AMERICAN SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION BENCHMARKS

Consider cultural and linguistic factors that may influence appropriateness and/or relevance of benchmarks.

AGE	BENCHMARK
Birth to 12 months	prefers looking at human face and eyes; prefers listening to human voice; looks for source of voice; differentiates between tones of voice (angry, friendly); smiles back at caregiver; follows caregiver's gaze; participates in vocal turn-taking with caregiver; vocalizes to get attention; demonstrates joint attention skills (sharing attention); uses gestures to make requests and direct attention; plays simple interactive games, such as peek-a-boo
12–18 months	brings objects to show caregivers; requests by pointing and vocalizing; solicits attention vocally; practices vocal inflection; says "bye" and other ritualized words; protests by shaking head, saying "no"; supplements gestures with verbal language; aware of social value of speech; responds to the speech of others with eye contact; demonstrates sympathy, empathy, and sharing nonverbally
18–24 months	uses single words to express intention; uses single and paired words to command, indicate possession, expresses problems, and gains attention; uses *I*, *me*, *you*, *my*, and *mine*; participates in verbal turn-taking with limited number of turns; demonstrates simple topic control; interrupts at syntactic junctures or in response to prosodic cues
24–36 months	engages in short dialogues; verbally introduces and changes topic; expresses emotion; begins to use language in imaginative way; relates own experiences; begins to provide descriptive details to enhance listener understanding; uses attention-getting words; clarifies and asks for clarification; introduces and changes topics; uses some politeness terms or markers; begins to demonstrate some adaptation of speech to different listeners

3–4 years	engages in longer dialogues; anticipates next turn at talking; terminates conversation; appropriately role-plays; uses fillers—such as *yeah* and *okay*—to acknowledge a partner's message; begins code-switching and uses simpler language when talking to very young children; uses more elliptical responses; requests permission; begins using language for fantasies, jokes, teasing; makes conversational repairs when not understood and corrects others; uses primitive narratives—events follow from central core/use of inferences in stories
4–5 years	uses indirect requests; correctly uses deictic terms (e.g., *this*, *that*, *here*, *there*); uses twice as many effective utterances as 3-year-olds to discuss emotions and feelings; uses narrative development characterized by unfocused chains—stories have sequence of events, but no central character or theme; develops basic understanding of Theory of Mind (ToM); shifts topics rapidly
School-Age Years	demonstrates increased understanding of ToM (e.g., read body language, facial expressions, prosodic characteristics of language to predict behavior, taking the perspective of another and modifying language use accordingly); provides assistance and demonstrates altruism; uses narrative development characterized by causally sequenced events using "story grammar;" demonstrates improved conversational skills (e.g., topic maintenance, repair, and increased number of turns); extends topic of conversation; demonstrates refined social conventions; uses language for varied functions, including persuading and advancing opinion
Adulthood	uses verbal and nonverbal language competently and flexibly; navigates multiple registers flexibly and fluidly; demonstrates refined understanding and use of nonverbal behavior

This table was developed based on information from Gard, Gilman, & Gorman (1993) and Russell (2007).