

Language milestones from 0 to 5

For a child growing up with two or more languages. Approximate markers: every child moves at their own pace.

Age	What they understand	What they say
0–6 months	Reacts to sounds and voices; calms when spoken to	Coos around 3 to 6 months, smiles, makes sounds back
6–12 months	Responds to their name; understands "no" and a few familiar words	Babbles ("bababa") around 6 to 9 months; points and waves around 9 to 12 months
12–18 months	Follows simple directions, at first with gestures	First words around 12 months; at least about 15 words by 18 months
18–24 months	Follows simple directions without gestures; points to body parts	About 50 words or more and two-word combinations around age 2
2–3 years	Follows two-step directions; understands where, who, what	2- to 3-word phrases, then 3 to 4 words around 3; asks questions
3–4 years	Follows longer directions; understands why and when	Full sentences; talks about their day; understood most of the time
4–5 years	Understands explanations and time words	Long sentences ("because"); tells a story; understood by strangers

How to read this chart for a bilingual child

- **Add up the words in all their languages:** *chien* + *dog* = 2 words.
- **At least one language** should be on track, often the one they hear most.
- **Understanding and gestures count.** Mixing languages is normal.

Talk to a professional if your child...

- loses words, gestures or babbling they had (at any age)
- doesn't babble or respond to their name around 12 months
- uses few or no gestures (pointing, waving) around 12 to 18 months
- says fewer than ~14 words at 18 months or ~50 words at 2 (all languages), or isn't combining 2 words at 2
- has difficulty in all their languages; is understood only by parents around 3

Their words over two weeks, in all their languages

Language 1: _____	Language 2: _____	Total words
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Sources: OOAQ (2026), Naître et grandir, CDC (2022), ASHA (2023), API-Enfance grids (adding-up rule). These markers come mostly from studies of children who speak one language. This chart does not replace an assessment.