



Language Rich Environment Checklists Information and Administration Guidelines¹

Language acquisition during the first years of life provides the foundation for later cognitive, communication, social-emotional, and academic development. For children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), early access to language is particularly critical, as reduced access to auditory input may affect the rate and trajectory of language development if appropriate intervention and communication supports are not provided (Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, 2019). Research has demonstrated that strong language development during infancy and early childhood provides the foundation for later literacy, academic achievement, and social-emotional development. Children who enter school with age-appropriate language skills are more likely to become proficient readers, with reading proficiency by the end of third grade serving as an important predictor of subsequent educational success (Snow et al., 1998; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2003; Moeller et al., 2024).

The **Language Rich Environment Checklists (LREC)** were developed to support the implementation and monitoring of language-rich practices within home and early childhood educational settings. The checklists provide a structured framework for identifying environmental characteristics and interaction strategies that facilitate language learning for young children who are deaf or hard of hearing. They are intended for use by parents, caregivers, early intervention providers, preschool educators, and other professionals who support children's communication and language development.

The LREC is designed as a practice guide rather than a diagnostic or evaluative measure. Their primary purpose is to promote reflection, guide coaching and professional development, and monitor changes in the quality of language and communication opportunities over time. Repeated use of the checklists can document progress, inform

¹ Adapted 2026 by Cheryl DeConde Johnson, Patricia Smolko, and Carrie Davenport with permission from Lang, S.N., Buettner, C.K., Knight, K. M., Buettner, D., Pickett, J., Artman-Meeker, K., et al. (2016-2024). Language-rich environment inventory from the Family Child Care Track, Communication & Language Development Course, Lesson 4. The Department of Defense Child Development *Virtual Laboratory School*, <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/fcc/communication-and-language-development/lesson-4/act/19946>. Adapted version available at www.adevantage.com/resources.

intervention planning, and support collaborative discussions among families and professionals regarding strategies that enhance children's language-learning experiences.

The conceptual framework underlying the LREC is based on three interdependent components that contribute to a language-rich environment:



1. **A learning environment** that is organized to maximize opportunities for communication, language access, and engagement.
2. **A child who is ready to engage**, characterized by attention, participation, and responsiveness to communication opportunities.
3. **High-quality adult-child interactions** that intentionally support language acquisition through responsive, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate communication.

These three components recognize that language development is influenced not only by the physical and social environment but also by the quality of interactions between children and their communication partners (Davenport et al, 2026). The LREC organizes observable practices within each component to provide a comprehensive framework for promoting language development in everyday routines and activities.

The checklists are intended to complement, rather than replace, other developmental assessments and intervention planning tools. When used as part of ongoing family-centered educational practices, the LREC provides a systematic approach to documenting the conditions that support optimal language learning and to identifying opportunities for continuous improvement in the quality of language experiences provided to young children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The LREC may be accessed at <https://adevantage.com/resources>.

Administration Guidelines

Purpose

The **Language Rich Environment Checklists (LREC)** are practice-based observational and coaching tools designed to identify environmental characteristics and interaction strategies that support language acquisition for infants and young children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The LRE Family/Caregiver Checklist and the LRE Preschool Checklist

document the extent to which evidence-based language facilitation strategies are incorporated into everyday routines and activities within home and early childhood educational settings.

The primary purposes of the LREC are to:

- Identify strengths within the child's language-learning environment.
- Guide collaborative coaching and intervention planning.
- Promote consistent implementation of language facilitation strategies.
- Monitor changes in language-supportive practices over time.
- Document progress toward creating increasingly language-rich environments.

The LREC is intended to complement developmental assessments and family-centered intervention planning. They are **not** designed to evaluate parenting practices, determine child eligibility, or serve as a measure of child developmental outcomes.

Qualifications of the Facilitator

The LREC should be administered by professionals with knowledge and experience in early intervention or early childhood education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Facilitators should possess an understanding of:

- Family-centered intervention practices;
- Typical and atypical language development;
- Evidence-based language acquisition methodologies for children who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Coaching strategies that promote caregiver competence and confidence.

Examples of qualified facilitators include early intervention providers, teachers of the deaf, speech-language pathologists, educational audiologists, listening and spoken language specialists, and other professionals serving young children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Administration Procedures

The LREC is designed to be completed collaboratively through discussion, observation, and reflection. Administration should occur within the context of naturally occurring routines whenever possible.

For each checklist item, the facilitator should:

1. Review the strategy with the caregiver or educator.
2. Provide examples that illustrate the practice.
3. Discuss how the strategy is currently incorporated into daily routines.
4. Observe implementation when appropriate.
5. Record strengths, challenges, and recommendations for continued growth.

Rather than emphasizing completion of the checklist, the facilitator should use each item as an opportunity for reflective discussion and collaborative problem solving.

Family/Caregiver Administration

When used with families, the facilitator should present each strategy, supplementing with the provided examples, and using language that is understandable, culturally responsive, and relevant to the family's everyday routines. Discussions should acknowledge existing family strengths while identifying opportunities to increase meaningful language interactions throughout the day.

Recommendations generated through the LREC may be incorporated into IFSP outcomes, home activity plans, or other intervention goals when appropriate.

Families who become familiar with the checklist may subsequently use the LREC independently as a self-reflection tool between intervention visits.

Preschool/Educational Administration

Within preschool settings, the facilitator should review each practice in relation to classroom routines and the child's communication and language goals. Discussion should focus on identifying opportunities to embed language facilitation strategies throughout naturally occurring classroom activities.

Recommendations may be incorporated into classroom intervention plans or IEP implementation strategies.

Educators who are familiar with the LREC may complete the checklist independently for self-monitoring or professional reflection, with periodic review by the facilitator.

Frequency of Administration

The LREC is intended to be administered repeatedly throughout intervention to monitor changes in language-supportive practices over time. Although administration frequency

should be determined by the child's needs and service delivery model, completion every **3 to 6 months**, or in conjunction with IFSP or IEP reviews, is recommended.

Repeated administrations allow providers, families, and educators to:

- document changes in implementation;
- evaluate the effectiveness of coaching and intervention strategies;
- identify new priorities as the child's communication skills develop; and
- support continuous improvement in the language-learning environment.

References

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