

Early Childhood Developmental Milestones

A child's early years are critical for later health and development.¹ Missing key milestones during this crucial period may indicate developmental delays. It is critical to know what to expect during the early stages of a child's development, since early detection and intervention can help kids stay on track. Between birth and age 5, a child's brain develops more than at any other time in life.



95% of brain growth happens before kindergarten.²

THE FIRST YEAR OF LIFE³

0-3 months



- Holds head up when on stomach
- Begins to smile
- Learns to briefly calm self (e.g., brings hand to mouth and suck on hand)

6-9 months



- Begins to sit with support
- Plays peek-a-boo
- Knows familiar faces

3-6 months



- Copies movements and sounds
- Begins to babble
- Rolls from stomach to back

9 months to 1 year



- Crawls and pulls to stand
- Uses simple gestures (e.g., shakes head, waves)
- Responds to simple spoken requests

THE SECOND YEAR OF LIFE (AGES 1 TO 2 YEARS)

mama
cat
dada

- Knows several words
- Points to show something is interesting
- Plays simple pretends

THE THIRD YEAR OF LIFE (AGES 2 TO 3 YEARS)



- Finds objects that are hidden
- Engages in conversation
- Begins to run
- Follows instructions with 2-3 steps

THE FOURTH YEAR OF LIFE (AGES 3 TO 4 YEARS)



- Cooperates with other children
- Dresses self
- Sings songs or poems from memory
- Plays roles (e.g., parent, teacher, animal)

Note: It is important to remember that children may develop skills on slightly different timelines. Therefore, developmental milestone achievements may not fully align with the provided time frames and may be met at slightly different times.

Sources for Early Childhood Developmental Milestones

- 1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Child Development, Early Brain Development." Accessed October 17, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/early-brain-development.html>
- 2 Gerber, A. J., Peterson, B. S., Giedd, J. N., Lalonde, F. M., Celano, M. J., White, S. L., Wallace, G. L., Lee, N. R., & Lenroot, R. K. "Anatomical Brain Magnetic Resonance Imaging of Typically Developing Children and Adolescents. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 48(5), 465-470. <https://doi.org/10.1097/CHI.0b013e31819f2715>
- 3 Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention. CDC's Developmental Milestones. Access September 17, 2022 from https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/FULL-LIST-CDC_LTSAE-Checklists2021_Eng_FNL2_508.pdf