Informal Speech and Language Screener: 4 years

A structured set of things to listen for at each age, drawn from this site's own word lists, worksheets and awareness tasks. Use it to decide whether a full evaluation is warranted.



READ THIS FIRST

Informal screening tool only. Not standardized, not normed, not diagnostic. This screener has no norms, no standard scores and no cut-offs, and it has not been validated against any standardized measure. It cannot diagnose a speech or language disorder and it cannot rule one out. It is a prompt for clinical judgment: a structured way to listen to a child for ten minutes and decide whether a full evaluation is warranted. A child who sails through it can still have a disorder, and a child who struggles with it may simply be tired, shy, or unfamiliar with the examiner. Nothing here substitutes for a comprehensive assessment by a certified speech-language pathologist.

4 years

INFORMAL SCREENING ONLY

Child: _____ Date: _____ Age: _____

What to expect: Four- and five-word sentences, and speech an unfamiliar listener understands nearly all of the time even if some sounds are still wrong.

Speech sounds 21 WORDS

V Sound /v/


van


vase


vest

S Sound /s/


sun


sock


soap

Z Sound /z/



zoo


zip


zebra

SH Sound /sh/


shoe


ship


shark

CH Sound /ch/


chair


cheese


chin

J Sound /j/


jump


jar


juice

L Sound /l/


leg


light


lamp

Language 12 ITEMS

Irregular Plurals


One foot, two ____ . (feet)


One tooth, many ____ . (teeth)


One man, three ____ . (men)

Third Person Singular -s


I ride a bike. My sister ____ a bike too. (ride) (rides)


We eat lunch at noon. Dad ____ lunch at noon. (eat) (eats)


They play outside. My brother ____ outside. (play) (plays)

Is, Am, Are: Copula and Auxiliary


The soup ____ hot. (is)



I ____ six years old today, and this is my cake. (am)



My shoes ____ muddy. (are)

Spatial Concepts



The cat is sleeping ____ the bed. (not on top - below it) (under)



The book is ____ the shelf. (resting on top) (on)



The milk is ____ the fridge. (inside) (in)

Language from a picture: In the kitchen

Put this picture in front of the child. Every question below is about it, and the same picture gives you the speech sample for fluency.



UNDERSTANDING - the child points or answers briefly

- Who is cooking at the stove? (points to the dad)
- Why is the girl carrying the plates? (to set the table, or to help)
- Show me the youngest person in the picture. (the baby in the high chair)

TALKING - the child produces the language

- Tell me everything the grandma is doing. (a full sentence, four or five words)
- What do you think they are going to eat? (a prediction in a sentence)

- The girl washed the dishes. Now tell me what the boy at the table did. (past tense, like "he set the table")

Following directions

Three ordinary things on the table, two of them the same kind in different sizes - a big cup and a little cup, plus a ball. Two steps with a size, color, number or order word buried in them.

- [ ] Put the little one in the big one, not the other way round. (little inside big)
- [ ] Before you give me the cup, touch the ball. (ball first, then hands over the cup)
- [ ] Give me two things from the table. (exactly two)

Phonological awareness: Syllable counting and rhyme production

Clap the syllables in a word together, then ask the child to do one alone. Then ask for a word that rhymes with a given word - production, not just recognition, is reasonable to probe by 4.



van (1)



vacuum (2)



violin (3)



dinosaur bone (4)

Also listen for

- [ ] Is the child intelligible to you as an unfamiliar listener, across the whole session?
- [ ] Are /s/ and /z/ present, even if distorted? Are they coming out sideways (lateral) or through the teeth?
- [ ] Do they tell a short connected story, or just label what they see?
- [ ] Are grammatical endings - plural -s, past -ed, third person -s - present in connected speech?



CONSIDER REFERRING FOR FULL EVALUATION IF

Velar fronting, stopping of f, v, s or z, final consonant deletion or prevocalic voicing still present, sound errors a listener notices immediately, sentences still limited to three words, or a child who avoids talking to unfamiliar people. This is a prompt for clinical judgement, not a cut-off score - there are no norms behind it.

NOTES