

Montana Language Developmental Milestones for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

This document was developed by the Language Development Advisory Committee which was enacted by [Montana Code §52-2-904](#). Milestones within this document have been identified through research and Committee members' professional expertise. It is important to note the *age ranges for each language skill are approximate and based on population norms*. All children will develop at a unique and diverse pace. If you are concerned about your child's language development, please work with your child's IFSP/IEP Team and case manager to request additional or new language assessment.

Definitions

Receptive language is the ability to understand words and language. It involves gaining information and meaning from body language and facial expressions, words (spoken and/or signed), grammar, and concepts such as size, shapes, colors, and time.

Expressive language refers to the ability to express wants, needs, and ideas using a language or elements of a language.

Social language is how and why people use language to interact with other people. It supports a person's ability to make decisions about communication based on where a person is, who is around, and why someone is communicating.

Each set of skills (receptive language, expressive language, and social language) may be developed at different times and different rates.

American Sign Language (ASL) means visual American Sign Language, tactile American Sign Language, or protactile American Sign Language, as defined in [Montana 52-2-902](#). ASL is a visual language of the Deaf community adhering to its own unique grammatical rules and syntax.

English, as defined in [Montana 52-2-902](#), means spoken English, written English, or English with or without the use of visual supplements, cued speech, or manually coded English. These English modalities are represented within the header title "Spoken English & English." Please note, spoken articulation milestones located within the "Spoken English & English" sections may not apply for children using cued speech or manually coded English.

Birth to 1 Year

0-3 months

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

- Looks around and is attentive to people's faces.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Looks at the visual environment with alertness.<input type="checkbox"/> Startles to sudden lighting changes, movements, or vibrations.<input type="checkbox"/> Responds to signing by quietening, smiling, or looking at the signer.<input type="checkbox"/> Discriminates different facial expressions, hand movements, and emotions.<input type="checkbox"/> Searches for the source of a change in lighting or vibration.<input type="checkbox"/> Begins "tracking," or following objects with their eyes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Startles to sudden noises.<input type="checkbox"/> Responds to talking by quietening or smiling.<input type="checkbox"/> Discriminates different voices, sounds, and emotions.<input type="checkbox"/> Searches for the source of a sound.

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Cries to express hunger and anger.
- Coos, gurgles, laughs, and smiles.
- Smiles to express pleasure.
- Brings hands to mouth.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Begins to explore using hands and fingers for early ASL babbling.<input type="checkbox"/> Looks in the direction of movements to express interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally vocalizes in response to a voice.<input type="checkbox"/> Begins to vocalize to express pleasure.

Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Smiles when they see parents/caregivers.
- Maintains brief eye contact.

4-6 months

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

- Responds to changes in the tone of your voice and/or changes in your facial expressions.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Begins to attend to signs that have repetitions and exaggerated movement.<input type="checkbox"/> Begins to follow the eye gaze of the signer and movement with alertness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Localizes the sound source with a head or eye turn.<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally responds to own name.<input type="checkbox"/> Usually stops crying in response to a voice.

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Begins to babble with hands and/or voice. May use babbling to get your attention.
- Begins to laugh when fingers approach to tickle.
- Begins to express excitement and displeasure.
- Expresses feelings by cooing, gurgling, and crying when alone or when playing with you.
- Blows raspberries, coos, yells.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Copies your movements involving arms, head, hands, and face.<input type="checkbox"/> Hand babbling emerges - opens and closes hands, wiggles fingers, twist wrists.<input type="checkbox"/> Begins to turn head in response to a hand wave or tapping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Vocalizes for needs and wants in response to others and with self.<input type="checkbox"/> Babbles with a variety of vocalization, vowels, and consonants.<input type="checkbox"/> Tries to imitate sounds.

Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Engages in communicative play like peek-a-boo.
- Begins to enjoy finger plays and games.
- Smiles when a familiar person is present.
- Imitates facial expressions.
- Shares joint attention.
- Maintains eye contact.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Fixates on the face and hands for longer periods of time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Takes the initiative in vocalizing to engage with others.<input type="checkbox"/> Produces different vocalizations for social reasons.<input type="checkbox"/> Engages in vocal turn-taking.

7-12 months

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

- Begins to show attention to storytelling and signing of stories.
- Uses joint reference (parent and child looking at the same object).
- Responds to “no” most of the time.
- Responds with gestures to such words as up, high, bye bye (e.g., raising arms to be picked up when asked “up”; waving in response to “bye bye”).
- Occasionally gives toys/objects on request.
- Occasionally follows simple commands (put that down).
- Can tell what different facial expressions mean.
- Understands words for common items (e.g., cup, shoe, juice) and family names.
- Looks at familiar objects or people when named.
- Begins to show interactions to greetings.
- Turns their head and looks in response to sounds or attention-getting behaviors (e.g., hand waving, lights on/off, foot stomping).
- Understands about 50 signs and/or words.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Follows eye gaze of the signer with alertness. <input type="checkbox"/> Naturally looks at the visual environment with alertness. <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to recognize own name sign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys listening to music.

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Points to self and to things.
- Imitates and expresses their first words or signs, such as mine, more, milk, mommy, daddy.
- Vocalizes or gestures to request or protest.
- Uses some gestures to communicate appropriately (shakes head for no).
- Uses language to note the disappearance of objects (e.g., all gone).
- Interacts with objects by holding, pointing, and looking at them.
- Smiles, makes eye contact, and laughs.
- Shows they are excited or upset.
- Begins to use first words (bye or mama).
- By 12 months of age, your baby has 1-3 signs and/or words.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hand babbles with basic hand shapes, like closed fists, index fingers, or flat spread hands. <input type="checkbox"/> Imitates and/or expresses some basic signs (mine, more, milk, mommy, daddy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Makes onomatopoeia (sound) words such as choo choo, swish, and buzz. <input type="checkbox"/> Babbles with intonation: jargon of sentence-like structures without true words. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses sounds to gain attention or initiate games. <input type="checkbox"/> Imitates inflections and rhythms by vocalizing. <input type="checkbox"/> Repeats consonant-vowel syllables (e.g., pa pa).

Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Expresses a variety of emotions.
- Smiles, initiates eye contact, laughs.
- Smiles when seeing a familiar person.
- Attempts to initiate turn-taking.
- Engages in more social games like pat-a-cake.
- Responds to activities by laughter or repeating an action.
- Begins to direct others by tugging, pushing, or hitting.
- Nods, waves, claps.
- Shows a desire to interact with people.
- Asks, protests, comments by reaching/pointing.
- Looks at books with adults.
- Enjoys being read to with or without story signing for short periods of time.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<input type="checkbox"/> Imitates the movements of others. <input type="checkbox"/> Fixates on the face and hands.	

1-2 Years

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

12-15 Months

- Recognizes their own name when it is spoken or signed.
- Points to self and objects in the environment.
- Finds familiar objects not in sight.
- Follows one-step directions.
- Answers "where" and "what" questions about items within the immediate environment.
- Identifies some body parts when requested.
- Points to pictures named on a page.
- Attends to simple stories.
- Understands names of family members (signed or spoken).
- Understands new words each week.
- Searches for objects named that are not present.
- Identifies an object from a group.

16-18 Months

- Identifies objects in the immediate physical context on request.
- Responds to yes/no questions with a head shake or "no".
- Identifies some clothing, toys, and food.
- Understands 50 words.
- Identifies two familiar objects from a group of three to five.
- Responds to simple requests for clarification.
- Develops category vocabulary (e.g., dishes, toys).

19-24 Months

- Understands personal pronouns (mine, yours, me).
- Chooses two familiar objects.
- Answers basic where and what questions by pointing or words.
- Responds to simple commands (sit down).
- By 24 months understands 250-300 words.

ASL	Spoken English & English
12-15 Months <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes own sign name with ease.<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes name signs of other familiar people (e.g., siblings).	

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

12-15 Months


- Uses single words consistently.
- Continues to use jargon and babbling with more true words developing.
- Imitates, repeats, and approximates new words.

16-18 Months

- Vocabulary of 10+ meaningful words.
- Identifies objects and actions in pictures.
- Uses functional words like no, more, and mine.
- Combines words or signs with gestures for requests (WHERE 'mommy?').
- Imitates more words spoken or signed.
- Uses single words or signs + a gesture.

19-24 Months

- Uses personal pronouns appropriately (me, my, mine).
- Attempts to tell stories about experiences.
- May ask 'what' and 'where' questions.
- Uses new words regularly.
- Uses single words/signs to express negation (no, all gone, gone).
- Uses at least two pronouns (it, I, you, mine).
- By 24 months uses 2-word phrases with nouns and some verbs and adjectives.
- Has an expressive vocabulary of 50+ words by age 2.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<p>12-15 Months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> First ASL signs using simple handshapes C, A, S, 1, and/or 5.  <p style="text-align: center;">C S A 1 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses/approximates name signs to refer to others. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicates wants (SLEEPY, FOOD, MILK). <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to use gestures to communicate (COME HERE). <p>16-18 Months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to form 2-word phrases (EAT MORE). <input type="checkbox"/> Gestures begin to become more consistent with ASL. 	<p>12-15 Months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses exclamatory expressions (uh-oh, no-no). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses a handful of spoken words consistently. <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporates pausing and intonation into jargon. <input type="checkbox"/> Produces early consonants, /b/, /m/, /n/, /t/, /d/, and /w/. <p>16-18 Months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> May decrease the use of gestures and begin more consistent use of verbal words to communicate. <input type="checkbox"/> Verbally requests and protests. <p>19-24 Months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Engages in word and sound play with adults. <input type="checkbox"/> Speech is 50% intelligible to unfamiliar listeners. <input type="checkbox"/> Asks yes/no questions with rising intonation. <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes uses the word endings -ing and -s. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses the words in, on, and up.

Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

12-24 Months

- Involves others by showing things during play.
- Naturally takes 1-2 turns in a conversation as language develops.
- Recognizes his/her favorite book by its cover.
- Pretends to “read” books.
- Begins to understand how books are used (e.g., turns several pages at a time, holds book right side up).
- Uses pointing, reaching, and single words to request.
- Begins to use signs/words to request a turn (my-turn, “mine”).

16-18 Months

- Initiates a signed/verbal interaction.
- Responds to simple requests for clarification.
- Prefers to be with familiar people.
- Shows caution with strangers.
- Imitates other children.
- Uses language to get attention.

19-24 Months

- Uses language to request help.
- Initiates pretend play.
- Requests information (What’s this?).
- Expresses feelings (mad, happy, sad, scared).
- Tells about past events and future actions.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Begins to use name signs to refer to others.<input type="checkbox"/> Repeats what others sign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Uses intonation, pointing, and single words to make requests.<input type="checkbox"/> Verbally requests and protests.<input type="checkbox"/> Initiates verbal interaction.<input type="checkbox"/> Responds to simple requests for clarification.<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys simple stories and rhymes.<input type="checkbox"/> Repeats the last word used by an adult.

2-3 Years

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

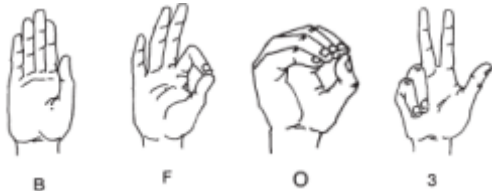
- Understands prepositions (in, on, under).
- Follows 2-step directions (Sit down and read the book).
- Comprehends action phrases.
- Begins to understand the concepts of past, present, and future and time phrases (e.g., yesterday, today).
- Understands quantity (one, all).
- Understands size differences (big/little).
- Identifies parts of an object.
- Notices (e.g., points, gets excited) sights or sounds like the videophone or doorbell flashing/ringing.
- Responds appropriately to a location description (under, on, in).
- Names pictures of objects and people when requested.
- Identifies objects by their functions.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Begins to recognize own name when fingerspelled.<input type="checkbox"/> Understands familiar, simple, fingerspelled words.<input type="checkbox"/> Begins to point to common areas in the house when asked a where question (WHERE MOMMY?).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Understands 250-300 spoken words.<input type="checkbox"/> Repeats a 4-5-word sentence.<input type="checkbox"/> Repeats 3 numbers in a sequence, and/or a sentence of 6-7 words.

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Uses simple describing words (hot, cold, fat).
- Uses phrases to express negation with no, not, don't, and/or can't.
- Uses two- to three-word phrases frequently.
- Uses early possessive pronouns (I, you, mine).
- Refers to self as "I" or "me."
- Asks what and where questions.
- Answers wh questions.
- Names objects, animals, and people in pictures.
- Says or signs full name on request.
- Attempts to tell "stories" about experiences.
- Requests help when needed.
- Uses prepositions (in, on, under, off of, through) to describe pictures and answer questions.
- Expresses emotions like happy, sad, mad with signs or spoken words.
- Uses the sign or word "and."
- Uses general words for categories (dog for all animals).
- By 2.5 years answers yes/no questions.
- Asks 'why' and 'who' questions.
- Names at least three colors.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses facial expressions grammatically (e.g., raised eyebrows to mark questions or puckered lips to mark small size). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses simple handshapes like B, F, O in signs such as “elephant,” “cat,” “owl”. <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally uses handshapes F, O, and 3 as classifiers (e.g., to describe polka dots, the size of a stick, or the movement of a car). <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates an expressive vocabulary of 250-350 signs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses present progressive -ing. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses possessive – s. <input type="checkbox"/> Recites a few short nursery rhymes. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses singular/plural noun-verb agreement (boy walks, boys walk). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses past tense in sentences (Mommy cooked). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses number + noun sentences (two doggies). <input type="checkbox"/> Speech is 50-70% intelligible to unfamiliar listeners.

Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Asks for help with 2 or more words.
- Requests information.
- Tells own age.
- Shares toys, cooperates in games.
- Requests help when needed.
- Answers most questions.
- Initiates pretend play.
- Will parallel play.
- Takes turns in conversations.
- Enjoys signed or spoken stories and imitates the actions/facial expressions of characters in the story.
- Begins to narrate past events and refers to future actions.
- Tells stories about present situations.
- Talks while playing.
- Initiates spoken conversation and responds with new information.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys signed stories and imitates the actions/facial expressions of characters in the story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Pretends to have a conversation on the phone.

3-4 Years

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

- Understands most of what is communicated to him/her.
- Gives you objects as you request them by name.
- Answers more complex questions (how many, who, whose, which, where, what doing, and what for?).
- Understands prepositions like between, in front, next to, beside, behind, around.
- Points to or places objects on top/bottom, up/down at your request.
- Points to pictures that depict a variety of action verbs when named.
- Carries out simple, unrelated, two-step directions (sit down and eat your lunch).
- Understands adjectives of quality, texture, and quantity.
- Understands 'same/different'.
- Understands the concepts of 'day/night'.
- Understands singular and plural.
- Points to common objects by function.
- Identifies missing objects in a scene when asked "what is missing?".
- Attends to a 10-15 minute story.
- Begins to understand 'full, empty, some'.
- Begins to understand comparatives (I am taller).
- Makes comparisons of speed/weight (Point to the fast/slow....).
- Correctly answers questions about a message just signed/spoken.
- Understands the difference between past, present, and future.
- Carries out 3 simple, related, three-step directions in order.
- Recognizes language absurdities (e.g., there's an elephant on your head).

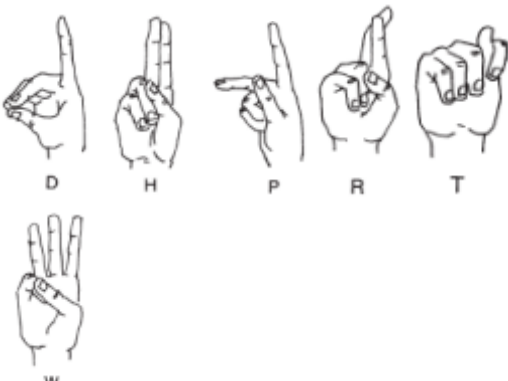
ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Begins to understand part to whole relationships (ARM-BODY, WHEEL-CAR).<input type="checkbox"/> Uses WHAT and WHY questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Answers final word analogies (e.g., cow is to farm as giraffe is to...).

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Communicates fluently, clearly, and is easily understood by family and familiar adults.
- Answers questions logically.
- Carries on simple conversations, staying on topic through 3-4 turns.
- Converses using many grammatical structures: plurals, possession, pronouns, prepositions, adjectives.
- Uses when, how many, and who questions.
- Begins to ask "How much?" and "How?" questions.
- Describes what objects can be used for.
- Identifies what does not belong and why.
- Passes on a message (e.g., telling a friend it's snack time).
- Uses 3-4 word combinations.
- Uses comparisons.
- Uses some basic qualitative (wet, dry, hot, cold) and quantitative (more, less, empty, full) adjectives.
- Provides a label when given a child-friendly definition of a familiar word (What is round and bounces? a ball).

- Tells a word that associates with another word.
- Begins to make inferences.
- Talks about things that have happened at school or with friends.
- Discusses storybooks that are read to him/her.
- Describes action in pictures.
- Uses possessives (mine, yours, his, hers).
- Repeats simple rhymes.
- Makes attempts to read and write.
- Combines two events in a narrative.
- Uses words or phrases used by conversation partner (“Do you want a cookie?”, “Yes, I want a cookie.”).
- Uses TWO-OF-US, THREE-OF-US.
- By age four (4), uses 800-1500 words.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses more classifiers in more complex and descriptive ways (e.g., to show how things move, relative positions, sizes, shapes, and more). <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately produces handshapes that require greater fine motor control, including D, H, P, R, T, and W.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attempts to fingerspell own name on request (may skip or invert letters, and/or use inaccurate handshapes). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses sentences that include subject, verb, and object (e.g., Mama like[s] coffee, John has [a] bike). <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to change the way verbs are produced to show different types of movement (walking, walking quickly, stomping, tiptoeing). <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to use topicalization (POPCORN, I LIKE). <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to use rhetorical questions in conversations (asking and answering the same question - Daddy go where? Work). <input type="checkbox"/> Creates sentences combining classifiers and lexical (regular) signs to describe the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses be + present progressive (-ing). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses articles (a, the). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses past modals 'could, would, should, must, might'. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses “do” to ask 'yes/no' questions. <input type="checkbox"/> Spoken language is 75-90% intelligible to unfamiliar listeners. <input type="checkbox"/> Combines sentences using 'and, but, and because'. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses regular and irregular past tense. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses third person singular 's'. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses some five-word sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses possessive -'s. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses plural -s. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses possessive pronouns (his, her).

same scenario - car drive fast, [vehicle classifier moving fast].	
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Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Continues a conversation through 3 or more turns.
- Shows understanding of the feelings of others.
- Acts out whole scenes in dramatic play/make-believe.
- Repairs conversations, like repeating a word if not understood or using gestures to clarify a point.
- Uses language for different communicative intent (obtaining information, giving information, expressing needs/feelings, bargaining).
- Responds to requests made from others.
- Asks questions for clarification or responds to requests for clarification.
- Begins contributing details or comments in a conversation without changing the subject.
- Adapts to changes of topic.
- Works in a small group for 5-10 minutes.
- Creates and maintains worlds of make-believe.
- Usually understands friends and familiar adults, and they usually understand the child.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<input type="checkbox"/> Increases the use of facial expressions and body position to participate in conversations (squinting to show confusion, matching facial expressions, nodding to show understanding).	

4-5 Years

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

- Follows directions using a variety of advanced prepositions.
- Sequences smallest to largest, shortest to tallest.
- Understands time concepts (morning, afternoon, night) and seasons of the year.
- Understands parts (half, whole, some).
- Groups assorted objects/pictures into categories (things that fly, things you eat, things you wear).
- Identifies items that don't belong.
- Answers "What happened?" and "Why?".
- Comprehends complex directions about pictures (point to the little girl with red hair and no shoes).
- Understands most of what is said or signed at home and school.
- Enjoys stories and can understand simple questions.
- Carries out 4 simple related commands in order.
- Understands words that rhyme in ASL or English.
- Points to places or objects before, after, above, below something when asked.
- Understands words for order (e.g., first, next, last).

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Distinguishes double movement nouns from single movement verbs (CHAIR-SIT, AIRPLANE, FLYING).<input type="checkbox"/> Understands number distribution (e.g., LEAVES, FALL-singular; LEAVES, FALL-plural).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Comprehends irreversible passives (The ball was kicked by a boy.).<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehends verb tense (e.g., kicked/kick, ran/run).

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Signs or speaks with between 75-90% intelligibility.
- Shows the ability to think about and comment on language.
- Uses expanded sentences involving two traits (Mother bear - big, mean).
- Tells a story including a beginning, middle, and end.
- Begins to ask the meanings of words.
- Uses 5+ word sentences with details.
- Uses 2,500+ signs/words.
- Asks 'why,' 'do,' and 'whose' questions.
- Asks 'who,' 'what,' 'where,' 'why,' and 'how' questions.
- Can tell made-up stories that stay on topic.
- Uses rhyming in words or signs.
- Uses when, but, because, if, and so to conjoin clauses.
- Uses before and after.
- Answers 'how' and 'why' questions.
- Speaks or signs with emotion and body language when describing an event or action.
- Ends conversations appropriately.
- Uses many common prepositions (to, from, in, out, on, off, for, of, by, with).
- Uses 'before' and 'after'.
- Names categories of items.

- Uses comparative adjectives (small-smaller).
- Uses grammatically correct sentences.
- Names 5+ items in 2+ categories w/o visual cues (animals, food).
- Uses long and detailed sentences.
- Uses past and future tense.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses body shift and eye-gaze. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses time indicators (FINISH, NOT-YET). <input type="checkbox"/> Storytelling includes setting up people and objects in space that are not present. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses noun modification to indicate spatial agreement. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses the AGENT sign (FARM-ER, TEACH-ER). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses topic continuation (holds a sign with one hand and continues signing with the other). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses conditional sentences (SUPPOSE TEACHER SICK - CLASS NONE). <input type="checkbox"/> Repeats WH-word expressions at the beginning and end of a question (WHO GO WHO) [WH-bracketing]. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses space as part of storytelling. <input type="checkbox"/> By 5 years old, produces most signs in standard adult forms, including appropriate handshape, palm orientation, location, movement, and facial expression. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses number distribution (Ex: talking about leaves falling - ONE LEAF FALLS, MANY LEAVES FALL, LEAVES FALL RANDOMLY FROM TIME TO TIME). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses space to describe spatial concepts and relationship to objects (The cat was under the table. The ball is in front of the chair.) <input type="checkbox"/> Adverb and adjective modifications show intensity and distribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> By age five (5), most sounds are pronounced correctly though the child may have difficulty with 'r,' 'v,' and 'th'. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses clauses (because, when, if, and so). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses many frequently occurring prepositions (to, from, in, out, an, off, for, of, by, and with). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses irregular third person verbs (e.g., is, am, and are). <input type="checkbox"/> Asks negative tag questions (We got that, didn't we?). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses 'if/then' sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses past and future tense.

Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Initiates conversations easily.
- Politely interrupts adult conversations.
- Changes topic appropriately.
- Uses language to resolve disputes with peers (may need help from adults).
- States name of own town.
- Tells father's and mother's first and last names.
- Tells month of birth.
- Understands simple jokes.
- Communicates about imaginary conditions (What if... I hope).
- Begins to understand others' points of view.
- Uses words to invite others to play.
- Sequences stories.
- Passes first-order false belief tasks (theory of mind).

Kindergarten

In this milestones chart, we switch from tracking language development by months/years to grade level, starting at age 5, due to alignment with state educational standards. We recognize not all children begin kindergarten at exactly 5 years old. Therefore, the skills listed under each grade level reflect those typically mastered by the end of that grade, allowing for a broad spectrum of individual growth and development.

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

- Answers questions about time sequences (what happened first, second, etc.).
- Classifies objects by material (wood, glass).
- Answers who, what, where, when, why, and how questions from a complete short story w/o visual cues.
- Accurately acts out verbs describing the same general action (walk, march, strut, and prance).
- Follows group instruction and discussions.
- Answers inference questions regarding short stories or hypothetical situations.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understands use of signing space to show categories, possession, relative positions, and speaker identity. <input type="checkbox"/> Understands sentences that use facial expressions in complex combinations including grammatical markers, adverbs, sign components, and emotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understands reversible passive sentences (e.g., That song was sung by my Mom.). <input type="checkbox"/> Begins to understand non-literal meanings (e.g., make up your mind). <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies whether words rhyme in sets of three to four. <input type="checkbox"/> Generates rhyme when given a word. <input type="checkbox"/> Follows directions that include ask or tell. <input type="checkbox"/> Understands irregular plurals (e.g., men, mice).

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Names opposites when asked about frequently occurring verbs, adjectives, and prepositions.
- Gives simple three-step directions.
- Describes familiar people, places, things, and events with relevant details.
- Answers questions to get help, give information, or better explain something.
- Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.
- Uses pronouns, prepositions, and articles correctly and consistently.
- Uses compound and complex sentences in well-formed narratives.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Describe verbs, people, objects, prepositions, and pluralization w/basic semantic classifiers. <input type="checkbox"/> Memorizes and recites ASL poems, rhymes, and folklore with expression. <input type="checkbox"/> Changes sign movement or handshapes to make new words. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the full range of handshapes. <input type="checkbox"/> Use frequently occurring nouns, verbs, and depictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses regular and irregular nouns (woman/women). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses adverbs (e.g., We will go for lunch. I want the yellow shirt instead). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses simple grammar correctly (e.g., pronouns, prepositions, and articles). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses past and future tense appropriately. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses it or that to represent an entire idea (e.g., That's not my fault). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses clauses (e.g., as soon as, until, while, before, after).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Form plural nouns by modifying parameters. <input type="checkbox"/> Use question signs and non-manual markers (e.g., WHO-Q, WHAT-Q, WHY-Q, WHERE-Q, HOW-Q, WHEN-Q). <input type="checkbox"/> Use the most frequently occurring prepositions through referents (e.g., CL: 3 CAR NEXT-TO CL-5 TREE, HURT-ON-TUMMY). <input type="checkbox"/> Use non-manual markers and classifiers to produce frequently occurring adjectives and adverbs. <input type="checkbox"/> Produce sentences with indicating verbs (e.g., BOY-THERE-TELL-ME). <input type="checkbox"/> Use pronouns as spatial referents (e.g., BOTH-OF-US, BOTH-OF-THEM, CL: 1 person). <input type="checkbox"/> Use inflection to indicate temporal markers (e.g., movement, non-manual signals). <input type="checkbox"/> Use context to identify the meaning of unknown signs, fingerspelled words, and phrases. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify new meanings for similar signs and apply them accurately (e.g., SAME vs. LIKE, BUT vs. DIFFERENT). <input type="checkbox"/> Use the most frequently occurring inflections (e.g., SIT-FOR-A-LONG-TIME, SHE-GIVES-HIM) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown sign. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the most frequently occurring affixes and compound signs (e.g., LAW-PERSON, WOOD+CUT-PERSON, TREE+HOUSE) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown sign. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly. |
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Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Builds on others' talk in conversation by responding to the comments of others (vs. answering questions).
- Asks questions to clear up any confusion about academic topics.
- Participates in 1:1, small group, and large group conversations (different group settings).
- Answers questions to seek help, give information, or clarify something.
- Tells a well-structured, personal story.
- Follows agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., attend to others, taking turns).

1st & 2nd Grade

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

- Identifies things that don't make sense in a sentence, both in the meaning of words and in the grammar.
- Detects which one of a set of words does not belong.
- Follows 3-4 oral directions in order (e.g., stay in your seat, wait for the bus to stop, and don't forget your backpack).
- Understands reflexives (herself, itself, ourselves).
- Uses context clues to learn the meaning of unknown words.
- Answers questions about a story.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Understands fingerspelled words (character names, setting/place names). <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizes that inflective changes in signs influence their meanings (e.g., SIT-for a long time, BOOK-give you/me). <input type="checkbox"/> Distinguish shades of meaning through non-manual markers (e.g., WORK-LONG-TIME nmm: teeth vs. WORK-LONG-TIME nmm: pursed lips). <input type="checkbox"/> With teacher scaffolding, understand and use figurative language vs. literal language using metaphors, similes, and analogies (e.g., EAT-YOUR-WORDS, EYES-POP-OUT). <input type="checkbox"/> Decode regularly fingerspelled letter combinations (e.g., wh, th, ph). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Has sound-letter correspondence for all consonants and vowels. <input type="checkbox"/> Blends and segments words with two or three phonemes. <input type="checkbox"/> Phoneme substitution to build new words with simple syllables. <input type="checkbox"/> Sound deletion in initial and final positions. <input type="checkbox"/> Distinguishes initial, middle, and final sounds in single-syllable words. <input type="checkbox"/> Understands words about place and time (e.g., midnight, minute, beneath). <input type="checkbox"/> Understands riddles and idioms.

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Uses more, less, and most in questions.
- Lists objects of a category and give categories a name.
- Gives category label and lists six to 11 items in a category in one minute.
- Gives and restates multi-step directions.
- Provides a summary of a story after one telling.
- Uses multi-word definitions.
- Uses well-formed narratives.
- Produces full explanations.
- Answers complex yes/no questions (e.g., Was the boy telling the truth when he said he was going to a friend's house?).

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses complex time indicators (FINISH TOUCH – “visited”, FINISH EAT – “ate”). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses the features of a sentence (e.g., eye gaze, body tilt, ending hold). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses passive voice (e.g., The house was built in 1837.). <input type="checkbox"/> Uses irregular comparatives/superlatives (better, best, worse).

- Uses common conjunctions (e.g., KNOW, MOVE-ON, THAT; head nods, eye gazes).
- Manipulates signs (e.g., UNDERSTAND with four fingers to show intensity).
- Identify frequently occurring sign families and their inflectional forms (e.g., large circular motion: long duration, brain area: DREAM, THINK, PONDER).
- Use knowledge of the meaning of individual signs to predict the meaning of compound signs (e.g., BIRDHOUSE, BOOKSHELF, DINING-ROOM).
- Determine meanings of signs based on similar features (e.g., nose/beaks: DUCK, BIRD, EAGLE, PARROT).
- Maintain hands in signing frame space.
- Use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., WHY-Q, WRONG, FINISH, HAPPEN).
- Manipulate spatial referents when incorporating frequently occurring prepositions through classifiers, eye gaze, and locative signs (e.g., role shifting, CL: 5 BIG-HOUSE-nearby, CL: 5 BIG-HOUSE-far away).
- Produce simple and complex sentences with indicating verbs using plural pronouns as referents. (e.g., I-GIVE-THEM, THEY-TOLD-US).
- Produce simple and complex conditional sentences.
- Produce rhetorical questions.
- Raise hands into signing frame space.
- Use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., KNOW, MOVE-ON, THAT; head nods, eye gazes).
- Understand how referents can be used to indicate determiners, pronouns, conjunctions (e.g., indexing on non-dominant hand).
- Produce and expand complete, simple, and compound declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences in response to prompts.
- Use common, proper, and possessive nouns (e.g., name signs, open palm to demonstrate possessiveness).
- Use temporal signs to convey a sense of past, present, and future (e.g., YESTERDAY I EAT, EAT I nms-NOT-YET).

- Uses present and past perfect tense (e.g., Have you been there before? She had read the book.).
- Uses past perfect progressive (had been camping).
- Asks have questions with present perfect (Have you been there before?).
- Uses common multiple meaning words.
- Uses complex verb tenses (e.g., He had been swimming. She might have hidden.).
- Correctly uses indefinite pronouns (e.g., Many come here, but some go down the street.).
- Uses up to three adjectives in the correct English order in a sentence.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use frequently occurring descriptive classifiers and other adjectives (e.g., DCL, ECL, SCL, ICL, BCL). <input type="checkbox"/> Produce simple sentences with indicating verbs using eye gaze and locative signs. <input type="checkbox"/> Use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., PLUS, OTHER, THAT, list form, head nod). <input type="checkbox"/> Use numerical incorporation. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the manipulation of non-manual markers in topicalization. <input type="checkbox"/> Use fingerspelled words for emphasis (e.g., #FUN, #WHAT). <input type="checkbox"/> Fingerspell longer words and phrases following correct contour as new ASL and English lexicon expands (e.g., fs-G-O-V-E-R-N-M-E-N-T, fs-R-A-I-N-I-N-G C-A-T-S A-N-D D-O-G-S (not sure why this is showing up as crossed out). <input type="checkbox"/> Use common, high-frequency, lexicalized, fingerspelling (e.g., #BANK, #CASH, #STYLE). 	
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Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Follows agreed upon rules for discussions (multiple people involved).
- Produces full explanations.
- Tells birthplace by state/town.
- Tells address and phone number.
- Understands/uses jokes, riddles, and idioms (hold your horses).
- Understands what someone else thinks about another person's thoughts. For example, knowing that Sam thinks Emma believes the toy is in the box, even though it's actually under the bed.
- Nicely gains attention and attends to others.
- Has discussions with different people.
- Responds nicely to praise and apologies.
- Gives multistep directions.
- Checks for comprehension.

3rd Grade

Receptive:

This is language your child understands.

- Understands what is taught in class.
- Retells, paraphrases, and explains the main ideas and supporting details of a lesson.
- Follows 4-step and higher directions.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Determines the meaning of finger-spelled words and signs in context.<input type="checkbox"/> Decodes unknown signs out of context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Understands jokes and riddles that have similar-sounding words.<input type="checkbox"/> Understands direction words (e.g., north, south, longitude).

Expressive:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to communicate and express thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs.

- Shares their own ideas and opinions.
- Asks complex questions to gain information.
- Uses words taught in subjects like science, math, and social studies.
- Clearly explains classroom vocabulary.
- Asks and answers questions about information from a speaker.

ASL	Spoken English & English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Expresses location through eye gaze and locative signs (e.g., VEHICLE-cl NEXT-TO HOUSE, HURT-ON-TUMMY).<input type="checkbox"/> Uses descriptive classifiers.<input type="checkbox"/> Uses linking signs (e.g., CL: 3-LIST, FOR-FOR-Q) to connect opinions and reasons.<input type="checkbox"/> Uses temporal and inflection verbs to show event order (e.g., WAIT-a-long-time, GIVE-to me/you).<input type="checkbox"/> Produce compound sentences using negations or as conditionals.<input type="checkbox"/> Can produce, evaluate, and ensure subject-verb-object agreement.<input type="checkbox"/> Can fingerspell words as lexical signs (e.g., #WHAT, #BACK, #OK, #MOOD).<input type="checkbox"/> Use fingerspelling for abbreviations (e.g., #REF, #VP, #E-MAIL, #APT).<input type="checkbox"/> Fingerspell longer words and phrases following correct contour as new ASL and English lexicon expands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Uses passive sentences (e.g., Anita was driven to the theater by Carla).<input type="checkbox"/> Asks and answers factual and inferential questions.

Social:

These are behaviors or skills your child uses to engage with others and play.

- Uses language to make friends and be part of a group, like joining a game by asking, "Can I play too?" or complimenting a classmate to fit in.
- Understands others' viewpoints.
- Gives background details.

Parent Resource Recommendations

Section 2(4)(d) of HB 619 tasked the Montana Language Development Advisory Committee with the responsibility to provide recommendations on unbiased and comprehensive materials for a parent resource. The DPHHS and the OPI will create the parent resource based on the Committee’s recommendations. The parent resource will include the language developmental milestones created by DPHHS and OPI in response to the language developmental milestones recommended by the Language Development Advisory Committee.

Once published, the Committee recommends DPHHS review the parent resource on an established timeline to ensure the parent resource contains accurate links and directs parents to the most recently available and accurate resources on the identified topics following DPHHS policies for updating published resources. The Committee also recommends the parent resource be available in printed and electronic formats and any printed copies include a QR code for the electronic format of the parent resource.

In addition to the language developmental milestones, the Committee recommends the parent resource include links to the following resources, with a note that some resources may overlap between the section headers.

<p>Family Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2 Ears 2 Learn ● Baby Hearing ● Let Them Hear Foundation ● MSDB Family Based Services ● My Deaf Child ● Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss ● Tips for Raising a Deaf/Hard of Hearing Child in a Rural Community 	<p>Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) Learning Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● AB Babybeats ● Hear to Learn ● Hearing First ● John Tracy Center LSL Resources ● Listen and Talk ● Listen Foundation ● Listening and Spoken Language Strategies ● The Listening Room ● The Moog Center for Deaf Education ● See the Sound ● Sound Start 	<p>American Sign Language (ASL) Learning Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ASL at Home ● ASL University ● ASL Virtual Academy ● Language First ● Gallaudet’s Science of Learning Center on Visual Language and Visual Learning (VL2) ● Montana Family ASL ● Sign it! ASL ● Sign Language Center ● The Signing SLP <p>Cued Speech Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cue College ● National Cued Speech Association
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National Organizations	Montana Organizations	Diagnostic Hospitals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf ● American Academy of Audiology ● American Speech and Language Hearing Association ● American Society for Deaf Children ● Center for Childhood Deafness, Language and Learning ● Hands and Voices ● Helen Keller Services ● Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center ● National Association of the Deaf ● National Cued Speech Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Montana Association of the Deaf ● Montana DeafBlind Project ● Montana Empowerment Center ● Montana Hands and Voices ● Montana School for the Deaf & the Blind ● Montana Speech Language Hearing Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Boys Town National Research Hospital ● Children's Hospital Colorado ● John Tracy Center ● Primary Children's Hospital ● Seattle Children's Audiology Services ● Shodair Children's Hospital