

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, or even have periods where they seem to take a step back.

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 their bottom
- rakes at tiny objects with their hands; picks up larger objects with their fingers
- grabs, shakes and bangs things together

9 to 12 months

- chews finely minced foods with teeth or gums
- stands by pushing off from a squat
- walks while holding onto furniture or your hands
- crawls well, including up stairs
- feeds themselves small pieces of food
- uses the tip of their index finger and thumb to pick up small things
- puts one block on top of another

12 to 18 months

- walks on their 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

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



TRY THIS

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



TRY THIS

Give them balls to play with. Play music and dance together. Let them stack and nest plastic bowls and match lids to pots. Offer them big crayons and paper. And help them 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 them practise walking
- ✓ cheering them on when they try 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 their 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 their 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 them shape-sorting activities and finger paints. Play with plastic containers in the bath. Run and kick balls together. Let them try a ride-on toy. And encourage them to dress and undress on their own.



TRY THIS

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



TRY THIS

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



BRAIN BUILDER

Tell them what they're doing as they're 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 them they’re not part of you. Invite others to join you as you play, or take part in a playgroup. Let them approach new people at their own pace.

9 to 12 months

- knows when you like or dislike their behaviour
- holds out their arms and legs while being dressed
- copies someone when asked
- notices children and what they are doing
- 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 them 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 themselves and doesn’t share toys
- copies adult activities, like reading and talking on the phone
- separates themselves 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 them choices, like whether to put on their coat or their shoes first. And let them help with simple chores.



KEY TAKEAWAY

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

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

18 to 24 months

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



TRY THIS

Let them know what to expect in new situations. Talk to them about family and friends. Point out what other children are doing, and introduce your child 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
- likes to do more for themselves
- likes being near other children in parallel play
- is learning to be comfortable around new people



TRY THIS

Give them chances to play one-on-one with another child. Let them do some things without help. Use their toys to model sharing (“Look! Dolly’s sharing their blocks with Teddy.”) Spend quiet time together reading, telling stories and cuddling. And give them 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 them in imaginary play. Introduce them to neighbours and let them play with other children, but stay nearby to supervise and help them 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 they're scared



TRY THIS

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



DID YOU KNOW?

Many infants and toddlers are affected and even scared of loud noises such as vacuum cleaners.



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 they do something wrong
- wants comfort when they're upset
- needs to be within sight and hearing of a parent or caregiver
- shows affection with hugs, kisses, pats and smiles



TRY THIS

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



BRAIN BUILDER

Starting when your child is about 9 months old, focus on helping them understand and deal with their emotions. Talk to them about how they feel ("I see you're feeling sad"). Tell them 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 themselves in mirrors and photos
- hugs and kisses you and other very familiar people
- likes being the centre of attention



TRY THIS

Let them play on their own. Talk about any upcoming changes to their routine. And find ways to help them 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.
- ✓ Try not to base praise on your child's appearance.
- ✓ Be specific: "You did a great job cleaning up your toys," for example, rather than simply "good job."
- ✓ Offer encouragement and empathy when they're 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 their own, sometimes wants help
- is watchful around new adults



TRY THIS

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

24 to 30 months

- wants to get their 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 them to show and talk about their emotions. Make transitions easier by letting them know what to expect (“In 5 minutes it will be time to pick up your sibling from school”).

30 to 36 months

- gets upset by big changes to routines
- responds to other people’s feelings
- wants to do things for themselves, 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 they were 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 them – especially when they’re upset, sick, scared or hurt
- ✓ practising “serve and return” interactions (see [Brain Development](#))
- ✓ using positive discipline (see [Positive Discipline](#))
- ✓ offering them choices
- ✓ talking about feelings – yours, theirs and other peoples’

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 them 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 themselves, and points when asked, "Who's Mommy?"
- recognizes their 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 them to help you find lost objects. And talk about cause and effect ("You dropped Teddy, so now he's on the floor").

12 to 18 months

- realizes things still exist even when they 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 they remember. Ask them to point to pictures in books. And give them simple directions ("Put your truck and doll in the toy box, please").



FAMILY STORY

Whenever my friend came over, she would pull things out from her pockets to show our 10-month-old and say the names of the things carefully. My toddler would often try and copy what my friend said. It was a good example of what we needed to be doing every day.



BRAIN BUILDER

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

18 to 24 months

- uses things the way they're meant to be used, like putting a phone to their 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 them 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 their skills by, for example, giving them a fourth block once they 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 them 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 them about number order ("Who's first?"), encourage them to tell stories, and ask them what they think about things. Let them try 3- to 6-piece puzzles. And give them clothes and props to play dress-up.



KEY TAKEAWAY

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

- ✓ offering them a variety of toys, puzzles and art supplies
- ✓ reading with them and talking about the pictures (see [Reading to Your Toddler](#))
- ✓ dancing and singing together
- ✓ counting together
- ✓ talking about the shapes and colours of things
- ✓ playing games with rules, like *Simon says*
- ✓ giving them plenty of praise as they learn 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 their name
- shakes their head to say “no”



TRY THIS

Have a “conversation” with your baby by responding to their babbling with your own sounds or words.



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. They may like flipping the pages, talking about what they see 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 them 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 they can say – points, for example, when asked where their belly button is
- uses “no” correctly, often with a shake of their head
- tries to sing songs
- makes animal sounds and other sound effects
- uses gestures like clapping their hands, blowing a kiss or giving a “high 5”
- puts their finger to their lips to say “shhh”



TRY THIS

Read to them using different voices and lots of expression. Sing to them. Give them books to look at and encourage them to point out things in pictures. And keep a diary of the words they say.



DID YOU KNOW?

You don’t need to try to teach your toddler to read and write. By reading, talking and singing to them, you’ll build the language skills that form the basis of their 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 themselves or their stuffed animals
- names pictures in books
- copies new words and phrases
- asks “what” and “where” questions



TRY THIS

Listen to them carefully and ask simple questions about what they're saying. And take them 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 their name, based on what they hear themselves 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 they say to show them you're interested. And look at family pictures together, describing them in simple sentences.



KEY TAKEAWAY

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

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

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 they're 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.