

# Language and communication

## Early childhood learning trajectories



## What is language and communication?

Language and communication are the foundations for all learning and social interaction. They relate to many other aspects of cognitive, physical and social development, beginning in infancy. Language and communication involve 4 main components:

- [Receptive language](#) emerges as children understand what is said to them (verbally and non-verbally) before they can talk, understanding more as they grow.
- [Expressive language](#) includes the ability to make purposeful sounds, words and gestures to convey their thoughts, feelings and ideas to others.
- [Emergent reading](#) describes the early stages of understanding written text. It includes decoding letters and symbols and becoming familiar with written materials.
- [Emergent writing](#) is when children express themselves by making marks and using these to convey meaning, eventually learning letters and using these to form words.

Many Australian children first develop these skills in a language other than English, and partnerships with families can help build on this valuable learning.

## Early Years Learning Framework

AERO's Early Childhood Learning Trajectories align with the principles, practices and outcomes of the [Early Years Learning Framework V2.0](#). The [Early Childhood Learning Trajectories: User Guide](#) provides further information and demonstrates how the Learning Outcomes can be mapped to domains.

## National Quality Standard

[Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice](#)

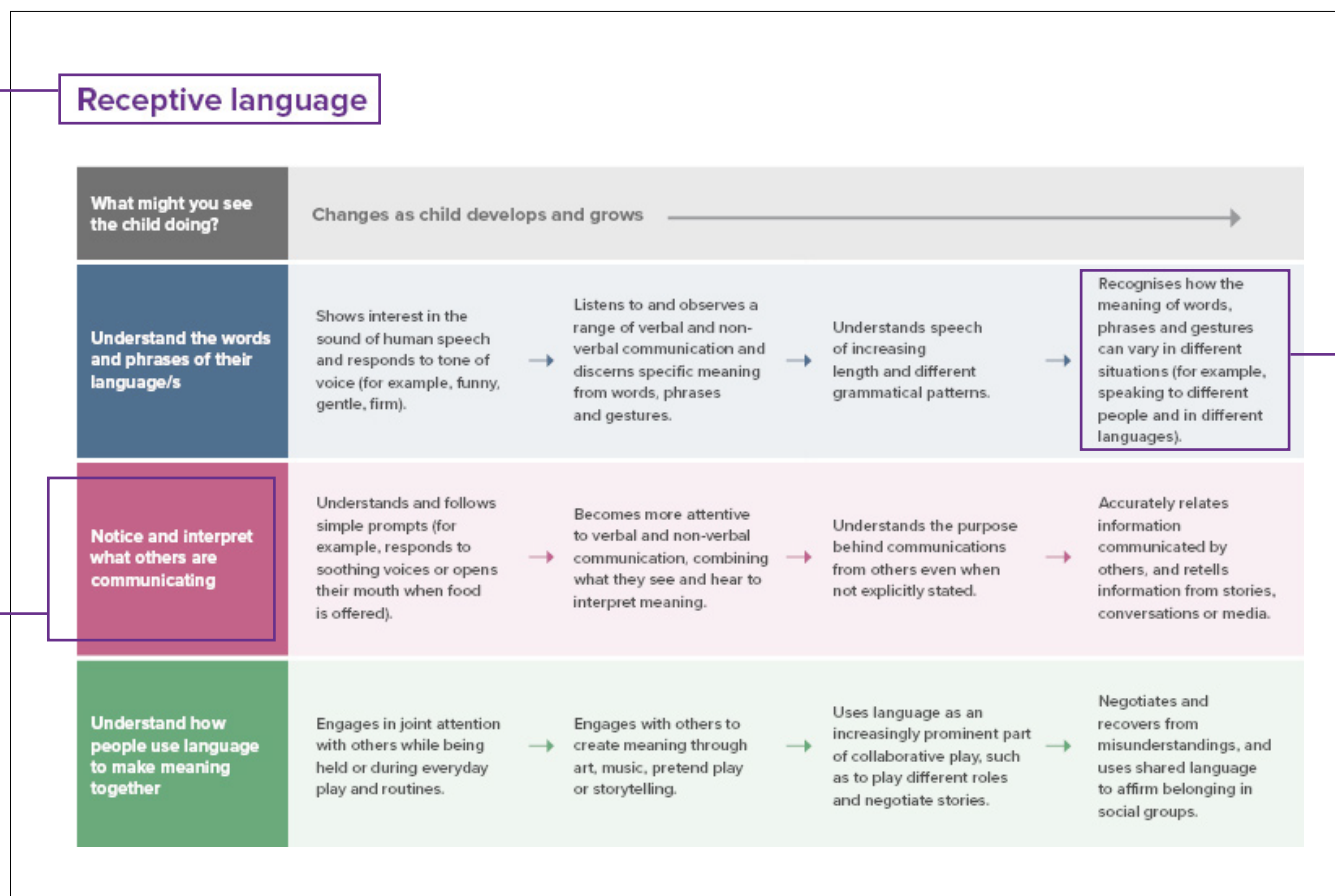
## How to use the Early Childhood Learning Trajectories

These learning trajectories will help you observe children’s progress in language and communication. They will give you language and ideas for documenting children’s learning and development, and for your conversations with families and colleagues about children’s progress. The trajectory is not a checklist. You are encouraged to use your professional knowledge and judgement in determining how each child may demonstrate progress along each trajectory, and how best to support their learning.

The domain for this set of learning trajectories is language and communication.

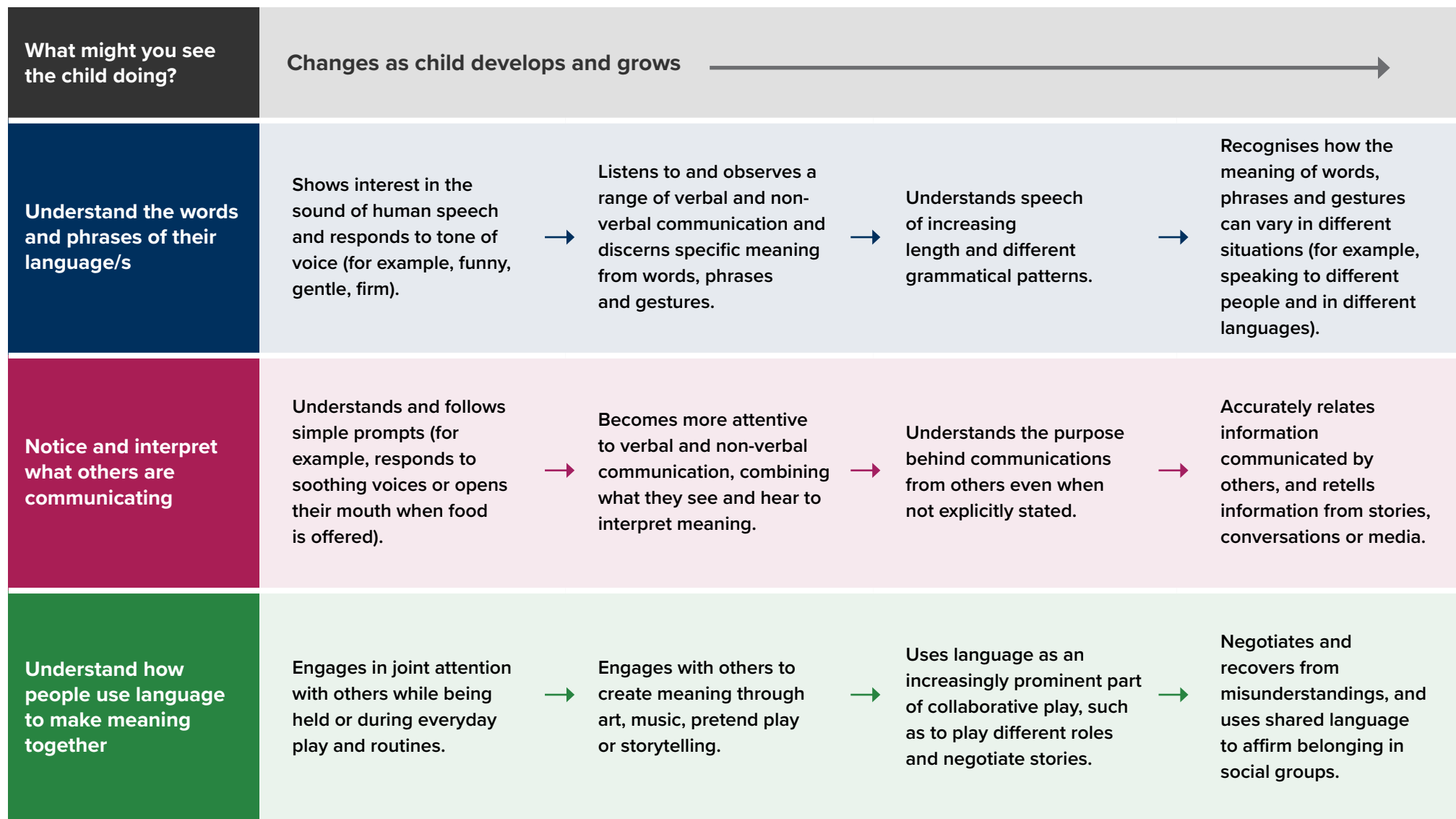
Within this domain, there are **4 subdomains**: receptive language, expressive language, emergent reading and emergent writing. Each subdomain is presented in a separate table.

Within each subdomain, there are **3 strands**, describing the capabilities that change over time as children learn and develop.

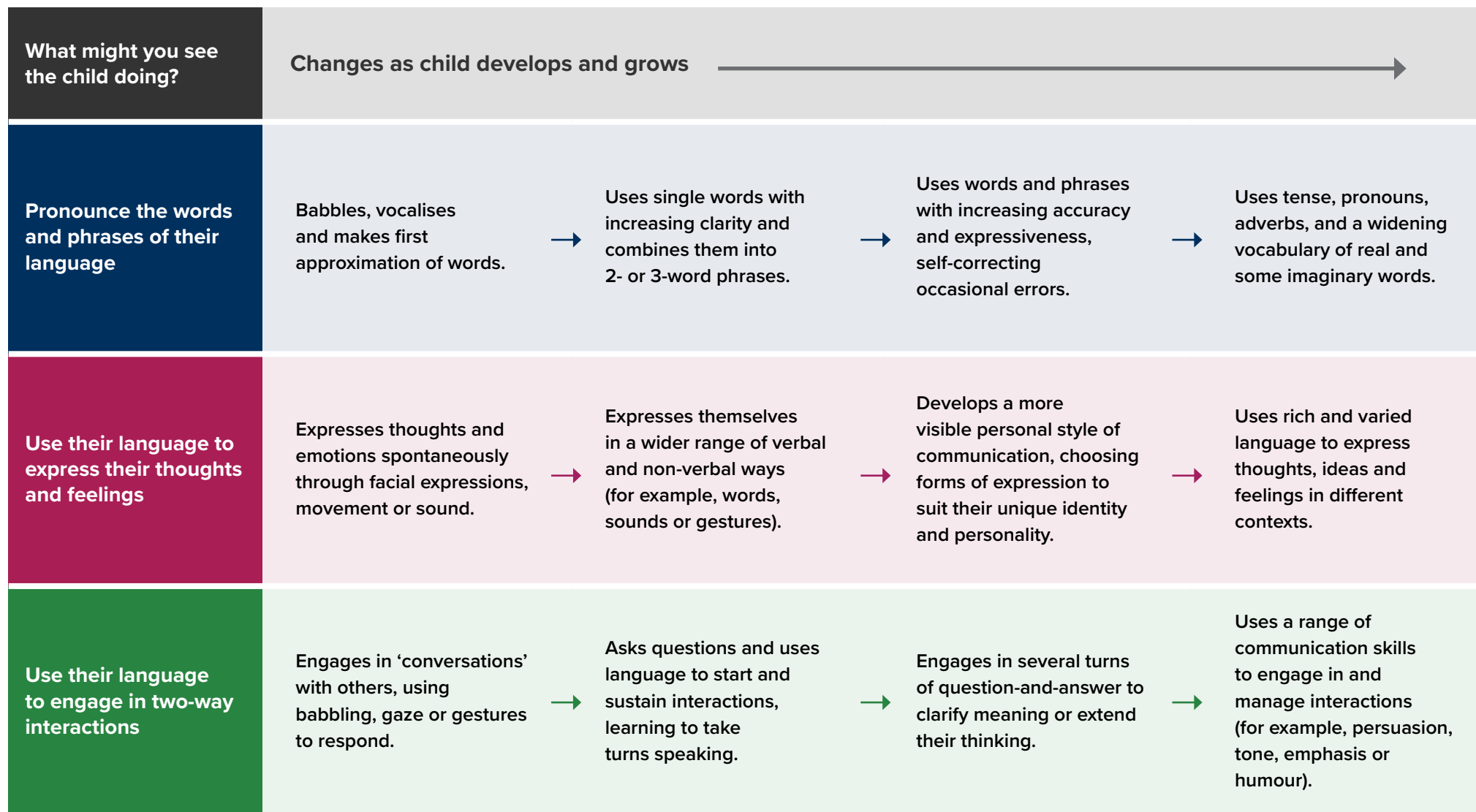


Within each strand, there are **indicators** that describe what you might observe as children progress along the trajectory. These indicators build on one another over time.

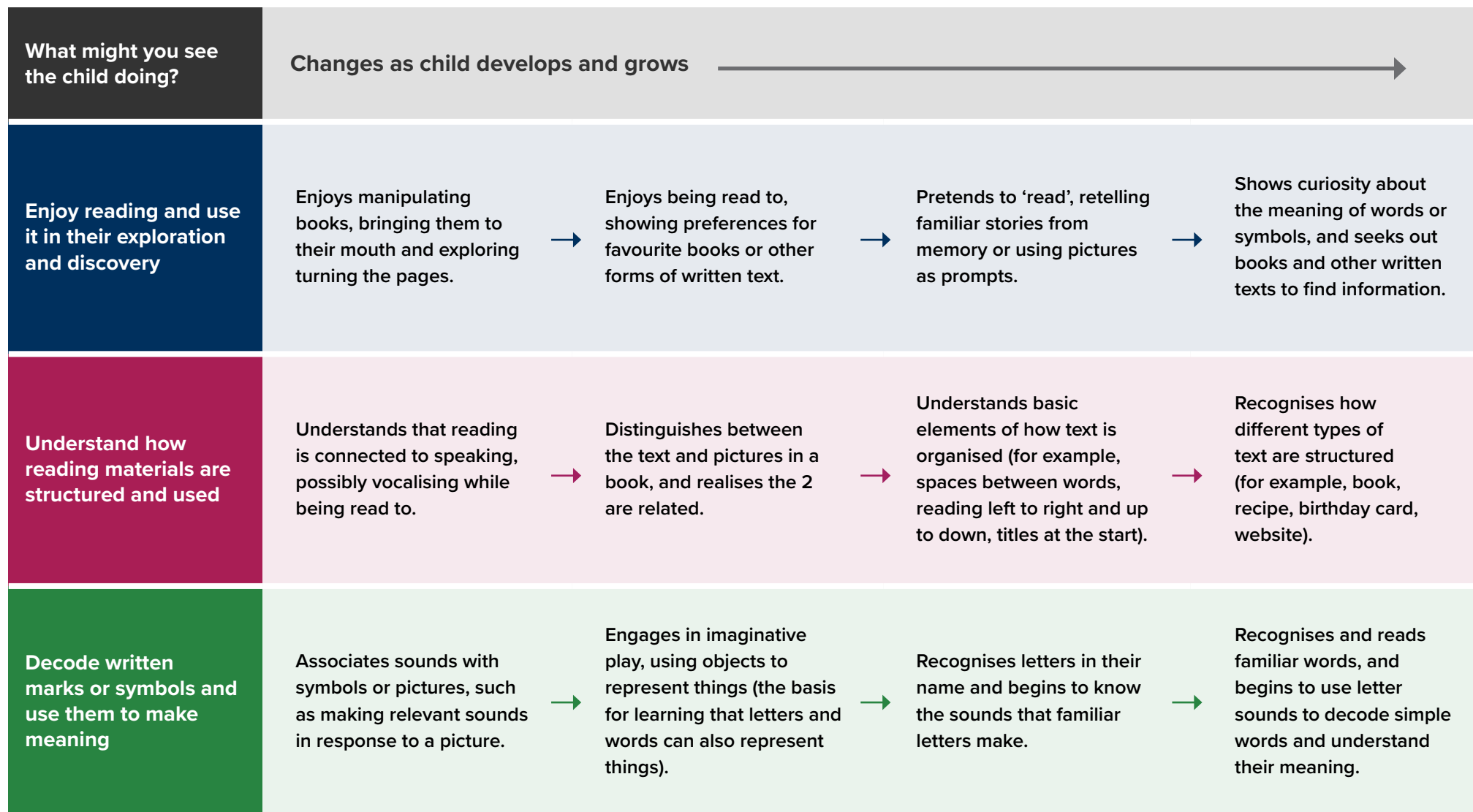
# Receptive language



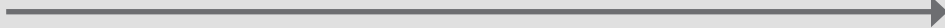
# Expressive language



# Emergent reading



## Emergent writing

What might you see the child doing?	Changes as child develops and grows 			
<p><b>Use fine motor skills to make marks with writing tools</b></p>	<p>Develops strength in their arms, wrists and hands through play with various hand-held objects.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Holds a crayon, pen or pencil in their fist and uses it to make marks on paper or surfaces.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Uses basic writing tools more confidently and begins to explore other writing tools such as keyboards or touchscreens.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Uses writing tools effectively and writes letters with increasing accuracy in shape and position.</p>
<p><b>Enjoy writing and use it to express themselves and communicate with others</b></p>	<p>Explores making marks on paper, including hand/finger painting.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Draws circles, lines and squiggles and explores using colours and textures on paper or in the sand.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Begins to talk about the meaning and purpose of what they are drawing or 'writing'.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Organises multiple ideas into stories, and represents these in drawings or emergent writing attempts.</p>
<p><b>Understand how writing represents language and its parts</b></p>	<p>Shows interest in others who are drawing and writing.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Shows awareness of the purpose of writing and notices different writing activities in everyday life.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Includes the forms of letters and numbers in their drawing, and possibly writes one or more letters in their name.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Writes simple words while sounding them out and begins to understand spelling conventions.</p>

# Creating opportunities to support children's language and communication

## Receptive language

- Vary the words, tones and gestures you use when talking to children to make language interesting at an age-appropriate level.
- Recognise that children may understand more than they can say, especially children from a language background other than English.
- 'Wonder aloud' or narrate what you are seeing or doing to help children make connections between words and actions.
- Encourage families to celebrate and extend children's emerging understanding, using their home language as a foundation for learning.

## Expressive language

- Experiment playfully with sentences, syllables or sounds (for example, in songs or rhymes) to help children recognise the building blocks of speech.
- Use a range of age-appropriate strategies to sustain two-way interactions, such as asking further questions or open-ended questions.
- Repeat, extend and rephrase children's words and sentences, modelling accurate expression and reinforcing their successful attempts.
- Encourage children to wonder aloud, hypothesise and predict, using any language they have to express and extend their thinking.

## Emergent reading

- Provide literacy-rich environments for all age groups using books – including bilingual books – print, signs and labels to incorporate reading into play and routines.
- Engage in songs, nursery rhymes and finger play and later rhyming games to support phonological awareness.
- Engage children in shared reading activities and talk to children about the meaning of what you have read together.
- When reading, introduce concepts of print such as reading from left to right, or phonological strategies like sounding out letters.

## Emergent writing

- Provide various age-appropriate materials for children to experiment with mark-making, and ask older children what their marks mean.
- Model purposeful writing throughout the program and encourage children to incorporate it into their socio-dramatic play.
- Encourage children's writing attempts and celebrate their efforts to convey meaning while gradually building accuracy over time.
- Introduce children to diverse symbols and writing scripts that reflect their home languages, cultures and experiences.

## About this resource

Our Early Childhood Learning Trajectories are designed for teachers and educators working in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services with children in the years before school. They can support ongoing professional learning, for individuals, and entire ECEC services and teams.

The Early Childhood Learning Trajectories describe how children learn and develop in these key domains:

- [Executive functions](#)
- [Social and emotional learning](#)
- [Mathematical thinking](#)
- Language and communication
- [Physical development](#).

While each learning trajectory describes children's progress in a single domain, they are designed to be used in interconnected ways. A single experience may support progress in multiple domains at the same time. Progress in one domain may depend on progress in another.

## Further reading

For more information on our learning trajectories research

- [Early Childhood Learning Trajectories: User Guide](#)
- [Early Childhood Learning Trajectories: The Evidence Base](#)

## More information

The AERO website features [further guidance](#), including practice guides and case studies for early childhood practice. Visit [edresearch.edu.au](https://edresearch.edu.au) for more information.