

# Your 6 Year Old

Speech and Language Tips



## 6 year olds tell creative and detailed stories

By 6 years of age, your child tells lots of stories. Their sentences are getting longer and are full of many new and different types of words. Your child is having conversations with other people about new experiences, their feelings, and what's around them. Their listening skills are getting better and they're able to understand more.

### How children learn language

Children learn language every day and in almost everything they do. They learn new words, new sentences, and how to play with language. Any activity that you and your child do together is a chance to learn.

### Try these tips in your language

#### Talking tips

- **Help your child make more complex sentences.** Add words that connect your child's sentences together. For example, if your child says, "I'm tired. I want to go to bed," you say, "Ahh, you want to go to bed because you're tired."
- **Use different types of words when you talk.** Describe a new object, like a blender, to your child. Talk about what it does (it mixes up food), what it goes with (food), what group it belongs to (kitchen things), and where you find it (in the kitchen).
- **Tell stories to your child.** Use words like first, next, and then.

#### Listening tips

- **Use order (first, second, third, last), position (between, beside), and time (before, after) words.** Show your child what these words mean as you say them.
- **Get your child ready to listen.** Say their name, then give them an instruction. After giving the instruction ask, "What do you need to do?" Encourage them to tell you what they need to do.
- **Talk about how things go together and how they're different.** When you're cleaning, you might say, "The vacuum and the broom are the same because I use both to clean. They're different because the vacuum cleans the rug and the broom cleans the floor. I plug in the vacuum but I don't plug in the broom."



For more information scan this QR code or visit: [ahs.ca/talkbox](https://ahs.ca/talkbox)



## Activities to try

### Children learn by doing

- **Ask your child to tell you how to do something.** Let them be the teacher. Ask them to tell you how to play a game that you both know well, how to make a sandwich, or how brush to their teeth. This gives your child practice using words like first, next, and then. It also gives them practice putting their ideas in order.
- **Tell stories together.** Ask your child to tell you what happened at school that day. Ask them to tell you what happened in a movie, TV show, or book. Tell your child about your day. Use words that talk about the order in which things happen.
- **Play listening games, like Simon Says.** Start with simple directions, like “Simon says, touch your nose.” Slowly make the directions harder by adding more steps, like “Simon says, touch your nose and your knees,” or by adding words, like “Simon says, touch your nose before you touch your toes,” or “Close your eyes after you turn around.”
- **Use lots of feeling words, like excited, nervous, and embarrassed.** Tell your child how you feel as you watch a movie or read a book together. Ask them how they felt about it.

### Children learn by reading

Reading and language go together. Reading helps your child learn to talk and listen. Talking and listening help make reading and writing easier. All of these skills are important in school. Here are some tips to keep reading fun:

- **Continue to read out loud to your child.** Let your child choose books that interest them.
- **Ask your child questions that encourage them to talk about the story.** Ask, “What do you think will happen next?” instead of questions that sound like you are testing them, like “What is her name?” or “Where did it happen?”
- **After you read a story together, ask your child to retell the story in their own words as you flip through the pictures.** Add words like and, then, so, and because as your child tells the story.
- **Talk about the sounds that you hear at the beginning and end of words.** For example, you might say, “Silly starts with the ssss sound.”
- **Practice playing with words by breaking them up into parts.** Take away parts of a word, like rainbow, and ask your child what’s left. “Rainbow. Take away rain. What’s left? Bow.”



## What to expect

Children's experiences and personality will shape how they communicate. However, they do learn the same things in a similar order.

### Most 6 year olds:

#### Talking

- are easy to understand and say most speech sounds correctly, except for th (as in teeth)
- speak in sentences that are 6 to 7 words long
- tell you what you do with something (you eat with a fork)
- tell who was in the story, where the story took place, and what happened

#### Understanding

- listen to a story or to information for 15 to 20 minutes
- understand words like right and left, first, second, and third
- understand how everyday things go together (pig, horse, and cow go together because they are all animals)

#### Social skills

- know how their friends are feeling and tell you how they are feeling
- watch other people's facial expressions and body language to know what they are saying
- take turns in a conversation and stay on topic

### Most 6 year olds:

- use different ways to help with reading a story, like predicting what will happen, asking questions, or using pictures
- break long words into parts (the word snowman has the words snow and man in it)
- know the sound that each letter makes (s says sss)
- know the first sound and some of the last sounds in short words (soup starts with s and ends with p)



## When to get help

### Reach out for help if your child:

- has trouble saying speech sounds except for th (as in teeth)
- is difficult to understand
- uses short sentences when talking
- has difficulty telling you what happened in a story or at school
- has trouble with the rules of conversation, such as taking turns, staying on topic, or letting you know that they do not understand

## Where to get help

Are you concerned about your child's speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. For more information, visit [ahs.ca/pedrehab](https://ahs.ca/pedrehab) or call Health Link at 811.

### For more ideas:

- [curriculum.learnalberta.ca/parents/en/home](https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/parents/en/home)
- [schools.healthiertogether.ca/en/](https://schools.healthiertogether.ca/en/)
- [alberta.ca/family-resource-networks](https://alberta.ca/family-resource-networks)

### Screens and your child

Children learn language best from conversations with others. Time spent on a screen is a missed chance to talk. Minimize screen time. Screen time is using a tablet, phone, television, or other screen. To learn more about screen time, ask a healthcare provider or visit [caringforkids.cps.ca](https://caringforkids.cps.ca).

Some children use apps or devices to communicate, which is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication. These programs are designed to support communication and are not considered screen time.

