

Early Child Development – what to expect for your child’s age

Birth to three years of age is a period of rapid brain growth. Knowing what to expect for your child in this age range helps you to support and encourage their growth and development. These years are important for establishing your child’s language and social skills; thinking ability; and physical and emotional health.

Birth to 6 months

6 to 12 months

Language and communication development

Cries, coos, gurgles

Soothed by sound of voice or low rhythmic sounds

Mimics adult tongue movements, copies sounds

Responds to their name being called

Babbles tunefully

Says words like ‘dada’ and ‘mama’

Waves goodbye

Imitates hand clapping

Notices differences and shows surprise

Enjoys games such as peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake

Enjoys finger rhymes

Shows interest in picture books

Physical development

Moves whole body, squirms, waves arms

Reacts to sudden loud noises

Lifts head and chest when laying on stomach

Rolls from side to side

Grasps objects put into hands

Plays with feet and Toes

Makes effort to sit alone, but needs hand support

Rolls from back to stomach

Sits without support

Able to take weight on feet when standing

Pulls self to standing position

Raises self to sitting position

Rolls balls and crawls to retrieve it

Crawls

Steps around furniture

May stand alone momentarily

Transfers objects from hand to hand

Picks up and throws small objects

Social and emotional development

Social and emotional development

Smiles and laughs, makes eye contact

Alert and interested in faces

Moves head to sound of voices

Cries when uncomfortable

Shows excitement when sees loved ones

Social and emotional development

Smiles often, shows excitement when it’s time for a meal or bath

Shows anxiety at appearance of strangers

Shows stress if parent goes away

Shows signs of empathy to other’s distress

Cognitive development

Smiles and laughs, looks towards direction of sound

Eyes follow a target

Looks at edges, patterns with light/dark contrast

Looks at faces

Learns through sensory experience

Repeats actions

Bangs objects together

Points to something they want

Explores objects by looking at and mouthing them

Seems to understand some things parent/familiar adults say to them

Drops toys to be picked up and handed back to them, then dropped again/looks in direction of the dropped toy



NT Learning Together - Families and Schools

Advice to parents and carers when providing learning opportunities for children

1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years
Language and communication development	
<p>Comprehends and follows simple questions and commands</p> <p>Says their name</p> <p>Says many words (mostly naming objects)</p> <p>Begins to use one to two word sentences eg 'want milk'</p> <p>Imitates another toddler's actions</p> <p>Enjoys rhymes and songs</p>	<p>Vocabulary 'explodes'</p> <p>Uses two or three words together e.g. 'go potty now', simple sentences and phrases</p> <p>Refers to self by name and often says 'mine'</p> <p>Asks lots of questions</p> <p>Labels own agenda</p> <p>Copies words and actions</p> <p>Makes music, sings and dances; likes listening to stories and books</p>
Physical development	
<p>Takes two to three steps without support, legs wide and hands up for balance</p> <p>May walk, climb, and run</p> <p>Dances in place to music</p> <p>Climbs on to a chair</p> <p>Kicks and throws a ball</p> <p>Feeds themselves</p> <p>Scribbles with crayon held in fist</p> <p>Turns pages of a book, two or three pages at a time</p> <p>Rolls large ball, using both hands and arms</p> <p>Tries to use spoon/fork</p> <p>Can drink from a cup</p>	<p>Walks, runs, climbs, kicks and jumps easily</p> <p>Uses steps one at a time</p> <p>Catches a ball rolled to them</p> <p>Jumps from a low step or over low objects</p> <p>Attempts to balance on one foot</p> <p>Moves to music</p> <p>Opens doors</p> <p>Turns pages one at a time</p> <p>Holds crayons with fingers</p> <p>Uses a pencil to draw or scribble in circles and lines</p> <p>Gets dressed with help</p> <p>Feeds self using utensils and a cup</p>
Social and emotional development	
<p>Begins to co-operate with others when playing</p> <p>Plays alongside other toddlers</p> <p>Curious and energetic, needs adult presence for assurance</p> <p>May show separation anxiety</p> <p>Seeks comfort when upset</p> <p>Becomes upset easily if tired or frustrated</p> <p>Assist others in distress by patting, making sympathetic noises or offering an object</p>	<p>Plays with other children; simple make-believe</p> <p>Unlikely to share toys without protest</p> <p>Shows strong attachment to a parent</p> <p>Shows distress and protest when a parent goes away</p> <p>Begins to show guilt or remorse for misdeeds</p> <p>Difficulty sharing toys with peers</p> <p>May demand adult attention</p>
Cognitive development	
<p>Repeats actions that are interested eg banging spoon on saucepan</p> <p>Points to objects when named</p> <p>Knows some body parts and points to body parts</p> <p>Mimics household activities</p> <p>Explores and manipulates objects, putting in mouth, shaking and banging them</p> <p>Stacks and knocks things over</p>	<p>Builds a tower of five to seven objects</p> <p>Lines up objects in a 'train' fashion</p> <p>Points to common objects and pictures</p> <p>Enjoys playing with sand, water, dough; explores what they feel like rather than making things with them</p> <p>Uses symbolic play eg uses a block as a car</p> <p>Make-believe and pretend play</p> <p>Can follow two or more directions</p>

