Informal Speech and Language Screener: 5 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.

5 years

INFORMAL SCREENING ONLY

Child: _____ Date: _____ Age: _____

What to expect: Full sentences, connected stories, and speech that is essentially always intelligible. Most sounds correct, with /r/ and /th/ the usual stragglers.

Speech sounds 12 WORDS

R Sound /r/


red


run


rain

Voiced TH Sound /th/


mother


father


brother

ZH Sound /zh/


measure


treasure


treasure chest

Vocalic R /er/ /ar/ /awr/ /er/ /ir/ /air/


earth


arch


arm

Language 15 ITEMS

Object Pronouns


My brother wants the ball. Throw it to ____. (him)


Mom is waiting. Give the note to ____. (her)


The twins are hungry. Make lunch for ____. (them)

Possessive Pronouns


My brother lost ____ shoe. (his)


My sister brushed ____ hair. (her)


The twins packed ____ backpacks. (their)

Future Tense Verbs


Tomorrow I ____ to the zoo. (go) (will go)


Later we ____ pizza for dinner. (eat) (will eat)

- Next week she ____ five years old. (be) (will be)

Quantitative Concepts


There were six cookies and you ate every one. How many did you eat? (all)


There were six cookies and you ate two. How many did you eat? (some)


There were six cookies and you ate zero. How many did you eat? (none)

Following Directions



Touch your nose. (touches nose)



Clap your hands. (claps)



Stand up. (stands)

Language from a picture: In the classroom

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

- Which child is NOT sitting down? (any of the standing children - listen for whether the "not" was heard)
- Point to the child tying his shoe, and then point to the hamster. (both, in order)
- Who is sitting behind the two children reading? (the boy with his hand up)

TALKING - the child produces the language

- Tell me why the girl is pouring water into the cups. (listen for "because")
- Tell me everything that is happening at the round table. (more than one clause)
- What do you think the teacher just said? (an inference, said in a sentence)

Following directions

Three ordinary things on the table in two sizes. Three steps now, and read them once - do not repeat straight away, because the pause is often all a child needs.

- [ ] Pick up the ball, put it in the cup, and give me the cup. (all three in order)
- [ ] After you touch the chair, give me the ball. (chair first, then the ball)
- [ ] Put the biggest one on the floor and the smallest one in your lap. (both, sorted by size)

Phonological awareness: Sound blending

Say a word broken into its sounds, one at a time, and ask the child what the word is. Start with two- and three-sound words. Along with letter knowledge, this is one of the strongest predictors of early reading.



earth (er - th)



row (r - oh)



red (r - e - d)



run (r - uh - n)

Also listen for

- [ ] Is /r/ present in any position, or substituted throughout (w/r)? Vocalic /r/ often lags behind consonantal /r/.
- [ ] Can they follow a two-step direction containing a concept ("before you sit down, touch the door")?
- [ ] Do they use pronouns with correct case, or still say "her did it"?
- [ ] Can they retell a story with a beginning, middle and end?



CONSIDER REFERRING FOR FULL EVALUATION IF

Any phonological process other than gliding or vowelization of /r/, errors on sounds other than /r/, /zh/ and /th/, difficulty following two-step directions, or a child whose sentences are still noticeably simpler than their peers'. This is a prompt for clinical judgement, not a cut-off score - there are no norms behind it.

NOTES