



The ABC's Of Child Development Developmental Milestones For Your Child's First Five Years

Children grow and develop at different rates. While their pathways through childhood differ, most pass a set of predictable milestones along the way. The information presented here offers a map that can help you follow your child's journey. Our map divides the developmental milestones into four areas: *Physical Development, Social & Emotional Development, Thinking Skills, and Communication Skills.*

In reality, these areas overlap, as development in one area is reinforced and enhanced by growth in others. The milestones suggested for each area offer examples of the developmental leaps that young children make. **These are not complete lists.** As you follow this map, keep in mind that each child develops differently and that an individual child may develop more quickly in one area than in another.

Ages	Physical	Social and Emotional Development	Thinking Skills	Communication Skills
Birth-3 months	<p>From the start, babies want to explore their world. They are eager to move their eyes, their mouths, and their bodies toward the people and objects that comfort and interest them. They practice skills that let them not only move closer to desired objects, but also move desired objects closer to themselves. As they grow, children's determination to master movement, balance, and fine-motor skills remains intense.</p> <p>Most infants begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise head slightly when lying on stomach - Hold head up for a few seconds, when supported - Hold hand in a fist - Lift head and chest, while lying on stomach - Use sucking, grasping, and rooting (holding tongue to the roof of the mouth) reflexes - Touch, pull, and tug own hands with fascination - Repeat body movements, and enjoy doing so 	<p>Social and emotional milestones are often harder to pinpoint than signs of physical development. This area emphasizes many skills that increase self-awareness and self-regulation. Research shows that social skills and emotional development (reflected in the ability to pay attention, make transitions from one activity to another, and cooperate with others) are a very important part of school readiness.</p> <p>Babies spend a lot of time getting to know their own bodies. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suck their own fingers - Observe their own hands - Look at the place on the body that is being touched - Begin to realize she is a separate person from others and learn how body parts, like arms and legs, are attached. <p>Infants are interested in other people and learn to recognize primary caregivers. Most infants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be comforted by a familiar adult - Respond positively to touch - Interact best when in an alert state or in an inactive and attentive state - Benefit from short, frequent interactions more than long, infrequent ones - Smile and show pleasure in response to social stimulation 	<p>Infants were once thought of as passive and unknowing. It was commonly believed that until they mastered language, young children were incapable of thinking or forming complex ideas. Today, we know otherwise. From the very start, young children are aware of their surroundings and interested in exploring them. Scientists from several fields have shown that from the first weeks of life, babies are active learners. They are busy gathering and organizing knowledge about their world. These milestones highlight young children's progress in developing perceptual and thinking skills.</p> <p>Newborns begin right away to use and integrate their senses to explore their world. Most infants can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See clearly within 13 inches - Focus on and follow moving objects, including human faces - See all colors and distinguish hue and brightness - Distinguish the pitch and volume of sound - Discriminate sweet, sour, bitter, and salty tastes - Respond with facial expressions to strong stimuli (like odors) - Prefer high contrast items and geometric shapes - Begin to anticipate events (for example, sucking at the sight of a nipple) 	<p>Long before children can say words or join them into sentences, they are active language learners. Within a few short years, young children go from newborns without language to excellent communicators and lively inventors and tellers of stories.</p> <p>From the very start, infants pay close attention to language. In the first year, they can distinguish all of the speech sounds that occur in natural language; then they begin to specialize in the sounds of their home language. Most infants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respond to speech by looking at the speaker - Respond differently to the voice of a parent than to other voices - React to changes in a speaker's tone, pitch, volume, and intonation - Respond differently to their home language and another language - Communicate with bodily movements, by crying, babbling, and laughing - Attempt to imitate sounds
3- 6 months	<p>Babies are quickly becoming stronger and more agile. Most begin to:</p>	<p>Babies are more likely to initiate social interaction. They begin to:</p>	<p>Babies perceptual abilities improve rapidly. At this age, they are able to:</p>	<p>Even small babies love to have "conversations." Most children of this</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roll over - Push body forward and pull body up by grabbing the edge of a crib - Reach for and touch objects - Reach, grasp, and put objects in mouth - Make discoveries with objects (for example, a rattle makes noise when it is moved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play peek-a-boo - Pay attention to own name - Smile spontaneously - Laugh aloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize faces - Differentiate between different people based on the way they look, sound, or feel - React to and imitate the facial expressions of others - Respond to familiar sounds 	age: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exchange sounds, facial expressions, or gestures with a parent or caregiver - Listen to conversations - Repeat some vowel and consonant sounds
6-9 months	<p>"Child-proofing" becomes important as babies get more mobile. During this time most begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crawl - Grasp and pull things toward self - Transfer objects between hands 	<p>Babies show a wider emotional range and stronger preferences for familiar people. Most can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Express several clearly differentiated emotions - Distinguish friends from strangers - Respond actively to language and gestures - Show displeasure at the loss of a toy 	<p>Using ingenious research methods, scientists have found that babies begin very early to have glimmers of how the world works. Even very young babies have been found to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stare longer at "impossible" events (like ordinary objects suspended in midair) - Distinguish between inanimate and animate objects, and understand that inanimate objects must be propelled into motion by an external force - Distinguish among pictures that show different numbers of items - Use the relative size of objects as a clue to how close or how far away they are 	<p>Children's vocalizations increase. Most babies of this age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin repetitive babbling (deaf children also start to babble with their hands) - Associate gestures with simple words and two-word phrases, like "hi" and "bye-bye" - Use vocal and non-vocal communication to express interest and influence others
9-12 months	<p>By this time, most babies can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sit without support - Stand unaided - Walk with aid - Roll a ball - Throw objects - Pick things up with thumb and one finger - Drop and pick up toys 	<p>As they near age one, imitation and self-regulation gain importance. Most babies can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feed themselves finger foods - Hold a cup with two hands and drink with assistance - Hold out arms and legs while being dressed - Mimic simple actions - Show anxiety when separated from primary caregiver 	<p>As they grow, children continue to explore how the world works and build on the conceptual leaps described above. At this age, most babies can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand that an object still exists even when it's not in view - Respond to simple directions and questions with gestures, sounds, and perhaps words - Imitate gestures and actions - Experiment purposefully with the physical properties of objects, for example, by seeing how objects fit into a container or what happens if the container is turned over - Enjoy looking at picture books 	<p>Children are getting ready to talk. Around the first birthday, language production doubles. Many babies of this age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the names of familiar people and objects - Show their understanding with responsive body language and facial expressions - Say a few words - Respond to a firm "no" by stopping what they are doing
1-2 years	<p>Walking and self-initiated movement become easier. Most children can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walk alone - Walk backwards - Pick up toys from a standing position - Push and pull objects - Seat self in a child's chair - Walk up and down stairs with aid 	<p>Children become more aware of themselves and their ability to make things happen. They express a wider range of emotions and are more likely to initiate interaction with other people. At this stage, most children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize themselves in pictures or the mirror and smile or make faces at 	<p>Children at this age spend much of their time intently observing and imitating the actions of adults. Most can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imitate adults' actions and language - Understand words and commands and respond appropriately - Begin to match similar objects - Recognize and identify familiar objects in 	<p>Children begin to learn many new words and begin to use simple phrases. Many children can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand many words, as well as simple phrases and directions ("Drink your juice") - Follow a series of two simple but related directions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move to music - Paint with whole arm movement <p>Balance improves and eye-hand coordination becomes more precise.</p> <p>Most children can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put rings on a peg - Turn two or three pages at a time - Scribble - Turn knobs - Grasp and hold a small ball; can use in combination with large motor skills to throw the ball - Shift marker or any drawing or painting tool from hand to hand and draw strokes 	<p>themselves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show intense feelings for parents and show affection for other familiar people - Play by themselves and initiate their own play - Express negative feelings - Show pride and pleasure at new accomplishments - Imitate adult behaviors in play - Show a strong sense of self through assertiveness, directing others - Begin to be helpful, such as by helping to put things away 	<p>storybooks with adult assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distinguish between "you" and "me" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respond correctly when asked "where?" - Say a few words clearly, and a few dozen additional words so that family members can understand. The words denote important people and common objects, and a few prepositions such as "on," "in," or "under." Many can say "more" and "all gone." - Say successive single words to describe an event - From about 18 months, begin learning about 9 new words a day - Use "my" or "mine" to indicate possession; begin to use "me," "I," and "you"
2-3 years	<p>Children become more comfortable with motion, increasing speed, and coordination. Most begin to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Run forward - Jump in place with both feet together - Stand on one foot, with aid - Walk on tiptoe - Kick ball forward <p>Children are able to manipulate small objects with increased control. Most can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - String large beads - Turn pages one by one - Hold crayon with thumb and fingers instead of fist - Draw a circle - Paint with wrist action, making dots and lines - Roll, pound, squeeze, and pull clay 	<p>Children begin to experience themselves as more powerful, creative "doers." They explore everything, show a stronger sense of self and expand their range of self-help skills. Self-regulation is a big challenge. Two-year-olds are likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show awareness of gender identity - Indicate toileting needs - Help to dress and undress themselves - Be assertive about their preferences and say no to adult requests - Begin self-evaluation and develop notions of themselves as good, bad, attractive, etc. - Show awareness of their own feelings and those of others, and talk about feelings - Experience rapid mood shifts and show increased fearfulness (for example, fear of the dark, or certain objects) - Display aggressive feelings and behaviors <p>Children enjoy parallel play, engaging in solitary activities near other children. They are likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch other children and briefly join in play - Defend their possessions - Begin to play house - Use objects symbolically in play - Participate in simple group activities, such as singing clapping or dancing - Know gender identity 	<p>A lot of learning is done through a child's own exploration, and this really takes off at this age. Most children can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respond to simple directions - Choose picture books, name pictured objects, and identify several objects within one picture - Group objects by category - Stack rings on peg in order of size - Identify themselves in the mirror, saying "baby" or their own name - Relate what they are doing to others - Observe and imitate more complex adult actions (for example, housekeeping play) 	<p>Both understanding of language and speaking develop more rapidly at this stage. Most 2-year-olds can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Join familiar words into phrases - Begin to use modifiers (adverbs and adjectives) - Point to common objects when they are named - Name objects based on their description - Respond to "what?" and "where?" questions - Enjoy listening to stories and asking for favorite stories - Recount events that happened that day
3- 4	Movement and balance improve. Most	As their dexterity and self-help skills	As children have more experiences in	Language usage becomes more

<p>years</p>	<p>children can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Run around obstacles - Walk on a line - Balance on one foot - Push, pull, and steer toys - Ride a tricycle - Use a slide without help - Throw and catch a ball <p>Children's precision of motion improves significantly. Most are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build a tall tower of blocks - Drive pegs into holes - Draw crosses and circles - Manipulate clay by making balls, snakes, etc. 	<p>improve, 3-year-olds become more independent. Most can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow a series of simple directions - Complete simple tasks with food without assistance, such as spreading soft butter with a dull knife and pouring from a small pitcher - Wash hands unassisted and blow nose when reminded <p>Children become more interested in other children. They are now more likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share toys, taking turns with assistance - Initiate or join in play with other children and make up games - Begin dramatic play, acting out whole scenes (such as traveling, pretending to be animals) 	<p>the world, their analytic powers grow. For some time, they have been observing and mentally "sorting" objects according to their physical properties. Now most children can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand concepts like grouping and matching (for example, recognizing and matching colors) - Organize materials on their own, for example by stacking blocks or rings in order of size - Identify parts of a whole, like a slice of pie - Draw, name, and briefly explain somewhat recognizable pictures that are meaningful to them - Actively seek information through why and how questions - Tell you their full name and age - Attend to an activity for a longer stretch of time (between 5 and 15 minutes) - Learn both by observing and listening to adults' explanations - Show awareness of past and present 	<p>complex. Most 3-year-olds can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make themselves understood to strangers, despite some sound errors - Use and understand sentences - Use more complex grammar, such as plurals and past tense - Understand sentences involving time concepts (for example, "Grandma is coming tomorrow") and narrate past experiences - Understand size comparisons such as big and bigger - Understand relationships expressed by "if... then" or "because" sentences - Follow a series of two to four related directions - Sing a song and repeat at least one nursery rhyme
<p>4- 5 years</p>	<p>Children are now more confident, and most are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walk backwards - Jump forward many times without falling - Jump on one foot - Walk up and down stairs without assistance, alternating feet - Turn somersaults <p>Children develop skills that will help them as they enter school and begin writing. Most can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use safety scissors - Cut on a line continuously - Copy squares and crosses - Print a few capital letters 	<p>At this age, children are more aware of themselves as individuals. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show some understanding of moral reasoning (exploring ideas about fairness and good or bad behavior) - Compare themselves with others <p>4-year-olds are very interested in relationships with other children. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop friendships - Express more awareness of other people's feelings - Show interest in exploring sex differences - Enjoy imaginative play with other children, like dress up or house - Bring dramatic play closer to reality by paying attention to detail, time, and space 	<p>At this age, children actively seek information and new experiences from the people in their environment. Most can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play with words, mimicking and creating sounds, and make rhymes - Point to and name many colors - Understand order and process - Draw a person with detail - Draw, name, and describe pictures - Count to 5 - Tell you their street and town 	<p>4-year-olds use language not only to converse, but also to exchange information. Most can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retell a story (but may confuse facts) - Combine thoughts into one sentence - Ask "when?" "how?" and "why?" questions - Use words like "can," "will," "shall," "should," and "might" - Combine thoughts into one sentence - Refer to causality by using "because" and "so" - Follow three unrelated commands appropriately - Understand comparatives like loud, louder, loudest - Listen to long stories (but may misinterpret the facts) - Understand sequencing of events when clearly explained (for example, "First we plug the drain, then we run the water, and finally we take a bath")