they see another child make a snake, make their own snake and then both children play snakes together. Score 2 if they always do this. Score 1 if they sometimes do this. Score 0 if they never do this.			
	7. Can the child talk about their emotions (e.g. happy, sad, upset) and show empathy (e.g. noticing when other children are happy or sad and crying)?	For example: the child can tell you that going swimming makes them happy, or that another child has fallen over or is unwell, and so is sad. Score 2 if they always do this. Score 1 if they sometimes do this. Score 0 if they never do this.			

Communication: Personal, social and emotional skills		Scoring guidance	Score		
			Always: score 2	Sometimes: score 1	Never: score 0
	8. Can the child introduce or reiterate 'rules' for playing, using words?	<p>For example: they tell another child 'We've got to do sharing', they divide a large piece of dough and say 'One bit for you, one bit for me', or they say 'It's not fair – Ayshea's had a long time with the bricks'.</p> <p>Score 2 if they always do this. Score 1 if they sometimes do this. Score 0 if they never do this.</p>			
	9. Can the child take turns with adults and peers to work in groups?	<p>For example: the child plays games such as Snap, Bingo or Pass the Parcel.</p> <p>Score 2 if they always do this. Score 1 if they sometimes do this. Score 0 if they never do this.</p>			
	10. Does the child enjoy and become fully engaged in role play?	<p>For example: the child can play in a home corner running a cafe, taking orders and serving drinks.</p> <p>Score 2 if they always do this. Score 1 if they sometimes do this or only play superficially. Score 0 if they never do this.</p>			
		Total score for Communication: Personal, social and emotional skills			

Scoring

If a child scores well on each section, but you're still concerned about their speech, language and communication development, use the Progress Checker at www.talkingpoint.org.uk/progresschecker, or the poster at www.talkingpoint.org.uk/resources/stages-speech-and-language-development.

3–3½ years

	Total score	Working below age expectations	Working towards age expectations	Working at age expectations
Attention and listening		0–6	7–12	13–20
Language: Understanding words and sentences		0–6	7–12	13–20
Language: Speaking		0–6	7–12	13–20
Communication: Personal, social and emotional skills		0–6	7–14	15–20
Overall total score		0–27	28–53	54–80
	Action to take	Further investigation or referral to a speech and language therapist	Targeted support, e.g. <i>Early Talk Boost</i>	Quality first teaching and monitoring

3½–4 years

	Total score	Working below age expectations	Working towards age expectations	Working at age expectations
Attention and listening		0–10	11–16	17–20
Language: Understanding words and sentences		0–10	11–16	17–20
Language: Speaking		0–10	11–16	17–20
Communication: Personal, social and emotional skills		0–10	11–16	17–20
Overall total score		0–43	44–67	68–80
	Action to take	Further investigation or referral to a speech and language therapist	Targeted support, e.g. <i>Early Talk Boost</i>	Quality first teaching and monitoring

4–4½ years

	Total score	Working below age expectations	Working towards age expectations	Working at age expectations
Attention and listening		0–14	15–17	18–20
Language: Understanding words and sentences		0–14	15–17	18–20
Language: Speaking		0–14	15–17	18–20
Communication: Personal, social and emotional skills		0–14	15–17	18–20
Overall total score		0–59	60–71	72–80
	Action to take	Further investigation or referral to a speech and language therapist	Targeted support, e.g. <i>Early Talk Boost</i>	Quality first teaching and monitoring