

The development of turn-taking: Pre-schoolers may predict what you will say, but they don't use those predictions to plan a reply.

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Abstract: Whereas adults exchange conversational turns very rapidly, children often respond after long gaps. However, it has been proposed that the infrastructure necessary to take turns develops in infancy. Why are children slow to respond to turns? Adults' turn-taking skills, it has been argued, rely on an ability to both predict when the current turn will end and prepare a response as soon as possible. In two experiments, we ask how these two abilities (prediction and early preparation) develop. Adults and 3-to-5-year-olds answered yes/no questions while playing an iPad-based maze game. Distributional analysis of answer latencies suggest that (i) neither children nor adults rely on fine-grained predictions of turn duration and (ii) both children and adults use predictions about turn content to prepare their answer early. In sum, by the age of three, children already have the cognitive architecture necessary to take turns successfully. ,