CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER

SERVING THE NEEDS OF SPECIAL CHILDREN SINCE 1953

Developmental Milestones

A CHECKLIST FOR FAMILIES · 18 MONTHS TO PRE-K

Every child grows at their own pace. Milestones help you see how your child is learning, moving, playing and talking.

The skills listed for each age are things most children (75% or more) can do by that age. Find your child's age and check off what you see them doing. This checklist is not a substitute for a developmental screening, so ask your child's doctor about screening at well-child visits.

Have a concern?

If your child is missing milestones, has lost skills they once had, or something just doesn't feel right, talk with your child's doctor. You know your child best, and acting early can make a real difference. See page 4 for next steps.

By 18 months

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL

- ☐ Moves away from you, but looks to make sure you are close by
- ☐ Points to show you something interesting
- ☐ Puts hands out for you to wash them
- ☐ Looks at a few pages in a book with you
- ☐ Helps you dress them by pushing an arm through a sleeve or lifting up a foot

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Tries to say three or more words besides "mama" or "dada"
- ☐ Follows one-step directions without gestures, like giving you a toy when you say, "Give it to me"

THINKING & LEARNING

- ☐ Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom
- ☐ Plays with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car

MOVEMENT & PHYSICAL

- ☐ Walks without holding on to anyone or anything
- ☐ Scribbles
- ☐ Drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes
- ☐ Feeds themselves with their fingers
- ☐ Tries to use a spoon
- ☐ Climbs on and off a couch or chair without help

We're here to help

Since 1953, the Children's Developmental Center has helped toddlers and preschoolers with developmental concerns build the skills and confidence they need for kindergarten. Our small, play-based classrooms give each child individualized support, and we get to know families well, often for several years.

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By 2 years

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL

- [ ] Notices when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying
- [ ] Looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

- [ ] Points to things in a book when you ask, like “Where is the bear?”
- [ ] Says at least two words together, like “More milk”
- [ ] Points to at least two body parts when you ask
- [ ] Uses more gestures than waving and pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes

THINKING & LEARNING

- [ ] Holds something in one hand while using the other, like holding a container and taking the lid off
- [ ] Tries to use switches, knobs or buttons on a toy
- [ ] Plays with more than one toy at the same time, like putting toy food on a toy plate

MOVEMENT & PHYSICAL

- [ ] Kicks a ball
- [ ] Runs
- [ ] Walks (not climbs) up a few stairs, with or without help
- [ ] Eats with a spoon

By 30 months

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL

- [ ] Plays next to other children and sometimes plays with them
- [ ] Shows you what they can do by saying, “Look at me!”
- [ ] Follows simple routines when told, like helping pick up toys when you say, “It’s clean-up time”

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

- [ ] Says about 50 words
- [ ] Says two or more words together, with one action word, like “Doggie run”
- [ ] Names things in a book when you point and ask, “What is this?”
- [ ] Says words like “I,” “me” or “we”

THINKING & LEARNING

- [ ] Uses things to pretend, like feeding a block to a doll as if it were food
- [ ] Shows simple problem-solving skills, like standing on a small stool to reach something
- [ ] Follows two-step instructions, like “Put the toy down and close the door”
- [ ] Shows they know at least one color, like pointing to a red crayon when you ask, “Which one is red?”

MOVEMENT & PHYSICAL

- [ ] Uses hands to twist things, like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids
- [ ] Takes some clothes off by themselves, like loose pants or an open jacket
- [ ] Jumps off the ground with both feet
- [ ] Turns book pages one at a time when you read together

Notes & questions for my child’s doctor

By 3 years

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL

- [ ] Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave, like at a childcare drop-off
- [ ] Notices other children and joins them to play

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

- [ ] Talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges
- [ ] Asks “who,” “what,” “where” or “why” questions, like “Where is Mommy?”
- [ ] Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like “running,” “eating” or “playing”
- [ ] Says their first name when asked
- [ ] Talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time

THINKING & LEARNING

- [ ] Draws a circle when you show them how
- [ ] Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn them

MOVEMENT & PHYSICAL

- [ ] Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni
- [ ] Puts on some clothes by themselves, like loose pants or a jacket
- [ ] Uses a fork

By 4 years

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL

- [ ] Pretends to be something else during play, like a teacher, superhero or dog
- [ ] Asks to go play with children if none are around, like “Can I play with Alex?”
- [ ] Comforts others who are hurt or sad, like hugging a crying friend
- [ ] Avoids danger, like not jumping from tall heights at the playground
- [ ] Likes to be a “helper”
- [ ] Changes behavior based on where they are, like the library, a place of worship or the playground

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

- [ ] Says sentences with four or more words
- [ ] Says some words from a song, story or nursery rhyme
- [ ] Talks about at least one thing that happened during their day, like “I played soccer”
- [ ] Answers simple questions, like “What is a coat for?” or “What is a crayon for?”

THINKING & LEARNING

- [ ] Names a few colors of items
- [ ] Tells what comes next in a well-known story
- [ ] Draws a person with three or more body parts

MOVEMENT & PHYSICAL

- [ ] Catches a large ball most of the time
- [ ] Serves themselves food or pours water, with adult supervision
- [ ] Unbuttons some buttons
- [ ] Holds a crayon or pencil between fingers and thumb (not a fist)

Notes & questions for my child’s doctor

By 5 years

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL

- [ ] Follows rules or takes turns when playing games with other children
- [ ] Sings, dances or acts for you
- [ ] Does simple chores at home, like matching socks or clearing the table after eating

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

- [ ] Tells a story they heard or made up with at least two events, like a cat stuck in a tree and a firefighter saving it
- [ ] Answers simple questions about a book or story after you read or tell it
- [ ] Keeps a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges
- [ ] Uses or recognizes simple rhymes, like “cat” and “hat”

THINKING & LEARNING

- [ ] Counts to 10
- [ ] Names some numbers between 1 and 5 when you point to them
- [ ] Uses words about time, like “yesterday,” “tomorrow,” “morning” or “night”
- [ ] Pays attention for 5 to 10 minutes during activities, like story time or arts and crafts (screen time does not count)
- [ ] Writes some letters in their name
- [ ] Names some letters when you point to them

MOVEMENT & PHYSICAL

- [ ] Buttons some buttons
- [ ] Hops on one foot

Concerned? Act early.

You don’t have to wait and see. Here’s where to start, and you can always call us at **(419) 226-5046**.

1. Talk with your child’s doctor
Share this checklist and ask about a developmental screening.

2. Under age 3
Contact Ohio Early Intervention through the Allen County Board of Developmental Disabilities for a free evaluation.

3. Age 3 and older
Contact your local school district about a preschool special education evaluation, even if your child isn’t in school yet.

4. Reach out to us
We’re happy to talk through your questions and explain how families get started.

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Milestones adapted from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” program (cdc.gov/actearly). Free checklists and the CDC Milestone Tracker app are available there. Use of this material does not imply endorsement by the CDC.