

Play and Learn with your Child

Milestones & play ideas to use with your child:
Birth to 9 years old

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Birth to 4 weeks

What to expect:

- Much of the first month your baby will be sleeping, eating and needing to be comforted.
- Baby's neck muscles are very weak and her neck needs to be supported when you pick her up or put her down.

Ideas:

- **YOU CANNOT SPOIL A BABY!** Go to your baby when she cries and hold her. Crying is a baby's language! Does she need to be changed, fed, held? **This is a time to build trust.**
- After feeding, burp her, and when laying her down, put on her back to prevent choking.
- If you bottle feed, never prop a bottle – this is a choking hazard!

Be ready to offer some of these toys to your infant soon:

- 1. soft, cuddly toys
- 2. lightweight rattles
- 3. soft, squeezable balls

1 to 3 months

What to expect:

- Will lift head up when lying on belly
- Turns head toward noises
- Appears to stare sometimes
- Begins to coo, gurgle
- Begins to follow things with eyes
- Begins to recognize people
- Begins to smile
- Grasps small object if placed in hand

Ideas:

- Smile and speak softly while holding your baby.
- Speak to your baby in a pleasant voice.
- Place your baby on her belly when she's awake.
- Watch and see if your baby reacts to sounds.
- Place baby so she sees what's going on around her.

Have you been offering these toys to your baby? If not, remember now!

- 1. soft, cuddly toys
- 2. lightweight rattles
- 3. soft, squeezable balls

3 – 6 months

What to expect:

- Lifts head and chest when on belly
- Sits with some support
- Holds head up unsupported
- Kicks legs and moves arms actively when on back
- May be able to roll over
- Brings hands to mouth
- Reaches for things with one hand; tries to hold an object
- Seems to know familiar objects and is happy to see – parent's faces, bottle, toys, mirror
- Begins to make babbling sounds; sometimes laughs
- Turns head toward sounds and copies what she hears

Ideas:

- Hold and cuddle your baby!
- Keep your baby safe!
- Place baby in different positions in crib.
- Hold her in a sitting position sometimes.
- Give your baby a few small safe objects to play with – rattles, squeak toys.
- Hold her in front of a mirror.
- Provide plastic blocks, teething rings (exploring and hand coordination).
- Provide a mobile and nonbreakable mirror in her crib.
- Look at and speak to your baby.
- Play music for your baby and sing to her.

6 – 9 months

What to expect:

- Begins to sit by self unsupported
- Rolls over from stomach to back, and back to stomach
- Begins to creep on belly; may rock back and forth on knees and go backwards
- May bounce when supported and standing up
- Reaches, holds and brings objects to mouth; begins to pass objects from one hand to the other
- Naps about 1 – 4 hours a day
- Makes sounds such as, “ah”, baba”
- Likes to play simple games – peek a boo, copies sounds - especially with parent
- Understands “no”
- May respond to own name
- Uses crying to show different needs- hunger, discomfort, anger
- Cries when parent goes away; may be afraid of strangers

Ideas:

- Help baby to sitting position.
- Place baby in playpen or blanket on the floor.
- Give baby safe play areas – baby is active now.
- Babies learn about their environment through their mouths. Watch what she puts in her mouth!
- Introduce finger foods, like crackers.
- It is very important to spend as much time as you can touching, talking, and playing with your baby. Play peek a boo, clap hands, and play with musical toys. Talk to your baby about what you are doing and name objects.
- Provide a quiet place for baby to sleep.
- Read to your baby! Use board & cloth books.
- Provide:
 1. gym crib, plastic blocks, teething rings (exploring and hand coordination)
 2. toys to bang, drums, wooden spoon & cereal box
 3. water & tub toys

9 – 12 months

What to expect:

- Pulls self to sitting and/or standing positions for short periods of time
- Crawls; perhaps backwards at first
- Pulls himself to standing
- Puts things in his mouth
- Picks up things with thumb and index finger and looks closely at objects; can stack two blocks
- Points at objects
- Understands some simple words and commands – “bye-bye,” “Mommy,” “Daddy,” “Give to me,” “No”
- Knows own name
- May be clingy with certain people
- Gives love and affection

Ideas:

- Provide a safe play area and be there to help baby.
- Play is important; play peek a boo; provide small, safe objects – blocks, containers; baby likes to watch gravity at work. Be patient as baby practices picking up and dropping things.
- Tell baby the names of things such as people, animals, colors, parts of the body.
- Ask baby to hand you things and give baby praise for doing it.
- Provide sounds and simple words that she can imitate. Look at simple picture books. Roll a big ball.
- Provide lots of love and attention to your baby.

Provide:

1. board & cloth books
2. gym crib, plastic blocks, teething rings (exploring and hand coordination)
3. toys to bang, drums, wooden spoon & cereal box
4. water & tub toys

12 – 15 months

What to expect:

- Begins to walk by herself and hold onto furniture for support; may begin to climb
- Can feed himself by using a spoon and two hands for drinking from cup
- Can usually say “Mama” and “Dada”
- Plays by himself but likes being with others; explores things in different ways – shakes, bangs, throws
- Can respond to simple requests and make simple gestures - shakes head “no” and waves “bye-bye”; may pick up a toy when asked

Ideas:

- Spend time with your baby; respond to baby’s gift of love.
- Provide safe spaces for your child to practice walking and climbing; praise him for his efforts; walk hand in hand with baby so he won’t fall.
- Provide infant-sized cups and spoons and be patient as baby learns how to use these things.
- Provide baby with cloth or cardboard books, blocks and plastic cups, cuddly toys, nesting toys, take apart toys.
- Talk with your baby about what is going on; name objects, toys, people.
- Give one simple direction at a time.

15 – 18 months

What to expect:

- Walks alone; can walk upstairs with help and creep downstairs; can throw a ball without falling
- Likes block building - can pile 3 – 4 blocks; can scribble with crayons; can push and pull toys
- Imitates simple words; can point to simple pictures such as dog, baby, car; can imitate two word combinations
- May have temper tantrums
- May be afraid of strangers
- Likes to hand things to others as play; knows what things are for – brush, phone – and can play simple pretend – feeding a doll; imitates simple actions such as cleaning and reading; begins to ask parent for help when needed; enjoys being with other children and adults
- Points to one body part
- Begins to eat with a spoon and drink from a cup

Ideas:

- Take your toddler on walks.
- LISTEN to your toddler.
- Provide quiet place to rest.
- Praise your toddler if she tells you she is wet.
- Let your toddler help you with everyday chores.

Provide your child with:

1. balls, blocks, nonbreakable mirror, push toys
2. fat crayons – easier for little hands – and paper - color with your toddler
3. sturdy picture books with rhymes and pictures - read aloud to your toddler and let her point to known objects
4. cardboard & large wooden blocks
5. stacking & snap together toys
6. pop up toys (hand-eye coordination)
7. sturdy toy cars, trucks, baby dolls, blankets, accessories (imaginative play)
8. low riding toys without peddles (language development) (develops large muscle groups)
9. containers for filling and dumping (hand-eye coordination)

18 – 24 months

What to expect:

- Walks well and may begin to run; can climb stairs and throw ball overhead
- Likes to explore and examine all sorts of objects
- Uses many words to tell you about specific objects, persons, and actions; starts to combine two or more different words
- Recognizes self in mirror and picture
- Often says “No” to certain requests
- May shove, hit, bang head, and/or kick when things aren't going his way
- May show some interest in using toilet
- Play times are longer; will play next to but not with other children
- Likes to move to music

Ideas:

- Take your child on walks; take outside and play catch.
- Provide balls, riding toys, musical instruments, take apart toys.
- Play with your child by showing how to use objects and toys – pretend like feeding doll, dancing to music.
- Give your child language - constantly talk to about what is going on; name objects, foods, toys; ask him if he can name them.
- Have child begin to make choices when possible.
- Praise dryness and NEVER punish for toilet accidents.
- Arrange to have child around other children.

2 years

What to expect:

- Child can jump, run, kick a ball, walk up and down stairs, stand on tip toes; dress and undress; feed self with a spoon; turn a doorknob; can turn a page of a book and name objects
- Longer attention span; can say first name; speak in short sentences; can name some body parts; follows simple instructions
- Shows more and more independence
- Shows defiant behavior
- Plays beside other children, but may include at times; little sharing of toys
- Begins to use toilet during day

Ideas:

- Provide your child with a safe play area. Provide riding toys, toys to push and pull, toys to dump.
- Provide your child with books and magazines. Read simple stories to your child. Point to pictures and ask child to tell you about them. LISTEN and answer questions simply and honestly.
- Have your child name body parts –mouth, nose, eyes, etc.
- Provide paint, playdough, crayons, puzzles, take apart toys, blocks, dolls, dress up clothes, musical instruments for your child to explore.
- Provide your child time with other children.
- Praise child when he uses the toilet. Remind child to use toilet especially after mealtime.

3 years

What to expect:

- Walks upstairs and down, one foot on a step; can ride a tricycle
- Can put shoes on (no lacing); begins to copy some shapes; cuts with scissors; brushes teeth with some help; does puzzles with 3 – 4 pieces; turns book pages one at a time
- Speech is clear; knows first and last name, age and sex; can name a friend; understands and can say “you,” “me,” “in,” “on”; knows difference between “big” and “little”; follows two and three instructions; begins to count; carries on conversation using 2 – 3 sentences
- Plays more often with other children (shares, tells stories, likes to play dress up)

Ideas:

- Take a walk with your child or visit a park and point out items in nature – flowers, birds, etc.
- Provide climbing apparatus, swings, tunnels, low balance beams (large muscle development).
- Provide him a tricycle, wagon, rocking toys.
- Provide keys (intellectual development, hand-eye coordination)
- Provide water play; provide and encourage the use of materials for drawing and creating – finger paints, paste, water-based markers, non-toxic crayons, big paint brushes, cardboard, paint, playdough, blocks; provide simple wooden puzzles.
- Play with your child and help her to understand numbers and ideas such as “large-small,” “on-off,” “under-over.”
- Provide old clothes for dress up – hats, dresses, shirts, shoes (encourages imagination, self-expression and language development) (builds small muscles).
- Provide your child the chance to play with other children.
- Teach rules for safe play.

4 years

What to expect:

- Wants to play with other children; plays well and cooperates; more independent
- Walks and runs well; can hop - has good balance
- Can catch a large ball; beginning to be able to copy some capital letters and draw shapes; can draw a person with at least 6 body parts; can use scissors
- Able to wash and dry self; dress and undress self (including buttons); brushes teeth
- Interested in new experiences and talks about them; enjoys making up stories; asks many questions - why, what, where; able to name 2 -3 colors
- Begins to understand time - "past, present, future," "yesterday;" names some colors and numbers; may count from 1 - 10
- Understands "same" and "different"

Ideas:

- Play games - Red Light-Green Light, Mother May I?, Hide and Seek; play card games and board games. Play guessing games - ask him, "What's round and you play catch with it?"
- Play ball with your child.
- Provide art supplies for drawing and creating - paste, cardboard, paint, tape, scissors, playdough, cookie cutters. Have child cut pictures from magazines, follow dot to dot outlines of letters. (small muscle development, fosters creativity, self-expression).
- Read and have your child "read" picture & story books (listening skills & language development).
- Provide blocks, construction toys, plastic tools, toy people and animals, dolls, strollers, toy kitchen utensils, dress-up clothes, jewelry, purses, shawls, wallets, briefcases. Provide puppets. (imaginative play, cooperation, role playing, learning how the world works)
- Encourage conversations with your child. Read to your child. Have them read to you! Talk about feelings with your child. Take long walks with your child and give him new experiences - visit the library, museum, post office.
- Encourage your child's independence and allow him to do as much as he can, but be available to help as needed.

5 years old

What to expect:

- Skips; hops; climbs; swings; can somersault; may stand on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- Dresses himself completely; uses fork and spoon at table; can take care of toileting himself
- Tells a story with full sentences; knows name and address
- More understanding of time – “tomorrow,” “when I grow up” – and everyday things – money, appliances, foods
- Can tell what’s real and pretend
- Can be demanding or cooperative
- Wants friends and to be like them; plays games with other children; enjoys singing, dancing, acting
- Shows sympathy and concern for others
- Aware of gender differences

Ideas:

- Take long walks with your child.
- Take your child to a park and climb, jump, run, and skip with your child.
- Encourage your child to care for herself. Let your child pick out his own clothes. Give child simple chores.
- Take time to talking and LISTENING to your child; show an interest in what your child is sharing with you.
- Spend time pretending; provide toys such as small cars, trucks, blocks, trains, dress up clothes, puppets, puzzles.
- Provide materials for drawing and creating – paste, cardboard, paint, playdough. Help your child to practice writing letters and numbers.
- Help your child get along with others. Play games with simple rules with your child. Play card games and board games.

6 – 9 years

What to expect:

- Becoming more social
- Moves with more skill
- Learning more about the world around him and tests new ideas

Ideas:

- Encourage you child to play with other children. Teach him how to play fairly and safe.
- Ask your child what he is doing and how things work. Supply cookbooks, science kits, bicycle, scooter, books, magnets, kites, balls, marbles, magnifying glass, books about other cultures.
- Provide quiet activities - board games, card games, painting, sewing, reading, stamp collecting, model-making. Tell stories, jokes, and riddles; encourage your child to make up stories and poems.
- Provide energetic activities – dodgeball, tag, dancing, jump rope, swinging. Balance between team or group activities and individual ones. – children need both group and solitary play