

Steps & Stages:

Developmental Skills Checklists for
Children Birth to Five



How to Use this Document:

The following milestone checklists are intended to be used as guides to note and mark your child's development. It is important to note that each child develops at his or her own pace. The skills listed are a general idea of the changes you can expect as your child grows.

You may consider consulting with your child's physician OR someone trained in the identification of developmental delays if your child is not demonstrating most of the milestones listed.

Included with each age range is a list of "red flags" which indicate areas of possible concern. Should you observe more than one of the red flags, consider discussing them with your child's doctor.

For more information contact the early intervention office of the county in which you reside, your local school district, your child's doctor, or the ECDC.

ECDC staff can offer guidance and direction to help you find answers regarding your child's development.

Central Early Childhood Direction Center

Phone: 361-5654

Email: ecdc@moboces.org

Web: www.moboces.org/ecdc

“Building foundations for brighter futures.”



Developmental Skills for:

0-3 Months

Each child develops at his/her own pace. Do not be alarmed if your child does not follow this exact sequence. If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your doctor or ECDC.

Social and Emotional

Develops a social smile (smiles in response to caregiver)

Begins to enjoy playing with a person

Becomes more expressive with face and body

Imitates some movements and facial expressions

Cognitive

Follows moving objects with eyes

Focuses on faces

Looks at a toy in own hand

Watches and/or notices own hands

Speech and Language

Smiles at the sound of a familiar voice

Babbling begins with vowel sounds (cooing, gooing, and gargle sounds)

Turns head toward the direction of a sound

Startles to a loud or new sound

Gross Motor

Raises head and chest when on stomach

Stretches legs and kicks when on back or stomach

Pushes down on legs when on a flat surface

Kicks feet alternatively (one foot kicks at a time)

Sensory

Intently watches faces

Follows moving object with eyes

Appears to recognize familiar people from a distance

Begins using hands and eyes together

Startles to a loud or new sound

Fine Motor

Supports upper body with arms when on stomach

Opens and shuts hands

Brings hands to mouth

Swipes at a dangling object with hands

Holds and shakes a toy in hand

Accidentally releases objects

Watches own hands



By the end of 3 months

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

- Does not respond to loud or new noises
- Does not notice hands
- Does not follow moving objects with eyes
- Does not grasp or hold objects
- Lack of head support; does not hold head up
- Does not push down with legs when feet are on a firm surface
- Does not kick feet alternatively (one foot kicks at a time)
- Crosses eyes most of the time (occasional crossing of the eyes is normal for this age)
- Does not smile
- Does not produce any sound (especially vowel sounds)
- Weak suck when feeding
- Movement is not equal on both sides of the body; one side seems more still or more active
- Seems stiff, with tight muscles
- Seems floppy, with limp muscles
- Does not show Moro or startle reflex (in response to the feeling of falling or in response to a loud sound the baby startles, spreads out arms, unspreads arms and usually cries)
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he/she once had

A child in this age range would be referred to the **Early Intervention Program**. For more information contact the Public Health Department in your county:

Herkimer County Public Health Department: 867-1176

Jefferson County Community Services: 785-3283

Lewis County Public Health Agency: 376-5849

Madison County Public Health Department: 366-2361

Oneida County Health Department: 798-5249

Growing Up Healthy Hotline 1-800-522-5006



This developmental checklist was compiled and adapted from:

The Keeping Infants Developmentally Sounds (K.I.D.S.) Guidelines, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Learn the Signs. Act Early. Important Milestones" found at www.cdc.gov/actearly, The American Speech-Language Hearing Association's "How Does Your Child Hear and Talk" developmental checklist found at www.asha.org/public/speech/development/01.htm, Zero to Three's "Your Baby's Development" found at www.zerotothree.org, and Terminology of Communication Disorders Speech-Language-Hearing Second Ed. Nicolosi, Harryman, Kresheck, 1983

Developmental Skills for:

3-6 Months

Each child develops at his/her own pace. Do not be alarmed if your child does not follow this exact sequence. If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your doctor or ECDC.

Social and Emotional

- Enjoys social play (e.g. peek-a-boo)
- Interested in images in a mirror
- Appears to be happy often
- Smiles at self (in mirror) and at others
- Looks at familiar people and appears to recognize parent(s)
- Responds to changes in your tone of voice (e.g. may smile when you speak in a happy voice)

Cognitive

- Finds a partially hidden object (e.g. finding a toy half covered by a blanket)
- Explores objects with hands and mouth
- Attempts to get objects that are out of reach
- Responds to name by looking when name is heard

Speech and Language

- May respond to "no" (briefly stops doing something when you say "no" but may continue with activity)
- When a sound is heard, may make a sound in response
- Uses voice to express happiness or frustration
- Produces a chain of babble (ba-ba-ba)
- Expresses happiness/joy and displeasure with voice

Gross Motor

- Rolls both ways (front to back, back to front)
- Sits; first with support then without support
- When held in standing position, supports whole weight

Sensory

- Vision for distance improves
- Better tracking of moving objects
- Notices toys that make noise

Fine Motor

- Reaches with one hand
- Transfers objects from hand to hand
- Rakes objects with hand (uses all fingers to scoop an object into palm)
- Helps hold bottle



By the end of 6 months

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

Seems stiff, with tight muscles
Seems floppy, with limp muscles
Lack of head control (unable to keep head up)
Head flops back when pulled to sitting position
One or both eyes turn in or out often
Does not smile
Does not sit with support by 6 months
Does not laugh or squeal by 6 months
Lack of differentiated cry (crying differently for hunger, comfort, diaper change etc.)
Little to no babbling
Does not roll
Does not engage in simple play with toys
Does not watch a moving object by turning head to follow it
Difficult to comfort during the night
Does not attract attention through actions
Experiences a dramatic loss of skill he/she once had

A child in this age range would be referred to the **Early Intervention Program**. For more information contact the Public Health Department in your county:

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Developmental Skills for:

6-9 Months

Each child develops at his/her own pace. Do not be alarmed if your child does not follow this exact sequence. If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your doctor or ECDC.

Social and Emotional

- Increased eye contact to people
- Increased attention to toys
- Smiles and laughs to show pleasure
- Responds to "no", but does not necessarily obey (briefly stops activity when "no" is heard then returns to the activity)

Cognitive

- Responds to name (looks when hears name)
- Engages and enjoys interactive games (e.g. peek-a-boo)
- Increased attention to a new or preferred toy (3-5 minutes)

Speech and Language

- Imitates simple gestures
- Uses simple gestures
- Babbles, may produce a string of varied syllables (ba-ba-de-go)

Gross Motor

- Sits alone and is able to play while sitting
- Pulls self to standing position
- Crawls forward on stomach
- Walks with 2 hands held
- Gets in a lying down position from sitting position

Sensory

- Begins to finger feed self
- Takes bite of a cracker
- Turns head toward direction of sounds

Fine Motor

- Holds smaller objects with thumb and side of index finger
- Transfers object from hand to hand
- Clasps hands together
- While lying on stomach bears weight on one arm while reaching with other



By the end of 9 months

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

- Does not bear weight on legs when held in standing position
- Does not assist when pulled to standing
- Does not get in and out of sitting position
- Sits in "W" position most of the time (knees in with feet out in the shape of the letter "W")
- Seems stiff with tight muscles
- Seems floppy with limp muscles
- Does not crawl or creep
- Head lags when pulled to sitting
- Does not respond to or turn head to name
- Does not respond to sound/noises
- Does not imitate actions (bye-bye, or peek-a-boo)
- Does not produce strings of babble (ba-ba-ba-ba)
- Does not play or attend to a preferred or new toy for more than 3 minutes
- Does not establish or maintain eye contact with people or toys
- Does not finger feed self
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he or she once had

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Developmental Skills for:

9-12 Months

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Social and Emotional

- Shy or anxious around strangers
- Cries when parent(s) leave
- Imitates people while playing
- Develops preferences for toys/people
- Tests responses during feedings and to behavior (drops cup several times)
- May show fear in some situations
- Repeats sounds or gestures to gain attention

Cognitive

- Explores objects in different ways (shakes, bangs, throws, drops)
- Finds a hidden object easily
- Looks at the correct picture when named
- Imitates gestures
- Demonstrates understanding of object use (drinks cup, talks on phone)

Speech and Language

- Responds to simple requests (give me the ball)
- Responds to "no"
- Appears to pay more attention to speech
- Jargon appears (babbling which mimics the tone, pitch, and intonation of adult speech)
- Produces 1 or 2 words and/or exclamations (e.g. mama, dada, uh-oh!)
- Tries to imitate sounds or words
- Looks at correct object when named
- Responds to name by looking when his or her name is heard

Gross Motor

- Able to get into sitting position without help
- Able to get in hands and knees position
- Crawls forward on stomach
- Pulls self up to stand
- Walks holding on to furniture
- Stands without help
- Take two or three steps without help

Sensory

- Appears to see well
- Appears to hear well
- Drinks from a cup
- Finger feeds self

Fine Motor

- Uses pincer grasp (holding object between pointer finger and thumb)
- Bangs two objects together
- Places object in a container with hand resting on the edge
- Takes objects out of a container
- Lets go of objects on purpose
- Pokes/points with index finger
- Begins to copy scribbling



By the end of 12 months

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

- Does not crawl or creep on all fours
- Does not babble
- Drags one side of body while crawling for a long period of time (more than 1 month)
- Does not attempt to search for objects that are hidden while he/she watches
- Does not take steps when hands are held
- Does not stand while holding on furniture and cruise (walks while holding on to furniture)
- Does not use gestures (e.g. pointing, waving, bye bye)
- Does not point to pictures/object or follow simple directions
- Lack of self feeding
- Issues with feeding such as trouble or difficulty biting, chewing, or swallowing
- Does not have pincer grasp with both hands (holding object between thumb and pointer finger)
- Does not appear to be able to help with dressing or undressing (e.g. extending arm through shirt)
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he/she once had

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Developmental Skills for:

12-18 Months

Each child develops at his/her own pace. Do not be alarmed if your child does not follow this exact sequence. If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your doctor or ECDC.

Social and Emotional

- Repeats sound/actions that made someone laugh
- Establishes and maintains eye contact (looks at people)
- Removes hat, socks, and gloves
- May get upset when parent(s) leave and may need help to calm down

Cognitive

- Attention to new toys increase to about 5 minutes
- Imitates actions of people
- Begins to match

Speech and Language

- Understands 50 or more words
- Produces/says 20-25 words
- Follow simple directions
- Points to an object when named
- Imitates actions of people
- Uses jargon (babble which imitates the tone, pitch, and intonation of adult speech)
- Imitates sounds and words

Gross Motor

- Throws ball
- Gets into standing position from lying down position
- Squats while playing
- Creeps up and down stairs using railing
- Walks independently

Sensory

- Listens when spoken to
- Appears to hear well
- Appears to see well

Fine Motor

- Stacks 2-3 small blocks
- Holds crayon in fist
- Scribbles
- Releases of a small object into a container with control



By the end of 18 months

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

- Is not able to reach standing position from lying down position
- Is not able to squat and return to standing position
- Does not creep up and down stairs
- Does not walk well
- Does not use both sides of body equally
- Does not scribble (after exposure to crayons and watching someone else scribble)
- Does not point to common objects and pictures
- Does not use 20 words
- Does not understand 50 words
- Does not follow simple directions without visual cues
- Does not make eye contact with people or toys
- Does not attend to a self chosen activity for more than 5 minutes
- Does not remove simple clothing items (hats, mittens)
- Does not attempt to self feed
- Has other feeding issues such as difficulty or trouble biting, chewing, or swallowing)
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he/she once had

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Developmental Skills for:

18-24 Months

Each child develops at his/her own pace. Do not be alarmed if your child does not follow this exact sequence. If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your doctor or ECDC.

Social and Emotional

Imitates actions/behavior of other children and adults

Identifies self in a picture of mirror

Defiant behavior appears

Actively explores environment (climbing, walking around)

Plays alone for short periods of time

Cognitive

Finds a hidden object under 2 or 3 layers

Begins to sort by shape and color

Begins to engage in pretend play (using a banana as a phone)

Points to 3-5 body parts when asked

Speech and Language

Points to a picture when named

Recognizes names of familiar people, objects, and 3-5 body parts

Uses phrases of 2-4 words (e.g. "mommy go bye-bye")

Has a vocabulary of 100 or more words

Jargon decreases (babble which mimics the tone, pitch, and intonation of adult speech)

Gross Motor

Walks independently

Pulls a toy while walking

Carries toy while walking

Begins to run

Stands on tiptoes

Kicks ball forward

Climbs on/off furniture

Walks up and down stairs while holding onto railing

Stands on one foot with hand held

Sensory

Listens when spoken to

Appears to hear well

Appears to see well

Begins to use utensils (fork/spoon) to feed self

Fine Motor

Scribbles independently with crayon held in fist

Dumps containers

Builds a tower of 4 blocks

May show hand preference

Helps to dress and undress



By the end of 24 months

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

- Does not walk or run
- Does not balance well when standing
- Walks only on toes
- Says less than 25 words
- Does not combine 2 words (e.g. "go bye-bye", "me eat", "uh-oh mommy")
- Does not show knowledge of the function of common objects (talking on toy phone, drink from cup, read book)
- Does not push a wheeled toy
- Does not attend to an activity for longer than 10 minutes (not T.V.)
- Does not comprehend simple yes/no questions (e.g. "Do you want more juice?")
- Does not stack blocks after a model
- Does not scribble (after exposure to crayons and watching someone else scribble)
- Does not imitate words/actions
- Does not self feed
- Has feeding issues such as trouble or difficulty biting, chewing, or swallowing
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he/she once had

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Developmental Skills for:

24-36 Months

Each child develops at his/her own pace. Do not be alarmed if your child does not follow this exact sequence. If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your doctor or ECDC.

Social and Emotional

- Imitates adults and peers
- Expresses affection openly (hugs family members)
- Expresses a wide range of emotions (happy, mad, sad, silly etc.)
- Takes turns in games
- Understands possession concepts (mine, his/hers)
- Easily separates from parents
- Cooperates with other children
- Has trouble telling the difference between real and imaginary

Cognitive

- Sorts object by shape, color, and size
- Completes 3-4 pc. puzzles
- Understands concept of "two" (e.g. "get two cookies")
- Pretend plays with dolls, animals, and people
- Names some colors correctly
- Knows own name, age, and gender
- Begins to have a clearer sense of time (e.g. daytime, nighttime)
- Follows 3-part commands
- Understands concepts of "same" and "different"

Speech and Language

- Follows 3-part commands
- Asks questions (who, what, where)
- Answers questions (yes/no, who, what, where)
- Uses 4-5 word sentences
- Understands most requests and most of what is said to him or her
- Experiences a large growth in vocabulary and is able to use a variety of words to name common objects, action words, pronouns (I, me, we) and familiar people (more than 800 words)
- Speech is mostly understood by strangers
- Understands position words in, on, and under

Gross Motor

- Runs well and is able to change speed
- Kicks a ball
- Able to walk on tiptoes
- Able to walk backward
- Balance on one foot
- Walks up stairs one foot at a time
- Jumps with two feet off floor
- Jumps off bottom step

Sensory

- Self feeds finger foods
- Appears to hear well
- Appears to see well
- Uses fork and spoon with some spilling and reminders
- Drinks from open cup

Fine Motor

- Able to place an object in a container with good control and with wrist extended
- Holds crayon in fingers with thumb pointing toward tip
- Copies a side to side line and up and down line
- Begins to work fasteners
- Stacks a tower of 6 blocks and is able to copy a tower of 6 blocks
- Cuts with scissors across paper or on a line



By the end of 36 months

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

Unable to kick ball
Unable to walk on toes
Unable to copy lines (up/down, side to side)
Unable to name one color
Does not play for 10-15 minutes at one activity (not TV) more than 1 time per day
Does not understand most requests and most of what is said to him or her (1,000 words)
Does not use a large variety of words (more than 500)
Does not use phrases of 3 or more words (e.g. "I go bye-bye", "more cookies please")
Unable to talk about events of the past
Unable to ask and answer some 'wh' questions ('who', 'what', 'where')
Unable to state whole name
Unfamiliar people do not understand at least half of what he or she says
Consistently leaves off the beginning sound of words (e.g. "at" for cat, "oggie" for doggie)
Unable to put on t-shirt and work on fasteners
Does not self feed or has trouble chewing and/or swallowing
Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he/she once had

A child in this age range would be referred to the **Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)**. For more information contact your school district's special education office.

This information can be found by going to your school district's web site or by calling ECDC.



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Developmental Skills for:

3-4 years

Each child develops at his/her own pace. Do not be alarmed if your child does not follow this exact sequence. If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your doctor or ECDC.

Social and Emotional

- Interested in new experiences
- Cooperates with other children
- Plays "Mom" and/or "Dad"
- Becomes more inventive in fantasy play (e.g. having an imaginary friend)
- Dresses and undresses
- Tries to solve conflicts with negotiation (e.g. offers to 'trade' toys during play)
- Follows adult requests (e.g. clean up your blocks)
- Can identify emotions in self (happy, sad, mad, silly)

Cognitive

- Names some colors
- Understands counting and may know a few numbers
- Follows a 3-part direction
- Recalls parts of stories
- Understands the concepts of "same and different"
- Begins to have a clearer sense of time (e.g. today, tomorrow, now, later)

Speech and Language

- Answers simple "who", "what", "where", and "why" questions
- Talks about events at school, childcare, or a friend's house
- Unfamiliar people understand speech
- Most utterances have 4 or more words with basic rules of grammar
- Tells stories
- Speech is usually smooth and flows without repeating any syllables or words

Gross Motor

- Hops on one foot
- Stands on one foot
- Goes up and down stairs without help
- Kicks ball forward
- Throws ball overhand
- Catches ball most of the time
- Easily moves forward and backward

Sensory

- Hears someone call him or her from another room
- Television and/or radio is able to be heard at the same volume as other family members
- Fork and spoon skills continue to improve, may still need reminders to use utensils to eat
- Drinks from an open cup with almost no spilling

Fine Motor

- Draws a person with a few body parts
- Uses scissors to cut paper
- Draws circles
- Begins to copy some capital letters
- Zips zipper
- Fastens large button



By the end of 4 years

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

Unable to throw a ball overhand
Unable to jump in place
Unable to ride/pedal a tricycle
Unable to use a crayon held between thumb and fingers
Unable to or has difficulty scribbling
Unable to stack 4 blocks
Unable to easily separate from parents
Shows no interest in interactive games (e.g. game of chase, Simon Says)
Ignores other children and other people outside of their family
Does not engage in fantasy play
Difficulty dressing, sleeping, and/or using the toilet
Unable to copy a circle
Unable to use sentences/phrases of more than 3 words
Does not use "me" and "you" correctly
Experiences a dramatic loss of skill he/she once had

A child in this age range would be referred to the **Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)**. For more information contact your school district's special education office.

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Developmental Skills for:

4-5 years

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Social and Emotional

- Wants to please and be like friends
- Follows group rules
- Develops better control over anger and frustration tolerance
- Tantrums are rare
- Likes to sing, dance, and act
- Independence increases

Cognitive

- Can count 10 or objects
- Names at least four colors
- Understanding of the concept of time improves (e.g. today, tomorrow, yesterday)
- Has an understanding of things used in the home (money, food, appliances)
- Names some letters and numbers

Speech and Language

- Is able to carry on a conversation by asking and answering questions and sticking to the topic
- Follow and give directions
- Speech is understood by people not as familiar with the child
- Understands most of what is said at home and at school
- Uses grammatically correct sentences of 4-5 words
- Stories increase in length and detail
- Begins to say rhyming words

Gross Motor

- Stands on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- Hops
- Does somersaults
- Swings
- Climbs
- May be able to skip

Sensory

- Hears someone call him/her from another room
- Television and/or radio is able to be heard at the same volume as other family members
- Uses fork, spoon, and sometimes a table knife during meals
- Drinks from open cup with almost no spilling
- Washes and dries hands
- Independently bathroom without help

Fine Motor

- Copies a triangle
- Draws person with a body
- Prints some letters
- Independently dresses and undresses
- Copies other shapes
- Fastens snaps, buttons, and zippers



By the end of 5 years

Consider discussing with your child's physician if one or more of the following are observed:

Is extremely fearful or shy
Is extremely aggressive
Demonstrates difficulty separating from parents
Easily distracted; unable to concentrate on any single activity for more than 5 minutes
Little interest in playing with other children
Does not or rarely engages in fantasy or pretend play
Seems sad or unhappy most of the time
Does not engage in a variety of activities
Avoids/seems unaware of other children or does not respond to other people
Has difficulty using the toilet, sleeping, or eating
Does not follow 2-part commands with spatial concepts (in, on, under)
Does not use plurals when speaking (dogs, cats, busses)
Does not use past tense verbs when speaking (jumped, passed, washed)
Consistently has disfluencies or stutters (repeats syllables or words)
Does not talk about daily events and experiences
Seems uncomfortable holding a crayon or pencil
Unable to brush teeth efficiently
Does not wash/dry hands
Experiences a dramatic loss of skill he/she once had

A child in this age range would be referred to the **Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)**. For more information contact your school district's special education office.

This information can be found by going to your school district's web site or by calling ECDC.



This developmental checklist was compiled and adapted from:

The Keeping Infants Developmentally Sounds (K.I.D.S.) Guidelines, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Learn the Signs. Act Early. Important Milestones" found at www.cdc.gov/actearly, The American Speech-Language Hearing Association's "How Does Your Child Hear and Talk" developmental checklist found at www.asha.org/public/speech/development/01.htm, Zero to Three's "Your Baby's Development" found at www.zerotothree.org, and Terminology of Communication Disorders Speech-Language-Hearing Second Ed. Nicolosi, Harryman, Kresheck, 1983

For more information contact the early intervention office of the county in which you reside, your local school district, your child's doctor, or the **ECDC**.

ECDC staff can offer guidance and direction to help you find answers regarding your child's development.



Central Early Childhood Direction Center

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