

# Speech and Language Considerations for Junior & Senior Kindergarten

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## What is typical speech & language development for a 4-year-old?

- Speech is easily understood by strangers most of the time (*errors affecting later-developing sounds such as 'r', 's', 'l', 'th' are still common*)
- Follows directions with 2 - 3 steps (e.g., "Get a paper, draw a picture, put it on the pile.")
- Can retell stories after hearing them; stories have clear beginning, middle & end
- Average sentences are 4 - 5 words long
- Uses adult-sounding grammar most of the time, including:
  - Plurals (*boys*)
  - Regular past tense (e.g., 'walked') - may over-generalize to irregular verbs (e.g., 'comed', 'goed', 'drinked')
  - Possessives ('John's dog')
  - Uses pronouns but may still confuse *him/he, he/she, them/their* etc.
- Able to ask and answer 'wh' questions (e.g., '*Where is Mom?*', '*What ...?*', '*Who....?*', '*Why...?*', '*How...?*' etc.)
- Interested in and able to listen to longer stories.
- Some children may have a period of dysfluent speech similar to stuttering: they may revise, interject, or repeat words and phrases. (*If this persists for several months, seems to be associated with tension or a struggle to push words out, or includes repetition of sounds or syllables within words, have a word with your Speech Language Pathologist*)



## What is typical speech & language for a 5-year-old?



- Speech is understandable more than 90% of the time (*errors affecting 's', 'th', 'r', 'l' etc. are still acceptable*)
- Sentences are complete, often complex/compound, and 6 or more words in length.
- Grammar is more mature (may still have errors), with more accurate use of:
  - Pronouns: *he, she, they, his, her, their, him, them*
  - Verb tenses (e.g., *He will go to school. I went to the store. The dog has long ears. The kittens were sleepy.*)
  - Small words like *a, the, because, if*
- Understands and uses time concepts such as '*today*', '*tomorrow*', '*morning*' and '*afternoon*'
- Uses and understands descriptive words about concepts such as:
  - Location (e.g., *around, beside, behind*)
  - Size/amount (e.g., *tall, few, whole*)
  - Comparison (e.g., *most, shorter, fastest*)
- Consistently recognizes and produces rhymes; enjoys playing with words that sound alike
- Classifies objects into categories such as food, animals, toys, shapes, etc.
- Understands sentences with dependent clauses: '*if ....*', '*because ...*', '*when ....*'
- Fluency difficulties are less common