

# Language for Learning

## A Checklist for Language Difficulties

### Primary Level

Developed by Speech-Language Pathologists from the  
Language Learning Disability - Special Interest Group (Vic)

**Student's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year Level:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Completed:** \_\_\_\_\_

This checklist is designed to enable teachers, parents, psychologists and other professionals to identify students who have language learning difficulties.

The features described in this checklist are signs of language difficulty. This may influence a student's learning at school, particularly in the areas of reading, spelling and written expression.

Consider each description carefully and mark those that are **CONSISTENT FEATURES** of the student's communication behaviour. A high number of these behaviours may indicate a language difficulty that requires assessment by a Speech-Language Pathologist.

This checklist is designed to cover a wide age range. Some items MAY NOT be applicable to your student's age or grade level.

If you have any doubts about a student's language and learning skills, please discuss them with a Speech-Language Pathologist. A Speech-Language Pathologist can:

- define and describe the difficulty in more depth
- decide about the developmental appropriateness of the observed features
- suggest strategies and practical activities for the classroom and home

## BEHAVIOUR

- is inattentive and restless in listening situations; may tire easily and ‘tune out’ at times
- has difficulty attending and listening in a noisy environment
- distracts other children and/or acts the ‘class clown’
- needs constant assistance or direction from an adult to complete a task
- needs extra time to respond verbally and to organise answers
- becomes frustrated when communicating, e.g. says “You know what I mean” or “It doesn’t matter”
- waits to observe other children before responding
- is quiet and does not draw attention to self in class
- rushes in impulsively, seemingly ‘without thinking’
- has disorganised behaviour e.g. forgets homework, loses jumper, arrives late
- organisational routines, usually learned quickly by peers, need explicit explanation, e.g. timetable routines and changes

## VERBAL MEMORY/SEQUENCING

- poor retention of words in nursery rhymes, songs etc.
- difficulty remembering sequences of auditory information, e.g. the alphabet, days of the week, telephone numbers, times tables
- remembers only part of a long instruction or message
- confuses directions, particularly those not given in order of the action required, e.g. before you go out to play, eat your lunch

## COMPREHENSION

- difficulty understanding questions, e.g. what, when, where, why, how etc
- misunderstands instructions or information that involve concepts of:
  - TIME e.g. the day before yesterday was my birthday
  - SPACE e.g. left and right; stand behind Jo, between the yellow markers
  - QUANTITY e.g. a few, many, least
  - ORDER e.g. first, second, last, next
  - PASSIVE e.g. Simon was pushed by the girl. Who was pushed?
  - RELATIONS e.g. What’s Mum’s brother called?
- difficulty integrating auditory information, e.g. getting the joke or riddle
- misinterprets indirect requests and subtle remarks, e.g. I want to hear a pin drop (i.e. be quiet!), pull up your socks
- fails to fully comprehend stories as a whole, i.e. drawing conclusions, predicting outcomes and understanding implied meanings
- has a narrow or literal understanding of word meanings which interferes with the understanding of jokes and puns, e.g. What type of shoes do koalas wear? Gum boots
- has difficulty understanding idioms, similes and metaphors, e.g. as quiet as a mouse

## EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE/STORY TELLING

- immature grammar or incorrect word order, such as:
  - PRONOUNS e.g. it's hers ball; Him did it all
  - TENSE FORMS e.g. they goed to the movies
  - PLURALS e.g. the cat chased two mouses
  - WORD ORDER e.g. I can go to the toilet?
- speaks in short sentences and may rely on well practised sentence forms
- has difficulty giving instructions for games or directions to an exact location
- stories can be disjointed or poorly sequenced, often missing important details about the setting, characters or events
- difficulty providing key points relevant to a topic
- has a lot to say but lacks specific detail, leaving the listener confused; has difficulty getting to the point when explaining something

## WORD RETRIEVAL/VOCABULARY

- uses non-specific words, e.g. sort of, stuff, junk, thing, there, that
- has trouble finding the exact word, e.g. may call a 'stamp' a 'label' or 'sticker'
- speech is hesitant, filled with pauses or numerous 'ums', repetitions or rewording
- often uses gesture to assist communication
- has poor memory for names of people or objects
- vocabulary lacks variety, e.g. uses good to mean – polite, happy, kind, friendly

## SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

- difficulty understanding and using playground language
- difficulty interpreting social cues e.g. facial expressions, body language, tone of voice
- tends to play alone or with younger children
- initiates conversation less often than peers and/or seldom contributes to group discussions
- has difficulty with the rules of games and conversation such as taking turns, staying on topic and indicating when he/she has not understood

## SAYING COMPLEX WORDS

- finds it hard to say words of several syllables, e.g. psgetti for spaghetti; cimmanon for cinnamon or swaps sounds in adjacent words, e.g. the cown clame for the clown came
- is easily confused by tongue twisters
- shows persistent articulation errors, e.g. fursday/Thursday; lellow/yellow; wed/red

## SOUND AWARENESS

- unable to make up a list of rhyming words, e.g. cat, fat ...
- has difficulty analysing spoken words into syllables or sounds
- slow to learn sounds and letter names
- confuses similar sounding words in speech or writing, e.g. cone/comb; speech/peach; manila folder/vanilla folder

## ANY OTHER INFORMATION

It is often helpful to think about the student's talking, reading and writing skills in different situations, e.g. school, playground, home

### PLEASE CONSIDER

- was there a delay in onset and/or development of language?
- is there a history of ear problems, e.g. middle ear infections?
- is there a family history of speech and/or language/learning difficulty?
- is English the student's first language?
- is the student having difficulty with literacy development?
- is there a history of poor attendance at school?

## ASSESSMENTS REQUIRED

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> speech pathology/therapy | <input type="checkbox"/> intellectual/psychological |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing                  | <input type="checkbox"/> gross/fine motor skills    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> eyes/vision              | <input type="checkbox"/> paediatric                 |

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OzChild Education Services delivers a range of professional support and programs in partnership with schools including speech therapy, assessments and our Lift Off With Language program.

For more information call 03 9695 2200 or email [educationservices@ozchild.com.au](mailto:educationservices@ozchild.com.au)

This checklist may be copied for use in schools

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