**Language for learning:**

**A checklist for language difficulties (Secondary level)**

**Student’s Name:** Click or tap here to enter name.

**Date of Birth:** Click or tap here to enter date.

**School:** Click or tap here to enter school.

**Year Level:** Click or tap here to enter year level.

**Completed by:** Click or tap here to enter name.

**Date Completed:** Click or tap here to enter date.

**Before using this checklist**

In the first instance, teachers should make evidence-based classroom adjustments across all subject areas and learning tasks (see below classroom adjustments). This will support **all** learners’ language development, especially those with language difficulties.

[General Expressive Language Classroom Adjustments](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/learningneeds/General_Expressive_Language_Classroom_Adjustments.DOCX)

[General Receptive Language Classroom Adjustments](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/learningneeds/General_Receptive_Language_Classroom_Adjustments.DOCX)

If a student continues to experience difficulties despite these adjustments, the teacher should investigate further:

1. Use the [What does a language difficulty look like in the classroom](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/learningneeds/What_a_language_difficulty_looks_like_in_the_classroom.DOCX) resource with this checklist (see page 3) to help build a language profile of the student.
2. Then use this profile to identify the skill areas where the student has difficulties and increase the use of classroom adjustments to support them in these areas.

**Things to consider when using this checklist**

This checklist is designed to enable teachers, parents, psychologists and other professionals to identify students who may have language learning difficulties. The features described may be signs of a language difficulty.

This checklist covers a wide age range. Some items **MAY NOT** be applicable to the student’s age or grade level. When completing the checklist, consider the student’s communication behaviours in relation to their same-aged peers. In other words, is the same behaviour typical of other students of the same age and expected for their age or different from their peers and potentially a sign of a difficulty.

Consider each description carefully and mark those that are **consistent features** of the student’s communication behaviour. In other words, the student experiences these on most days and with most tasks rather than occasionally in tasks that would challenge many same-aged peers.

Remember that language difficulties affect every individual differently, and there are many ways language problems may present and evolve over time.

There is no target number of items a student needs to ‘tick’ to have difficulty with language. A student may have difficulty across all the areas of the checklist or may have difficulty in a few areas.

It is important to also collect the student’s views on their strengths and areas of challenge with language. You could ask the student:

* How do you feel about listening in class? Are there times that you find this easier / harder? What do these times look like?
* What things help you to remember instructions? (Offer suggestions: When I write instructions on the board, when I show you how to do something?).
* What talking activities do you enjoy in class (e.g. small group tasks, whole-group activities etc.)? Are there ones you find harder and what is hard about these?

**Use the checklist to support further investigation**

Consider a referral to a speech pathologist and use the data and information collected from the checklist to support this discussion. The wellbeing coordinator / assistant principal and the student’s parents should be included in the discussion. A speech pathologist can:

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

**SEE CHECKLIST ON NEXT PAGE**

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| SECONDARY LEVEL CHECKLIST |
| **Academic and literate language use** |
| has delayed progress in literacy skills including, decoding, reading for meaning, punctuation, proof reading, spelling, handwriting, language-based maths tasks  has reduced written output compared to same-aged peers  written work can be disjointed or poorly organised, has difficulty providing information relevant to the topic or task  has difficulty taking notes from spoken or written text, including paraphrasing and summarising  has difficulty learning subject-specific language and new terminology  has difficulty using formal/literate styles of language (e.g., presenting, reporting, debating) |
| **Behaviour** |
| **Has difficulty processing auditory information**  has difficulty paying attention, listening and understanding speech in a noisy environment  is inattentive and restless in listening situations  may tire easily and ‘tune out’ at times  is slow to process information  needs extra time to respond verbally and to organise answers  frequently asks for clarification of information/instructions  **Disguises learning problems by using coping strategies or adopting behaviours that impact on learning**  waits to observe other students before responding; may copy other student’s work  distracts other students and/or engages in attention seeking behaviours  interacts inappropriately with teachers and/or other students  fails to follow class rules  is quiet and does not draw attention to self in class  tends not to participate or contribute to discussions  rushes in impulsively, seemingly ‘without thinking’  shows evidence of aggression, withdrawal, frustration  becomes frustrated when communicating (e.g., says ‘You know what I mean’ or ‘It doesn’t matter’)  **Has difficulty planning tasks and working independently**  has difficulty organising themselves (e.g., forgets homework, loses jumper, arrives late)  needs explicit explanation of organisational routines that are usually learned quickly by peers (e.g., timetable routines and changes)  has difficulty with:  using a diary  completing tasks  handing work in on time  using effective study routines  organising and sequencing information  applying research skills  monitoring performance and progress through a task  **Has difficulty with social skills**  makes inappropriate comments; may be related to previous topics  body language and facial expressions may indicate disinterest or disengagement  tends not to clarify information, or seeks excessive clarification  has difficulty making and maintaining friendships  has difficulty sustaining conversations due to difficulties in taking turns and introducing and maintaining topics  interprets ambiguous language literally (e.g., ‘I’m so hungry I could eat a horse’)  has difficulty understanding and using social / conversational language with peers, including colloquial expressions and teenage slang (e.g., ‘He is so extra’ – meaning he’s trying too hard to / he’s over the top or excessive)  has difficulty interpreting social cues (e.g., facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, innuendo, sarcasm, humour)  has difficulty using language to manage or resolve conflict (e.g., to persuade, negotiate bargain) |
| **Speaking and listening skills** |
| **Has difficulty with language comprehension**  has difficulty remembering sequences of verbal information (e.g., days of the week, months of the year, 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., ‘Start on your revision sheets after you have handed in your essay’ is harder to understand than ‘Hand in your essay, then start on your revision sheets’).  misinterprets indirect requests and subtle remarks (e.g., ‘It is advisable you finish your work by Friday’; ‘I want to hear a pin drop’; ‘Pull up your socks’)  comprehends ‘concrete’ language but has difficulty understanding more abstract language (e.g., idioms, similes, proverbs and metaphors)  comprehends only fragments of information or gets the wrong message  **Shows limited range and flexibility of vocabulary**  has a narrow understanding of word meanings. For example, fails to comprehend multiple meanings of words in different contexts (e.g., ‘crane’ is a bird, a machine and an action (‘I craned my neck to see the TV screen’)  has difficulty with retrieving words from memory and, or frequently uses non-specific words (e.g., sort of, stuff, junk)  has a restricted range of vocabulary (e.g., relies on familiar words)  **Has difficulty with language expression**  gives inappropriate responses to questions  speaks in short, simple sentences, connecting ideas with ‘and’ or ‘then’, language use is less mature and sophisticated than peers  has difficulty giving instructions for games or directions to an exact location  may have a lot to say but lacks specific detail, leaving the listener confused; has difficulty getting to the point when explaining something  speech is hesitant, filled with pauses or numerous ‘ums’, repetitions or rewording  has trouble providing accurate and specific information (e.g., when asked to give the cooking method, may list the equipment instead)  mispronounces and confuses longer or similar sounding words (e.g., constipate consummate; elaborate / evaporate)  **Has difficulty with ‘text’ level language**  has difficulty gaining information from written and spoken text without teacher assistance  fails to fully comprehend text (e.g., has difficulty drawing conclusions and predicting outcomes)  has difficulty drawing inferences (i.e., connecting what’s on the page, what’s in your head and reading between the lines)  has difficulty ‘seeing’ the connection or relationships between more complex ideas  has difficulty identifying the main idea and providing supporting details relevant to a topic  has difficulty paraphrasing or putting information into own words  has difficulty making sense of pictorial information; may have difficulty following films as gets ‘caught up’ in the action sequence |
| **Student voice** |
| Click to add student’s views on their strengths and challenges |
| **Any other information** |
| It is helpful to think about the student’s talking, reading and writing skills in different situations (e.g., classroom, school ground, home). You may also want to comment on the student’s confidence, self-esteem etc.  Click to add any relevant background, assessment findings, observations or relevant information |

**Acknowledgement**

This checklist was originally developed by speech pathologists from the Language Learning Disability – Special Interest Group (Victoria) and OzChild Education Services. Adaptations have been made by the Department of Education, following consultation and approval from OzChild. This checklist may be copied and used in schools.