

Speech and Development

➤ ONE of the best indications of a child's overall development may be his speech.

Psychological tests can be misleading and motor skills such as sitting and walking are ambiguous. That leaves oral language as "perhaps the clearest mirror" of a child's total functioning. Dr. Richard W. Olmsted of the University of Oregon Medical School in Portland told the American Academy of Pediatricians meeting in Chicago.

However, he said, pediatricians as a whole have had little exposure in the area of language development and disorders.

To help correct that situation, Dr. Olmsted and three of his colleagues from the University of Oregon pointed out the landmarks in normal language development and suggested simple tests for pediatricians to use in isolating the probable cause of delayed speech.

Nothing could be more erroneous than the common assumption that a child does not have to be examined for speech until his second year when he starts to talk, stated Dr. Harold Lillywhite.

During his first year, the child plays with sounds and learns to approximate easy consonants—"m", "p", "b" and so forth. Language potential can be predicted quite easily in this early period and corrective steps should be taken then, Dr. Lillywhite said.

Dr. Robert W. Blakeley suggested gross screening tests for five areas of possible trouble.

The last place to look for a speech deficiency is in the mouth, he said.

Mental retardation and/or central nervous system dysfunction is still the major cause of delayed language.

Hearing can be tested with soft sounds while the child is distracted with a toy. Oral structural defects are not common and are obvious in large tonsils, a high palate or a tongue tie, Dr. Blakeley said.

Similarly easy to recognize are neuromuscular defects which show up in sucking, chewing and swallowing, as well as in a monotone voice and slurred articulation.

The evidence must be quite strong before doctors accept emotional-social reasons as the cause of delayed speech, Dr. Blakeley said. He suggested that pediatricians ask questions such as: Do siblings have a similar disorder? Has the child been regularly beaten or severely criticized for being noisy? Is the child markedly withdrawn or aggressive?

Information on the last and most important category must come from parents. But parents, when they fear mental slowness, are "prejudiced, suggestible, forgetful and cagey," so the doctor is more likely to get honest answers if he begins his questioning on a "safe" level, just below where he thinks the child is already functioning, Dr. Blakeley said.

Most children alternate peaks of vocalization with periods of relative quiet. The slow child will have more dramatic changes and longer periods of quiet. A retarded child of 15 months, for instance, may not have started babbling.

If the child is slow in language development, Dr. Blakeley said, an excellent place for him is nursery school for the stimulation it provides.

SCIENCE NEWS

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

Vol. 90 November 12, 1966 No. 20

E. G. SHERBURNE JR., Editor

Watson Davis, Director Emeritus, Editor, 1922-66

WARREN KORNBERG, Managing Editor

The Weekly Summary of Current Science, published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036. NOrth 7-2255. Cable Address: SCIENSERV.

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$5.50; 2 yrs., \$10.00; 3 yrs., \$14.50. Special trial offer for new subscribers only: 41 weeks, \$3.13. Ten or more copies in one package to one address, 7½ cents per copy per week; single copy, 15 cents, more than six months old, 25 cents. No charge for foreign postage. Change of address: Three weeks notice is required. Please state exactly how magazine is addressed. Include zip code.

Copyright © 1966 by Science Service, Inc. Reproduction of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS is strictly prohibited. Newspapers, magazines and other publications are invited to avail themselves of the numerous syndicated services issued by Science Service. Science Service also produces and distributes THINGS of science (monthly), \$5.00 per year; produces and publishes books and conducts the National Science Youth Program.

Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C. Established in mimeograph form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark U. S. and Canadian Patent offices. Indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Abridged Guide, and the Engineering Index. Member of Audit Bureau of Circulation.

SCIENCE SERVICE

The Institution for the Popularization of Science organized 1921 as a non-profit corporation.

Board of Trustees—Nominated by the American Association for the Advancement of Science: Wallace R. Brode,** Washington, D.C.; Bowen C. Dees, National Science Foundation; Athelstan F. Spilhaus, University of Minnesota. Nominated by the National Academy of Sciences: Harlow Shapley, Harvard College Observatory; Detlev W. Bronk, Rockefeller Institute; Henry Allen Moe, The Clark Foundation. Nominated by the National Research Council: Leonard Carmichael, National Geographic Society; Eric A. Walker, Pennsylvania State University; Glenn T. Seaborg*, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. Nominated by the Journalistic Profession: Gordon B. Fister, Allentown (Pa.) Call-Chronicle; Ralph B. Curry, Flint Journal; O. W. Riegel,** Washington and Lee University. Nominated by the Scripps Estate: Ludwell Denny, Scripps-Howard Newspapers; Edward W. Scripps II,** Edward W. Scripps Trust; Edward J. Meeman, Memphis Press-Scimitar. *President, **Vice President, ***Treasurer, ****Secretary.

Staff—Director: E. G. Sherburne Jr. Assistant Director: Dorothy Schriver. Writers: Barbara Culliton, Jonathan Eberhart, Ann Ewing, Faye Marley, Patricia McBroom, Barbara Tufty, Judith Viorst, Ruby Yoshioka, Marilyn Raleigh, Magazine Production, Science Youth Division: Joseph H. Kraus, Lloyd Ulmer. Photography: Fremont Davis. Production: Marcia Nelson. Syndicate Sales: Forrest L. Snakenberg, Librarian: Margit Friedrich, Interlingua Division in New York: Alexander Gode, 80 E. 11th St., GRamercy 3-5410.

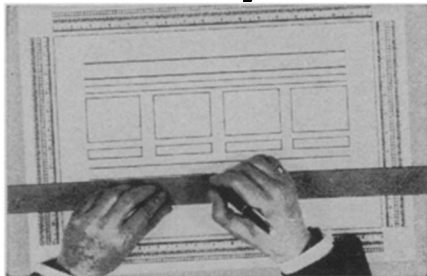
ADVERTISING

Louis D. Young, Advertising Director, SCIENCE NEWS, 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036. Telephone 202-667-8945.

Advertising Representatives: SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPERS. General Advertising Department: 200 Park Ave., New York, N.Y., TN 7-5000; 400 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill., SU 7-3355; 800 Broadway, Suite 1100, Cincinnati, Ohio, 721-1254; Suite 211, Braniff Building, Dallas, Texas, FL 7-3847; 908 E. Northland Tower, Southfield, Michigan, 444-4595; 6363 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif., OL 3-0026; Room 1522, Philadelphia National Bank Building, Philadelphia, Pa., LO 3-6275; Central Tower Building, 703 Market St., San Francisco, Calif., GA 1-5187.



How To Make Layouts Faster



GRAPHIC LAYOUT BOARD

You cut your work in half for most Office Forms, Charts, Brochures, Catalogues, Ads, Etc. Printed scales on edges of your copy save measuring time. Produce better layouts in half the time with this new form. Available in several sizes and weights of quality stock. Write for literature.

FREE Illustrated Brochure No. 26-E Including Samples

GRAPHIC SYSTEMS
925 Danville Road • Yanceyville, N.C.

METEOROLOGY

Precipitation Sensor Developed

➤ AN ELECTRONIC gadget that can automatically distinguish between rain, snow, dew and frost in remote locations is being tested by the U.S. Weather Bureau.

Built into two fiberglass boxes about the size of small file drawers are a series of four sensors that are triggered in different combinations by different kinds of precipitation.

Signals from the sensors go to computerized weather reporting systems which change them into readable messages that can be sent over teletype networks.