

Developmental Milestones from Birth to 3 Years of Age: General Facts

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Developmental milestones are the functioning skills or acts which most children can perform when they reach a certain age. The pediatrician uses these milestones to check the development of a child at different stages. Each milestone determines an age. However, the actual development stage of the child can vary based on the fact that children are not identical. There are four major types of developments in each milestone, namely motor, sensory, communication, and feeding.



Overview of Developmental Milestones

The development of communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving, and personal-social functioning is step-wise in children. The progressive development and the different skills the child develops are classified into milestones. For a child to be said is normally developing, he or she must achieve the suggested developmental milestones by the end of the given age.

Advice for Parents to Help Children Achieve Good Developmental Milestones

Communication can be improved by playing “I Spy” with the child or the use of parallel talk. Gross motor skills can be improved by taking the child to the playground, practicing

climbing up the slide, sliding down, or playing 'Simon Says'. Fine motor skills are improved by asking the child to shape with a pencil or crayon similar to what you draw. Fine motor skills are also improved by teaching the child to use child-safe scissors.

Problem-solving skills can be improved by asking the child to place objects of different sizes, texture, or color in different bags. Planning a treasure hunt with the child can also help with improving problem-solving skills.

Finally, for the support of personal social development, one might instruct the parents to play dress-up or make-believe with the child. It is also advisable to let the child help at mealtimes.

Of course, not all of these activities can be done by children at any given time. Therefore, it is important to choose activities that are age-appropriate to the child.

By the end of the third month, “most babies”:

Motor milestones

- Lift the head and chest when lying on stomach
- Kick legs
- Open and shut hands
- Bring hands to mouth
- Hold upper body up with arms when lying on stomach
- Grab and shake toys

Sensory milestones

- Attempts to reach for a toy with hands while lying on the back
- Visually tracks a moving thing from side to side
- Enjoys movements and gets calm upon touching, rocking and lighter sounds
- Begins to recognize the parent

Communication milestones

- Smiles in response to a sound
- Turns head in the direction of the voice
- Pays attention to faces and objects
- Eye contact and cooing sounds
- Cries for different needs, e.g., hungry, tired, etc.
- Begins to babble

Feeding milestones

- Latches on baby bottle
- Moves the tongue back and forward to suck during feeding
- Takes feed for at least six times a day, drinking only two to six oz. of liquid per feed
- Swallows well when given a liquid

By the end of the seventh month, 'most babies':

Motor milestones

- Can support self with the help of the hands while sitting
- Rolls to the tummy and back again
- Can stand up on legs with support
- Reaches for the toys around while taking support from the abdomen
- Can transfer a toy from one to the other hand
- Plays with her or his feet using both hands
- Pushes up to the elbows while lying on tummy

Sensory milestones

- Uses both hands and eyes to examine toys
- Responds to people and generally looks happy
- Bites on nearby objects
- Enjoys different movements and is calmed upon touching, rocking and lighter sounds
- Not disturbed by the noises around
- Likes to look into the mirror
- Knows his or her name

Communication milestones

- Reacts to sudden noises or sounds
- Responds to the sounds by babbling
- Begins to say consonant sounds while babbling, e.g., "da," "ba," etc.
- Makes different kinds of sounds to show joy or displeasure
- Takes notice of the toys that produce sounds
- Tries to get attention through babbling
- Likes to take turns with the elders in making sounds
- Responds to her or his name and turns to look at the person when being called

Feeding milestones

- Shows interest when the spoon is brought near the mouth
- Opens mouth to take food
- Starts eating cereals and puree - crushed, thick and smooth food, e.g., banana, apple, peach

7-9 Months Developmental Milestones

From seven to nine months of age, an infant can generally perform the following functions:

Motor milestones

- Can comfortably sit without any support
- Sits without falling
- Tries to grab the toys from some distance

- Shows more controlled movements
- Can easily roll over the tummy
- Begins the alternate leg and arm movements like crawling
- Picks up head and pushes through elbows while lying on tummy
- Turns head to 90 degrees to visually follow the objects around
- Less trembling and falling while standing on a support, i.e., toppling and recovering
- Starts picking up small objects with the help of thumbs and index fingers, i.e., finger-thumb opposition
- Eye-hand coordination

Sensory milestones

- Expresses joy when given the bouncing and rocking movements
- Shows interest in objects and tries to examine them using both hands and mouth
- Learns to turn the pages of books, however, many pages at the same time
- Tries to pick up heavy objects using force
- Takes an interest in both far and nearby objects
- Examines and explores the geometric shapes, character and size of toys and other nearby objects
- Observes the environment with more interest and from varying angles

Communication milestones

- Makes a variety of sounds in babbling
- Looks at familiar objects and people
- Recognizes his or her name when called off
- Points at things using fingers
- When paired with gestures, starts following some routine commands
- Recognizes the commonly used words
- Understands simple gestures, e.g., head or finger shaking for 'No'
- Starts to imitate the sounds like mamama, bababa

Feeding milestones

- Can hold the bottle and drink from it on her or his own
- Begins to eat thicker pureed and mashed table foods
- Sore and swollen gums - tries to chew on things to relieve the symptoms of teething
- Does not need frequent feeds; eats adequately to stay full for a longer time
- Reaches for nearby food
- Shows joy or displeasure for new smells and tastes

10-12 Months Developmental Milestones

From ten to twelve months of age, an infant can generally perform the following functions:

Motor milestones

- Pulls up to stand on his or her own
- Cruises along the furniture
- Starts taking independent steps and can stand alone
- Takes small steps to get the desired toys
- Moves in and out of different positions to explore the environment
- Can throw objects from a sitting position without losing balance
- Clapping of hands is a new activity
- Throws objects in large containers with big openings
- Uses thumb and index finger to pick up minute objects
- Bangs two things together
- Pokes with the help of pointer finger

Sensory milestone

- Enjoys listening to soft sounds like songs
- Explores toys using fingers
- Takes toys to the mouth
- Cries when one of the parents leaves
- Plays peek-a-boo type of games
- Has favorite people and things
- Cries in strange situations

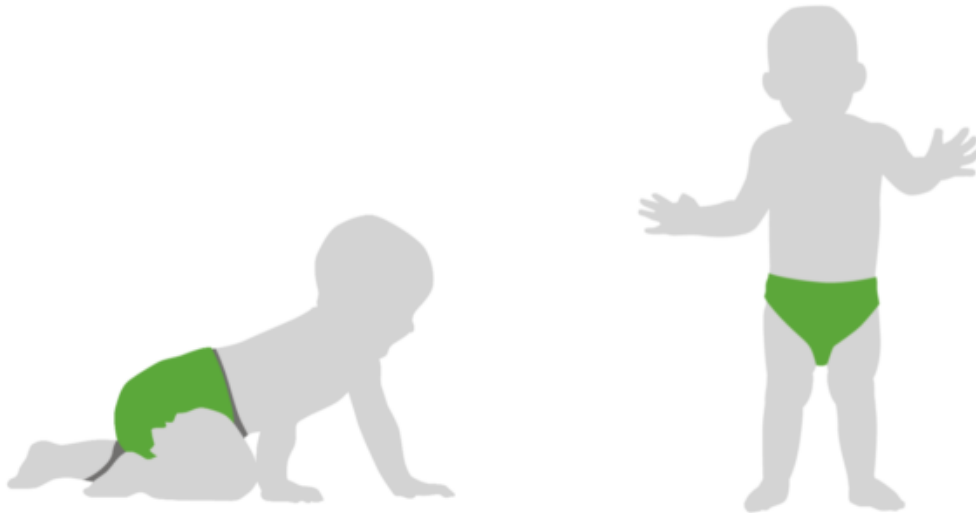
Communication milestones

- Starts saying some clear words like “mama” or “dada”
- Responds to simple directions like “Pick up the toy!”
- Vocabulary increases
- Tries to copy the sounds
- Babbling now has a rhythm of speech
- Pays attention to where you are looking and pointing
- Understands and responds to “No”
- Learns to wave bye-bye
- More responsive at the time of dressing
- Begins to communicate wants and needs, e.g., pulls out hands to be picked up

Feeding milestones

- Finger-feeds self
- Starts eating a greater variety of food
- Can drink from an open cup
- Eats soft diet like cooked vegetables, biscuits, banana, other soft fruits, pasta
- Learns to use a spoon
- Enjoys a variety of food and aroma

Comparison: 1st Year of Life vs. 1 Year



13–18 Months Developmental Milestones

From thirteen to eighteen months of age, an infant can generally perform the following functions:

Motor milestones

- Can easily walk independently
- Scrunch to pick up toys and other fallen objects
- Knows how to stack two objects
- Learns to scribble

Sensory milestones

- Helps in dressing and undressing
- A predictable sleeping schedule
- Eats a greater variety of food

By 15 months

- Knows up to 10 words and can understand almost 50 words
- Uses sounds and gestures together
- Copies simple words and actions
- Can identify some body parts like the nose and the lips
- Can follow simple directions
- Takes interest in colorful pictures

By 18 months

- Understands the questions and gives responses
- Learns words overheard in conversation and repeats them
- Speech-like babbling is still there
- When shown pictures, points at familiar objects and people
- Understands “in” and “on” commands
- Responds to questions with head shakes

Feeding milestones

- Starts eating coarsely chopped food
- Easily holds the cup and drinks
- Eats with a spoon

19–24 Months Developmental Milestone

From nineteen to twenty-four months of age, a child can generally perform the following functions:

Motor milestones

- Knows how to climb stairs
- Climbs onto and down from furniture without help
- Begins to run and can easily kick a ball
- Can throw the ball with hands
- Can stack up to four blocks

Sensory milestones

- Gets excited when other children are around
- Disobedient behavior: the child does what she or he is told not to do.
- Copies others, especially adults
- Can sort certain colors and shapes

By 21 months

- Uses up to 50 words
- Consistently imitates overheard words
- Knows the names of objects and pictures like cat, bird, bag, etc.
- Understands simple pronouns like me, mine, my, you
- Can identify 3-5 body parts
- Learns new things quickly, especially vocabulary

By the second birthday, most children:

- Walk alone
- Jump
- Pull toys behind them while walking
- Carry toys while walking
- Climb on and off furniture
- Kick a ball
- Begin to run
- Walk up and down stairs while holding on support
- Recognize the names of familiar people, objects, and body parts
- Build a tower of five blocks or more
- Scribble with crayon
- Use two words together
- Follow simple commands with 1 or 2 steps
- Begin to sort objects by shape and color
- Begin to play make-believe
- Imitate others' behavior

- Want to do things themselves

2-3 Years Developmental Milestones

From two to three years of age, a child can generally perform the following functions:

Motor milestones

- Runs smoothly
- Climbs the furniture
- Rides a tricycle
- Climbs stairs easily
- Turns the pages of a book, one at a time
- Can stack more than six blocks
- Can untighten jar lids
- Can use door handles

Sensory milestones

- Shows concern for a crying person
- Shows a variety of emotions
- Does not usually cry when parents leave the room
- Gets upset with a change in routine

Communication milestones

By 30 months

- Can use 2-3 sentences in a row
- Understands the meaning of in, under, and on
- Almost 50% of the speech can be understood
- Follows 2-step directions that are not related to each other, e.g., "Give me the bag and go get your toys!"
- Knows basic grammar
- Knows the meaning of "I", "mine" and "yours"

By 36 months

- Starts asking questions like "What is this?"
- Learns to use plurals, e.g., 'birds', 'cats' etc.
- Clarity of speech
- Simple understanding of concepts, including color, space, time
- Understands questions related to reasoning like "Why?"
- Can name a friend
- Can tell his name, age, and sex

By the age of four years, most children:

- Play with other children
- Can follow family rules
- Play with favorite toys
- Listen to stories
- Know the first and the last name

- Engage in fantasy play
- Sing a song or say a poem from memory
- Balance on one foot for two seconds
- Draw a person with three parts
- Know what to do if feel cold, tired or hungry
- Name four colors
- Can be understood
- Copy a cross
- Eat by themselves
- Brush their teeth
- Can dress themselves

By the age of five years, most children:

- Like to sing, dance and act
- Know the difference between reality and fantasy
- Know their name and address
- Hop, swing, and climb
- Can count 10 or more objects
- Use a fork and a spoon
- Dress and undress without assistance
- Copy triangles and other geometric patterns
- Stand on one foot for ten seconds or longer
- Recall part of a story

Comparison: 2 Year vs. 3 Year



Premature babies may lag on these developmental milestones. This is because they do not have the same muscle strength, and their rate of development is somewhat different from that of an average child.

References

[7-9 months](#) via pathways.org

Crying, Cooing, Communication: Baby's First Year. (n.d.). Retrieved Feb 1, 2017, from

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[Important milestones: Your child by Two years](#) via cdc.gov

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