

## Developmental Milestones: A Guide for Parents

Although no two children grow at the same rate, experts have determined that there are normal signs of development. These signs are called “developmental milestones”. When we speak of normal development, we are talking about developing skills like:

**Gross motor**- using large groups of muscles to sit, stand, walk, run, etc., keeping balance, and changing positions.

**Fine motor**- using hands to be able to eat, draw, dress, play, write, and do many other things.

**Language**- speaking, using body language and gestures, communicating, and understanding what others say.

**Cognitive**- Thinking skills

**Social**- Interacting with others, having relationships with family, friends and teachers, cooperating and responding to the feelings of others.

Developmental milestones are a set of functional skills that most children can do at a certain age range. Your pediatrician uses these milestones to check how your child is developing.

### **By 3 months, your child should:**

- lift head when held at your shoulder
- lift head and chest when lying on his stomach
- turn head side to side when lying on his stomach
- follow a moving object or person with his eyes
- often hold hands open or loosely fisted
- grasp rattle when given to her and shake it
- wiggle and kick with arms and legs
- visually track a rattle
- smiles or quiets to a familiar voice
- begins to turn head and eyes toward sound
- expresses pleasure by cooing, squealing, gurgling
- enjoys taking turns in vocalizing with parents

### **By 6 months, your child should:**

- hold head steady when sitting with your help

- reach for and grasp objects
- play with his toes
- help hold the bottle during feeding
- explore by mouthing and banging objects
- move toys from one hand to another
- shake a rattle
- pull up to a sitting position on her own if you grasp her hands
- sit with only a little support
- sit in a high chair
- roll over
- bounce when held in a standing position
- shows fear of angry voice
- smiles and laughs at “pleasant” speech
- babbles by repeating series of same sounds
- blows raspberries, tongue clicking sounds
- begins to imitate sounds
- makes protest when desired objects are removed

**By 12 months, your child should:**

- drink from a cup with help
- feed herself finger food
- remove socks
- grasp small objects by using her thumb and index finger
- use his first finger to point or poke
- put things in and out of a container
- knock 2 blocks together
- sit well without support
- crawl
- pull to stand, or take steps holding onto furniture
- stand alone momentarily
- walk with one hand held
- cooperate with dressing by offering a foot or an arm
- clap hands together
- understands some simple requests (“give me” or “open your mouth”)
- understands simple, over-learned words (“hot” or “so big”)
- responds to simple questions with searching movements (“Where’s your shoe? the ball?”)
- uses jargon (strings of a wide variety of consonant-vowel combinations with adult intonation)
- uses first true word with meaning

- uses exclamation like “huh”
- “converses” with people, toys, mirror

**By 18 months, your child should:**

- like to pull, push and dump things
- pull off hat, socks and mittens
- turn pages in a book
- stack 2-3 blocks
- carry a stuffed animal or doll
- scribble with crayons
- place 2 out of 3 shapes into basic shape puzzle
- walk without help
- run stiffly with eyes on the ground
- understands simple one-step commands
- recognizes basic body parts when named
- enjoys listening to rhymes and jingles
- attempts to get objects by pointing and vocalizing
- uses 3 to 20 single words meaningfully
- answers questions “What’s this?”
- asks for “more”
- imitates many new words
- communicates primarily through true words and gestures

**By 2 years, your child should:**

- drink from a straw
- feed himself with a spoon
- help in washing hands
- put arms in sleeves with help
- build a tower of 6 blocks
- imitate drawing vertical lines
- toss or roll a large ball
- open cabinets, drawers and boxes
- bend over to pick up a toy and not fall
- walk up steps without help
- take steps backward
- understands simple yes/no questions
- understands differences in personal pronouns (“me” and “you”)
- appears to listen to meaning of language, not merely words
- understands spatial concepts “in” and “on”
- replaces jargon with meaningful words

- refers to self by name
- uses “no” and “my/mine” frequently
- begins combining words to form two word phrases
- asks questions by raising pitch of voice

**By age 3, your child should:**

- balance on one foot for a few seconds
- walk up and down stairs
- run easily
- pedal tricycle
- feed himself
- kick a large ball
- have bladder control
- be able to dress himself
- build a tower of 10 blocks
- hold a pencil in writing position
- screw and unscrew jar lids, nuts and bolts
- string beads
- snip paper with scissors
- draw basic lines and a circle
- understands actions in pictures
- understands functions of objects, size concepts “big” and “little”, quantity concepts “one,” “more,” and “all”, spatial concepts “in,” “on,” and “under”
- understands question forms “who?” “where?” and “what...doing?”
- understands genders boy/girl
- combines words to express possession “my coat,” recurrences “more juice,” action “go outside,” location “want up,” and negation “no eat”
- usually uses two-four word combinations
- asks for help with personal needs
- can say first and last name
- talks about an event that has just happened
- has mastered production of early developmental sounds /p/, /b/, /m/, /n/, /h/, /w/, /t/, /d/
- speech is understood by other 70-80% of the time

The first 3 years of a child’s life are an amazing time of development. What happens during these years stays with your child for a lifetime. That is why it is so important to watch for signs of delays in development and get help from professionals if you suspect problems.

The sooner a developmentally delayed child gets intervention, the better their progress will be.

This information has been synthesized from a variety of professional resources to help you appreciate your child's progress. It is not a formal, standardized measurement tool.

Works cited:

Powell, Smith: Developmental Milestones: A Guide for Parents; National Network for Child Care; [www.NNCCDevelopmentalMilestones.htm](http://www.NNCCDevelopmentalMilestones.htm); retrieved 2/14/08

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