

How many words should a toddler say? *12 to 36 months.*

What research reports at every age from 12 to 36 months, and the floor numbers that mean "check in with your pediatrician." Typical children land hundreds of words apart; the floors are what matter.

Age	What research reports	The floor (act, don't wait)
12 mo	The median baby says fewer than 10 words; many say none yet	Calls a parent "mama," "dada," or another special name; babbling and gestures present
15 mo	A handful to a few dozen words	Tries one or two words besides "mama" or "dada"
16–20 mo	The median child crosses 50 words in this window; typical vocabularies run from a handful to well past 100	At 18 months: tries three or more words besides "mama" or "dada"
21–24 mo	Average around 300 words at the second birthday, with a typical spread of roughly 150 to 500; two-word phrases arrive	Fewer than 50 words <i>or</i> no two-word combinations at 24 months: book an evaluation
30 mo	The median child says about 570 of the 680 words on the research checklist	Says about 50 words
33–36 mo	Too many to count; researchers switch to measuring sentences	Holds a short conversation with two back-and-forth exchanges

The three numbers that actually matter

1. **18 months, fewer than three words** and little babbling, pointing, or understanding
2. **24 months, fewer than 50 words or no two-word phrases** ("more milk"), the late-talker checkpoint
3. **Any age: losing words they used to have.** That's a call this week, not this quarter

What counts as a word? Count generously

A consistent sound used for a consistent meaning. **"Baba" for bottle counts. "Moo" counts. "Uh-oh" counts.** Names count, including the dog's. A sign used reliably for "more" counts. And if your child hears two languages, **count every word in both and add them up:** measuring one language alone makes a typical bilingual child look delayed.

Sources: CDC "Learn the Signs. Act Early;" milestone checklists (2022 revision, 75th-percentile); Fenson et al., Variability in Early Communicative Development, Monogr Soc Res Child Dev 1994; Frank et al., The Wordbank Project, MIT Press 2021; Rescorla, J Speech Hear Disord 1989. General information for parents, not medical advice. Every child develops at their own pace; talk to your pediatrician about any concern.

My baby's first words

The first ten never come back around. Write them down the day they arrive: the word as your child says it, not as the dictionary spells it.

The word (as they say it)	What it means	Language	Date	Who was there
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Ten words! Around fifty, two-word phrases usually arrive. Keep going.

When the paper runs out: Saylings keeps every word your child says, in every language they speak, each one with a photo, a date, and their actual voice saying it. A word book you'll keep forever. saylings.com