

Developmental Milestones

How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves are important clues about their development. Check the milestones to identify any areas of concern. Call your child's doctor or call for services to help if your child is missing milestones.

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Lifts head 45 degrees while prone (lying on tummy)
- Opens and closes hands
- Brings hands together toward middle of body
- Attempts to reach for toy
- Breastfeeds or drinks from a bottle without choking, coughing or gagging

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Watches you as you move
- Follows a toy with eyes from side to side
- Startles at loud noises

Language/Communication

- Makes sounds other than crying
- Reacts to loud sounds
- Makes eye contact with you

Social/Emotional

- Calms down when spoken to or picked up
- Looks at your face
- Seems happy to see you when you walk up to them
- Smiles when you talk to or smile at them

2-3 Months

It is important to note that all children are unique in their development. The guidelines can help you identify the need for a referral from a physician.

Developmental Milestones

4-6 Months

Movement/Physical Development

- Rolls belly to back (both to right and left sides)
- Rolls back to belly (both to right and left sides)
- Hits at dangling toys with hands
- Lifts head to 90 degrees while prone (lying on tummy)
- Holds head steady without support when holding them
- Raises entire chest when on stomach and bears weight on hands
- Brings hands to mouth

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- If hungry, opens mouth when seeing breasts
- Looks around at things
- Reaches for toys and brings to mouth
- Watches faces and looks at your face while feeding

Language/Communication

- Makes sounds like “oooo”, “aahh” (cooing)
- Makes sounds back when being talked to
- Turns head towards the sound of your voice
- Copes some of the gestures you make, like waving, pointing, or clapping

Social/Emotional

- Smiles on their own to get your attention
- Chuckles when you try to make them laugh
- Looks at you, moves, or makes sounds to get or keep your attention

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Begins to sit using hands for support
- Transfers toys from hand to hand
- Reaches with increased control for a toy
- Shakes and bangs toys
- Pushes up with straight arms when on tummy

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Closes lips to show they don't want more food
- Reaches to grab a toy they want
- Puts things in their mouth to explore them
- Looks around at things

Language/Communication

- Takes turns making sounds with you
- Blows "raspberries" (sticks tongue out and blows)
- Makes squealing noises
- Points at things

Social/Emotional

- Knows familiar people
- Likes to look at themselves in a mirror
- Makes sounds to express happiness or displeasure
- Enjoys playing with others, especially family
- Responds to other people's emotions and often seems happy

6 Months

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Sustained sitting without using their arms for support
- Crawls on hands and knees with stomach off the floor (9 months)
- Feeds self finger foods (8 months+)
- Moves into sitting position independently
- Eats mashed table food

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Looks for objects when dropped out of sight
- Watches object as it falls
- Plays peek-a-boo
- Puts things in mouth

Language/Communication

- Imitates simple play such as “peek-a-boo”
- Makes different sounds like “mamamama” and “babababa”
- Lifts arms up to be picked up
- Points at things

Social/Emotional

- Shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers
- Shows several facial expressions, like happy, sad, angry, and surprised
- Looks when you call their name
- Reacts when you leave (looks, reaches for you, or cries)
- Smiles or laughs when you play peek-a-boo

7-9 Months

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Pulls off socks and shoes
- Pulls up to stand
- Walking (1-2 steps alone)
- Drinks from a cup without a lid, as you hold it
- Cooperates with dressing (helps to pull off clothing; extends arms and legs to assist with dressing)
- Scribbles on paper
- Uses thumb and pointer finger to pick up small objects

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Puts something in a container, like a block or a cup
- Looks for things they see being hidden, like a toy under a blanket
- Bangs two things together
- Looks at the correct picture when named
- Follows simple directions, such as "pick up your book"
- Lets things go without help

Language/Communication

- Waves "bye-bye"
- Calls a parent "mama" or "dada" or another special name
- Makes sounds, looks excited or goes quiet when you talk with them or say their name
- Coos and laughs
- Responds to their own name by looking, widening their eyes, listening or smiling

Social/Emotional

- Prefers certain people and toys
- Imitates sounds, gestures, or actions to get your attention
- Cries when you leave and is shy around strangers
- Enjoys playing games like "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake"
- Shows affection with familiar people

1 year

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Walks well with infrequent falls
- Eats a variety of soft, chopped table food
- Drinks from a sippy cup independently
- Squats to pick up an object and stands up again without falling

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Stacks 2 blocks
- Tries to use things the right way, like a phone, cup, or book

Language/Communication

- Tries to say one or two words besides “mama” or “dada”, like “ba” for ball or “da” for dog
- Looks at a familiar object when you name it
- Follows directions given with both a gesture and words
- Points to ask for something or to get help

Social/Emotional

- Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does
- Shows you an object they like
- Claps when excited
- Hugs stuffed dolls or other toys
- Shows affection (hugs, cuddles, or kisses you)

15 months

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Walks without holding on to anyone or anything
- Scribbles
- Drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes
- Feeds themselves with their fingers
- Tries to use a spoon
- Climbs on and off a couch or chair without help
- Throws/kicks balls

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom
- Plays with toys in a simple way, pushing a toy car
- Points to at least one body part
- Knows that common objects are for, such as a phone, brush, or spoon

Language/Communication

- Tries to say three or more words besides “mama” or “dada”
- Follows one-step directions without gestures, like giving you the toy when you say, “Give it to me”

Social/Emotional

- Moves away from you, but looks to make sure you are close by
- Points to show you something interesting
- Puts hands out for you to wash them
- Looks at a few pages in a book with you
- Helps you dress them by pushing arm through sleeve or lifting up foot
- Will understand the purpose of a toy and can operate it according to the function

18 months

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Kicks a ball
- Runs
- Walks up a few stairs without help
- Eats with a spoon
- Snips with scissors
- Imitates horizontal lines, vertical lines and circular marks
- Removes elastic waist pants
- Builds at least a 6 block tower
- Pushes, pulls or carries toys while walking

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Holds something in one hand while using the other hand; for example, holding a container and taking the lid off
- Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy
- Plays with more than one toy at the same time, like putting toy food on a toy plate
- Begins to sort shapes and colors
- Follows two-step directions, such as “pick up your truck and put it on the shelf”

Language/Communication

- Points to things in a book when you ask, like “where is the bear?”
- Says at least two words together, like “more milk”
- Points to at least two body parts when you ask them to show you
- Uses more gestures than just waving and pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes

Social/Emotional

- Notices when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying
- Looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation
- Plays briefly beside other children, gets excited when with other children
- Imitates others, especially adults and older children
- Shows more independence
- Begins to play with other children, as in chasing one another

2 years

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Developmental Milestones

30 months

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Movement/Physical Development

- Uses hands to twist things, like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids
- Takes some clothes off by themselves, like loose pants or an open jacket
- Jumps off the ground with both feet
- Turns book pages, one at a time, when you read to them.
- Pedals a tricycle
- Catches a large ball thrown gently from very close
- Runs well without falling (2.5 years)
- Drinks from an open cup

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Uses things to pretend, like feeding a block to a doll as if it were food
- Shows simple problem-solving skills, like standing on a small stool to reach something
- Follows two-step instructions like "Put the toy down and close the door."
- Shows they know at least one color, like pointing to a red crayon when you ask, "Which one is red?"

Language/Communication

- Says about 50 words
- Says two or more words, with one action word, like "doggie run"
- Names things in a book when you point and ask, "what is this?"
- Says words like "I", "me", or "we"

Social/Emotional

- Plays next to other children and sometimes plays with them
- Shows you what they can do by saying, "Look at me!"
- Follows simple routines when told, like helping to pick up toys when you say, "It's clean-up time."

Developmental Milestones

3 years

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Movement/Physical Development

- Cuts straight lines
- Buttons large buttons
- Throws tennis ball 5-7 feet overhand with one hand
- Catches large ball thrown from 5 feet away
- Uses a fork
- Puts on some clothes by themselves,
- Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni
- Holds writing utensil with thumb, index and middle fingers while hand moves as a unit

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Copies vertical, horizontal lines and circles
- Does puzzles with three or four pieces
- Knows what “two” means
- Knows common colors
- Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn them
- Plays make-believe with dolls, animals, and people
- Uses imagination to create stories or play

Language/Communication

- Talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges
- Asks “who,” “what,” “where,” or “why” questions, like “Where is mommy/daddy?”
- Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like “running,” “eating,” or “playing”
- Says first name, when asked
- Talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time

Social/Emotional

- Shows concern and affection for others without prompting
- Copies adults and friends (e.g., runs when other children run)
- Takes turns in games
- Separates easily from parents
- Shows a wide range of feelings
- Enjoys routines and may get upset with a major change
- Dresses and undresses self
- Enjoys simple household tasks

Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Static tripod grasp (writing utensil held with thumb, index and middle fingers)
- Cuts out a circle
- Zips jacket
- Copies intersecting lines, diagonal lines, simple shapes, some letters and numbers
- Balances on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- Serves themselves food or pours water, with adult supervision
- Unbuttons some buttons

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Understands the concepts of “same” and “different”
- Understands the concept of counting and may know numbers
- Knows basic colors
- Tells what comes next in a well-known story
- Draws a person with three or more body parts
- Fully potty trained

Language/Communication

- Says sentences with four or more words
- Says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme
- Talks about at least one thing that happened during his day, like “I played soccer.”
- Answers simple questions like “What is a coat for?” or “What is a crayon for?”

Social/Emotional

- Plays cooperatively with other children
- Negotiates solutions to conflicts
- Prefers playing with other children than playing alone
- Enjoys doing new things
- Becomes more creative in make-believe play
- Confuses what’s real and what’s make-believe
- Expresses likes and dislikes.
- Seeks new experiences

4 years

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Hops on one foot
- Colors within the lines
- Draws a person with at least 6 or more different parts
- Cuts out a square
- Copies a triangle and other geometrical shapes
- Prints some letters and numbers
- Uses toilet independently
- Swings and climbs
- Uses fork and spoon, and sometimes a table knife
- Does somersaults

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Counts to 10 or more objects
- Names at least four colors correctly
- Understands items used every day, such as food or money
- Pays attention for 5 to 10 minutes during activities
- Understands the concept of time
- Recognizes own printed name and may be able to write name

Language/Communication

- Tells a story she heard or made up with at least two events. For example, a cat was stuck in a tree and a firefighter saved it
- Answers simple questions about a book or story after you read or tell it to him
- Keeps a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges
- Uses or recognizes simple rhymes (bat-cat, ball-tall)

Social/Emotional

- Wants to please friends and be like friends
- Agrees to rules more easily
- Likes to sing, dance and act
- Knows the difference between fantasy and reality
- Knows who is a boy or girl
- Expresses likes and dislikes
- Shows increasing independence
- Seeks new experiences
- Demonstrates both demanding and cooperative behaviors

5 years

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Developmental Milestones

Movement/Physical Development

- Dynamic tripod grasp (held with thumb, index and middle fingers with ring and pinky curled into palm; movement of writing utensil comes from the fingertips)
- Throws at a target 5 feet away and hits target fairly consistently
- Copies letters and numbers
- Skips independently
- Rides a bicycle independently

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Can tell you their age
- Begin to understand cause-and-effect relationships
- Are learning to express themselves well through words
- Are learning to write

Language/Communication

- Able to describe a favorite tv show, movie, story, or other activity
- Speaks with correct grammar most of the time
- Reads some simple words

Social/Emotional

- Wants their parents to play with them
- Usually likes to play with friends of the same gender
- Play themes include events never personally experienced (e.g., goes to space)
- Plays and negotiates with others during play
- Develops a sense of humor. May make simple jokes and funny books and rhymes

6 years

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