

Typical Child Development by Age

Most toddlers develop at about the same pace. Sometimes, though, a child will progress more quickly or more slowly than expected.

If you're concerned, see [If You Have Concerns About Your Toddler's Development](#) and talk with your health care provider.

Physical Development

6 to 9 months

- sits steadily without help
- stands firmly when held
- bounces and shuffles around on her bottom
- rakes at tiny objects with her hands; picks up larger objects with her fingers
- grabs, shakes and bangs things together
- chews or gums finely minced foods



TRY THIS

Make lots of time for crawling and tummy time. Give her something to hold and shake. And get down on the floor and roll a ball to her.

9 to 12 months

- stands by pushing off from a squat
- walks while holding onto furniture or your hands
- crawls well, including up stairs
- feeds herself small pieces of food
- uses the tip of her index finger and thumb to pick up small things
- puts one block on top of another



TRY THIS

Hold her hand or stand behind her as she climbs stairs. Show her how to stack blocks. Let her use activity tables or other toys where she can press buttons and make noises. And offer her foods with different textures.

12 to 18 months

- walks on her own
- crawls or walks up stairs, putting both feet on one step while holding onto a railing or your hand
- climbs on things (like chairs) and out of things (like strollers)
- drinks from a cup
- turns the pages of a book
- stacks 3 or more blocks
- scribbles with a big crayon



TRY THIS

Give her balls to play with. Play music and dance together. Let her stack and nest plastic bowls and match lids to pots. Offer her big crayons and paper. And help her solve simple, large-piece puzzles.



FAMILY STORY

When our daughter was just starting to move around, I would lay on the floor with a toy just out of her reach. She would work hard to get to me. It kept her busy and active, and was a nice way for me to relax at the end of the day.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler's physical development at every stage by:

- ✓ being active together
- ✓ spending lots of time playing outdoors and at playgrounds
- ✓ helping her practise walking
- ✓ cheering her on when she tries something new
- ✓ limiting screen time (see [Screen Time](#))

18 to 24 months

- kicks a ball
- squats while playing
- backs into a chair to sit down
- rides a small-wheeled toy
- takes off her own shoes, hat and socks
- lifts a cup and drinks, then puts it down

24 to 30 months

- walks backwards and sideways
- walks up and down stairs alone, putting both feet on one step
- jumps in place, lifting both feet off the floor
- moves on a riding toy using both feet at the same time
- holds a crayon in her whole hand and scribbles

30 to 36 months

- walks a few steps on a narrow beam
- climbs a slide's ladder
- pedals a tricycle
- copies circles, dots, lines and swirls
- cuts paper with small safety scissors
- turns handles and doorknobs



TRY THIS

Offer her shape-sorting activities and finger paints. Play with plastic containers in the bath. Run and kick balls together. Let her try a ride-on toy. And encourage her to dress and undress on her own.



TRY THIS

Play movement games where you stop and go, change directions and move fast and slow. Let her dress herself, helping with buttons and zippers only when needed. Give her markers, crayons and puzzles to play with. And let her help with simple kitchen tasks.



TRY THIS

Play tag and follow the leader. Roll down hills together. Pretend you're animals. Let her turn the pages while you read to her. And offer her dress-up clothes with snaps, buttons and zippers.



BRAIN BUILDER

Tell her what she's doing as she's doing it ("You're climbing the stairs!" "You're drawing with a crayon!")



DID YOU KNOW

Between ages 2 and 3, some toddlers will learn to walk up and down stairs, one foot after the other, while holding the handrail.

Social Development

6 to 9 months

- plays social games like peekaboo and patty cake
- wants to do things with others
- points to things for a reason
- tries to get attention
- watches others
- notices when people enter a room



TRY THIS

Play seeking games (“Where’s Michael?”) to teach your toddler he’s not part of you. Invite others to join you as you play, or take part in a playgroup. Let him approach new people at his own pace.

9 to 12 months

- knows when you like or dislike his behaviour
- holds out his arms and legs while being dressed
- copies simple actions and other children
- repeats sounds or movements that make you laugh
- takes turns with you in simple games
- notices what others are looking at
- follows where you point, then looks back to you



TRY THIS

Talk to your toddler about what activities will happen next in the day.

12 to 18 months

- likes to be the centre of attention
- starts to show a sense of humour
- plays best by himself and doesn’t share toys
- copies adult activities, like reading and talking on the phone
- separates himself from you for brief periods
- calls for you



TRY THIS

Make up a goodbye routine (a big kiss, a wave and some special words, for example). Offer him choices, like whether to put on his coat or his shoes first. And let him help with simple chores.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler’s social development at every stage by:

- ✓ responding when he wants help or attention
- ✓ keeping to routines
- ✓ eating together at the family table
- ✓ using “please” and “thank you” to model good manners
- ✓ letting him be around people and play with other children

18 to 24 months

- likes playing alone for short periods
- is better at playing beside, rather than with, other children
- says “no” and “mine” often and has trouble sharing
- likes to do things without help



TRY THIS

Let him know what to expect in new situations. Talk to him about family and friends. Point out what other children are doing, and introduce him to a playmate.

What is parallel play?

Playing beside or near other children.

What is cooperative play?

Playing with other children.

Most children prefer parallel play until they're 30 to 36 months old.

24 to 30 months

- has trouble sharing
- knows the difference between boys and girls
- likes to do more for himself
- likes being near other children in parallel play



TRY THIS

Give him chances to play one-on-one with another child. Let him do some things without help. Use his toys to model sharing (“Look! Dolly’s sharing her blocks with Teddy.”) Spend quiet time together reading, telling stories and cuddling. And give him lots of praise for positive behaviour.



DID YOU KNOW

It’s common for toddlers to be afraid of new people and act shy around strangers.

30 to 36 months

- hugs, kisses and shows affection
- uses social language like “thank you” and “bye-bye”
- plays with others and takes turns more easily
- plays make-believe games and creates imaginary characters



TRY THIS

Give your toddler lots of affection and encouragement. Join him in imaginary play. Introduce him to neighbours and let him play with other children, but stay nearby to supervise and help him solve problems.



DID YOU KNOW

Around age 3, some toddlers will create an imaginary friend.

Emotional Development

6 to 9 months

- shows strong likes and dislikes
- laughs
- wants to stay with you or other trusted adults
- shows when she's scared



TRY THIS

Smile at your toddler, make lots of eye contact and practise other serve and return interactions (see [Brain Development](#)).



DID YOU KNOW

It's common for young toddlers to be scared by vacuum cleaners, banging and other loud noises.



FAMILY STORY

Whenever one of us left for the day, we had a special routine. We would all hug and say, "Let's kiss Daddy," "Let's kiss Mommy," and then, "Let's kiss Taylor." It was fun, took just a minute and made leaving easier for everyone.

9 to 12 months

- shows many emotions
- is upset when she does something wrong
- wants comfort when she's upset
- needs to be within sight and hearing of a caregiver
- shows affection with hugs, kisses, pats and smiles



TRY THIS

Offer her simple choices, like which cup to use. And ask her for lots of hugs and kisses.



BRAIN BUILDER

Starting when your toddler is about 9 months old, focus on helping her understand and deal with her emotions. Talk to her about how she feels ("I see you're feeling sad"). Tell her how you're feeling, too, ("I'm frustrated") and about how you handle your emotions in a healthy way ("I'm going to take some deep breaths").

12 to 18 months

- likes familiar places
- takes risks if a trusted adult is present
- recognizes herself in mirrors and photos
- hugs and kisses you and other very familiar people
- likes being the centre of attention



TRY THIS

Let her play on her own. Talk about any upcoming changes to her routine. And find ways to help her feel successful.



HOW TO

Use praise to build your child's self-esteem

- ✓ Save praise for things that take effort, rather than praising every small act.
- ✓ Be specific: "You did a great job cleaning up your toys," for example.
- ✓ Offer encouragement and empathy when she's struggling with something new: "I can see you're trying hard to zip up your jacket. It can be tricky, but if you keep trying I know you'll get it. If you need a break, though, I can help this time."

18 to 24 months

- shows concern for others
- shows fear, but can be settled down
- sometimes wants to do things on her own, sometimes wants help
- is watchful around new adults



TRY THIS

Talk to her about how others feel and how her actions affect them (“I think John feels sad because you took away his toy.”) And offer her choices to help her cope with her own feelings (“You’re feeling sad. Do you want to cuddle or be alone?”).

24 to 30 months

- wants to get her own way
- likes routines
- acts out emotions through play – roaring like an angry lion, for example
- has strong feelings but trouble expressing them



TRY THIS

Encourage her to show and talk about her emotions. Make transitions easier by letting her know what to expect (“In 5 minutes it will be time to pick up your sister from school”).

30 to 36 months

- gets upset by big changes to routines
- responds to other people’s feelings
- is more comfortable with new people
- wants to do things for herself, but may fear new things
- wants approval and needs praise



TRY THIS

Sing songs and read stories about emotions. Talk about how the characters are feeling and why.



DID YOU KNOW

Many toddlers like to have a security blanket or toy.



DID YOU KNOW

Your toddler may suddenly be frightened by situations that she was fine with before.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler’s emotional development at every stage by:

- ✓ creating lots of structure and routines
- ✓ holding, cuddling and comforting her – especially when she’s upset, sick or hurt
- ✓ practising “serve and return” interactions (see [Brain Development](#))
- ✓ using positive discipline (see [Positive Discipline](#))

Cognitive Development

6 to 9 months

- notices the size of objects
- knows if things are near or far
- searches briefly for an object that's been taken away
- understands how things can be used – shakes a noisemaker or pushes a button, for example



TRY THIS

Play copying games, like clapping or sticking your tongue out at each other. Hide things from him briefly, then reveal them. And play in-and-out games, like putting blocks in a container and taking them out again.

9 to 12 months

- connects animals with the sounds they make
- has a better memory
- sees you as separate from himself, and points when asked, "Who's Mommy?"
- recognizes his own name
- starts to understand cause and effect, like that things fall when dropped
- matches shapes, like putting a cube in a square hole



TRY THIS

Take turns doing things, like blowing kisses. Ask him to help you find lost objects. And talk about cause and effect ("You dropped Teddy, so now he's on the floor").



FAMILY STORY

Whenever my friend, a teacher, would come over, she would pull things from her pockets to show our 10-month-old and say the names of them carefully. He would often try to copy her. It was a good example of what I needed to be doing every day.

12 to 18 months

- realizes things still exist even when he can't see them
- finds things in pictures
- learns by touching and moving things – fitting things into holes, for example
- expects events to follow routines
- follows simple directions, like "show me the ball"



TRY THIS

Count things together. Talk about events and people he remembers. Ask him to point to pictures in books. And give him simple directions ("Put your truck and doll in the toy box, please").



BRAIN BUILDER

It's healthy for your toddler to feel a little bit of frustration when he's trying to do something. By not rushing in to help, you're teaching him problem-solving skills.

18 to 24 months

- uses things the way they're meant to be used, like putting a phone to his ear
- understands the passing of time and the meaning of words like "not now"
- names familiar people in photos
- has a better memory



TRY THIS

Give him crayons, markers and paper to scribble with and 2- to 4-piece puzzles to try. Talk about time ("We're going to Grandma's tomorrow") and about sounds you hear, like car horns or barking dogs. And challenge his skills by, for example, giving him a fourth block once he can stack 3.

24 to 30 months

- pretend-plays with others
- matches and sorts some shapes and colours
- starts to understand the order of numbers
- has a longer attention span
- starts solving problems by trial and error



TRY THIS

Let him fill in the blanks when you're singing or reading together. And play matching and sorting games.

30 to 36 months

- compares sizes of things and uses words like "bigger" and "smaller"
- play-acts, like pretending to be a dinosaur
- counts 3 things
- matches and sorts things
- enjoys creative movement



TRY THIS

Talk to him about number order ("Who's first?"), encourage him to tell stories, and ask him what he thinks about things. Let him try 3- to 6-piece puzzles. And give him clothes and props to play dress-up.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler's cognitive development at every stage by:

- ✓ offering him a variety of toys, puzzles and art supplies
- ✓ reading with him and talking about the pictures (see [Reading to Your Toddler](#))
- ✓ dancing and singing together
- ✓ counting together
- ✓ talking about the shapes and colours of things
- ✓ giving him plenty of praise as he learns new skills



See the **Brain Builder** boxes throughout this guide for ideas on boosting your toddler's cognitive development.

Language Development

6 to 9 months

- says several sounds (“ma mu da di ba”) in one breath
- babbles and repeats sounds (“da da da”)
- responds to some words, like “Mommy” or “ball”
- turns to listen to familiar sounds, like a ringing phone
- looks when you say her name
- shakes her head to say “no”



TRY THIS

Use simple sentences to talk about what you’re doing (“We’re looking at the dog”).



TRY THIS

It’s never too soon to start sharing books with your toddler. She may like flipping the pages, talking about what she sees or just looking at the words and pictures (see [Reading to Your Toddler](#)).

9 to 12 months

- babbles in longer strings of sounds like “bababa” or “badagee”
- responds to simple instructions that include familiar words
- takes turns making sounds with you
- copies speech sounds



TRY THIS

Read to your toddler every day (see [Reading to Your Toddler](#)).



TRY THIS

If you speak more than one language, use both from the start. One parent or caregiver can use one language while the other uses another. Read to your child in both languages, too.



DID YOU KNOW

Many toddlers leave out words like “the” and “in” and endings like “-ing” and “-s” when they’re learning to speak English.

12 to 18 months

- says 5 or more words
- understands many more words than she can say – points, for example, when asked where her belly button is
- uses “no” correctly, often with a shake of her head
- tries to sing songs
- makes animal sounds and other sound effects
- uses gestures like clapping her hands, blowing a kiss or giving a “high 5”
- puts her finger to her lips to say “shhh”



TRY THIS

Read to your toddler using different voices and lots of expression. Sing to her. Give her books to look at and encourage her to point out things in pictures. And keep a diary of the words she says.



DID YOU KNOW

You don’t need to try to teach your toddler to read and write. By reading, talking and singing to her, you’ll build the language skills that form the basis of her later literacy.

18 to 24 months

- uses 2- or 3-word sentences
- understands about 200 words
- says (clearly or not) about 50 words
- talks to herself or her stuffed animals
- names pictures in books
- copies new words and phrases
- asks “what” and “where” questions



TRY THIS

Listen to her carefully and ask simple questions about what she’s saying. And take her to the library.



FAMILY STORY

I talked to my daughter about anything and everything we were doing. When crossing the street, for example, I’d say, “Is it safe to cross? Let’s look for cars. There are no cars. It’s safe. Let’s go.” All that talking really helped her learn words, and I wasn’t surprised when she spoke at an early age.

24 to 30 months

- uses personal pronouns like “I,” “me,” and “you”
- says her name, based on what she hears herself being called
- answers simple questions like “What’s your name?”
- likes looking at books and talking about the pictures
- sings parts of songs
- asks lots of questions



TRY THIS

Repeat what she says to show her you’re interested. And look at family pictures together, describing them in simple sentences.

30 to 36 months

- can often be understood
- asks lots of questions
- tells stories and sings
- may repeat 5-word sentences
- uses social words like “please,” “thank you” and “hello”
- names most body parts



TRY THIS

Ask about things she’s interested in. Use open-ended questions like “What did you see on your walk?” or “What do you think?” Sing number songs, too, and make up silly rhymes together.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler’s language development at every stage by:

- ✓ talking to her about everything from what you’re doing (“Let’s wash these cups”) to what she sees (“What a fluffy cat!”)
- ✓ responding to her babbling with your own words, as though you’re having a conversation
- ✓ pointing out the names of things around you
- ✓ reading to her every day
- ✓ building on what she says (If she says “ball,” you can say, “Yes, that’s a red ball.”)
- ✓ using nursery rhymes to help her learn language patterns
- ✓ singing while doing daily tasks, like changing her diaper