



Promoting Your Child's Development—Birth to Three Years

Research has shown that the young brain grows at an extraordinary rate in the first years of life, opening developmental windows of opportunity for learning that occur only once during a lifespan. After those windows close, the speed and facility of one's learning capability declines dramatically. What then, can parents and caregivers do to maximize a child's development during these formative years?

From an educational standpoint, research highlights the need to start teaching and stimulating children at an early age. For example, researchers have found that vision develops within the first few months of life. Emotional stability develops before two years of age. An adult's vocabulary potential is determined primarily by words absorbed by the brain before three years of age and the foundations for math, logic and music aptitude and total muscle control are established before the age of four.

As a parent, one of the most essential things you can do to promote your child's development is to enjoy the miracle of infancy, toddlerhood and early childhood. You do not need to purchase every "developmentally appropriate" toy on the market to ensure healthy brain maturation. Neither do you need to have "perfect" parenting skills. What is important is to be actively involved in your child's growth and learning process. Be affectionate, communicate and encourage your child to become aware of his or her surroundings. Children are motivated to learn best through these kinds of nurturing interactions. Emotionally invested

Jon is raising two-year-old Samantha on his own. Recently, when he brought her to play group, he noticed that other children her age seemed to have basic verbal skills. "Sammy does not speak yet," Jon explained. "She will point, whine, giggle or babble, but that's all. One of the mothers suggested that I get Samantha checked out. Now I am concerned. Is this normal?"

parents respond to children and draw out their natural curiosity about the world.

In light of the developmental changes taking place during these formative years, child care choices take on a significant role. It is important for parents to choose—and work together with—child care providers to maximize their child's age-appropriate learning potential and provide the stimulation that is pivotal to a child's desire, potential and ability to learn.

Birth to Three Years—What You Can Expect Developmentally

Though each child's development is unique, there are some developmental milestones that you can expect. In the first year of life, your newborn gradually transforms from a fragile bundle of reflexes into an alert, curious infant. By toddlerhood, he or she begins to communicate needs through words and gestures—and eventually starts walking. Personality emerges as your child learns to recognize his or her own name, become aware of others and play and socialize.

As your child gets older, developmental changes become even more noticeable. From age two to the early school years, your child's vocabulary and imagination increase, spurring him or her to ask questions, tell stories and share ideas. By the end of age three, your child usually has an understanding of abstract concepts such as past, present and future. As long-term memory develops, your child learns to recite the alphabet and identify numbers and colors. Gradually, your child becomes more capable of self-evaluation, more interested in social interaction and more expressive with thoughts and emotions. He or she will giggle, sing, skip, gallop and saunter—and become capable of performing many activities at once.

Promoting Your Child's Growth at Critical Junctures

As a parent, you are the first and most prominent teacher in your child's life. To help you evaluate your child's progress over time and become aware of possible developmental delays, we have charted some general developmental milestones based upon age group norms for intellectual, social, emotional, lingual and physical growth. The developmental skill timelines that follow can assist you in nurturing and fostering your child's growth in critical periods of his or her life.

Keep in mind that children develop at different rates, therefore, these charts should serve as a guideline only. There are no hard and fast rules regarding a child's unique growth—you may find that your child fits in to several developmental stages. When planning activities to promote growth, try some of our suggested tips, gauging your selection upon your child's personality and capabilities, as well as your own comfort level. Use your imagination to experiment with alternative activities to stimulate your child's development.

Fetal Brain Development

When a fetus is just six weeks old, the brain begins to develop at a rapid rate—becoming wired with billions of neurons coded for functions such as vision, hearing, taste, touch, smell, muscle control, language, memory, thought, judgment, emotion and perception. Research indicates that processes similar to those that wire the brain in utero also guide the explosion of learning that occurs from birth to three years of age.

Post-Natal Stimuli Fine Tunes the Brain

Despite the rapid rate of brain development in utero, a baby's brain is not completely developed by birth. Rather, the many lobes of the brain initiate their primary functions, while additional functions continue to build over the course of the next three years of a child's life. A baby's sensory experiences after birth initiate trillions more connections within the first year—wiring the brain with informational pathways. Experts attribute the cultivation of brain matter to a child's external experiences and stimulation. With each experience, new connections are forged, and the original neurological matter is reshaped. In sum, every experience counts for a young child—the first years last forever.

Should you have questions or concerns regarding your child's development at any time, consult your pediatrician or a specialist. For more information on your child's growth and development, or if your child has been diagnosed with any particular special needs, consult other publications in the LifeCare® education series.

Birth to Three Months

Type of Development	Typical Skills	Tips to Stimulate Your Child's Growth
Cognitive development (Self-awareness, perception and thought processes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Observes his or her own hands. ◆ Looks to the place on his or her body where being touched. ◆ Begins to make simple associations (such as between crying and being fed). ◆ Is alert to stimuli like colors, patterns and shapes. ◆ Becomes aware of environmental stimuli. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Play music for your child. ◆ Use your child's name when you speak. ◆ Make or buy a colorful mobile to hang over your baby's bed (angled down so your baby can see it).
Social-Emotional Development (Cooperative interaction with others and expression of feelings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Expresses comfort and discomfort. ◆ Spontaneously smiles or cries. ◆ Demonstrates preference for familiar people. ◆ Responds emotively to familiar faces or voices. ◆ Quiets to holding and cuddling. ◆ Prefers the sight, smell and sound of the principal caregiver. ◆ Cries when in distress or pain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Talk, sing and play with your child frequently. ◆ Demonstrate a wide range of emotions. ◆ Be affectionate with your baby—hug, kiss and cuddle him or her frequently.
Language Acquisition (Ability to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Makes cooing sounds when happy. ◆ Communicates by grunting, whimpering or crying. ◆ Recognizes and turns toward the source of sound. ◆ Responds to speech by looking at the speaker. ◆ Thrusts arms and legs about awkwardly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use simple phrases and noises. ◆ Address your baby by name. ◆ Mimic your baby's melodic high-pitched speech style or sounds.
Gross and Fine Motor Skill Development (Large and small muscle control)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Brings closed fists to head (reflexive movements). ◆ Avoids brightness, strong smells, loud noises and pain. ◆ Legs straighten out from fetal position by one month and movements become smoother as nervous system develops. ◆ Opens/closes his or her hands. ◆ Grasps objects, such as fingers and hair. ◆ Swipes at dangling objects by third month. ◆ Moves both arms when lying on back. ◆ Raises head when lying on belly. ◆ Flexibility increases in hip/knee joints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Massage your baby's body lightly for stimulation. ◆ Support your baby's head and neck. ◆ Place a blanket on the floor and lay your baby on his or her belly. ◆ Cradle your infant and rock him or her slowly. ◆ Place your finger in the palm of your baby's hand to encourage grasping.
Neurological Reflexes (Automatic physical responses of a healthy central nervous system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Moro Reflex: When your infant is startled, he or she throws arms and legs outward while extending his or her neck. ◆ Rooting Reflex: When cheek is stroked, he or she turns toward hand or breast to be fed. ◆ Walking/Stepping Reflex: When the soles of his or her feet touch a surface, infant places one foot in front of the other. ◆ Tonic Neck Reflex: When your baby's head is turned to one side, the same arm straightens while the opposite arm bends. ◆ Palmar Grasp Reflex: When your baby's hand is stroked, he or she grasps your finger. ◆ Plantar Grasp Reflex: When the sole of your baby's foot is tickled, his or her foot flexes and toes curl. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Check-ups: Visit the doctor in the first and second month (doctors generally do not schedule a routine checkup in the third month) for a physical examination.

Three to Six Months

Type of Development	Typical Skills	Tips to Stimulate Your Child's growth
Cognitive Development (Self-awareness, perception and thought processes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stops sucking to listen to parent's voice. ◆ Clasps his or her hands together and plays with fingers. ◆ Responds to his or her image in the mirror. ◆ Distinguishes between familiar and unknown. ◆ Recognizes the primary caregiver in a group. ◆ Drops objects to watch parents pick them up. ◆ Anticipates whole object when only part of it is seen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Give your baby board books to hold and examine. ◆ Place a mirror in front of your baby. ◆ Applaud your child after each newly learned skill. ◆ Provide a stable caregiving schedule to reduce your baby's stranger anxiety.
Social-Emotional Development (Cooperative interaction with others and expression of feelings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Becomes interested in people; enjoys social smiles and mutual gazing. ◆ Shows displeasure by crying at a loss of social contact. ◆ Expresses clearly differentiated emotions: pleasure, anger, fear, excitement, joy, anxiety, curiosity and contentment. ◆ Laughs aloud; squeals. ◆ Becomes more assertive. ◆ Responds differently to various tones of voice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Interact with your baby face-to-face. ◆ Mimic sounds to show interest. ◆ Introduce your baby to family and friends for group interaction. ◆ Nurture your child. ◆ Use varying inflections. ◆ Phase out baby talk at around six months of age.
Language Acquisition (Ability to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Makes sounds when he or she hears other people talk. ◆ Responds to change in tone and inflection. ◆ Imitates changes in inflection. ◆ Responds to "no!" ◆ Looks around to identify the source of sounds. ◆ Begins to babble routinely—most sounds begin with the consonants "m" and "b." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use primarily adult intonation and language. ◆ Sing "The Itsy Bitsy Spider" or other favorite songs with accompanying hand gestures. ◆ Speak often to your baby using simple sentences.
Gross and Fine Motor Skill Development (Large and small muscle control)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reaches with arms and legs. ◆ Puts small objects in his or her mouth. ◆ Supports head, neck and upper torso when on his or her belly. ◆ Learns to shift his or her weight when lying down. ◆ Rolls over. ◆ Sits up with support. ◆ Shows more arm and leg strength. ◆ Holds finger foods and bottle. ◆ Grabs feet and brings them to his or her mouth. ◆ Swaps items from hand to hand at five months. ◆ Exhibits increased balance while seated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hold your baby upright, supporting all weight. ◆ Place your baby on his or her back and rotate legs as if pedaling. ◆ Place your child on stomach to encourage him or her to lift head. ◆ Move an object from side to side or place it at a distance to get your baby to reach for it. ◆ While changing your baby, always keep one hand on your child as he or she can wiggle away easily.
Neurological Reflexes (Automatic physical responses of a healthy central nervous system)	Persisting Reflexes (see previous page): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Rooting ◆ Tonic Neck ◆ Palmar Grasp ◆ Plantar Grasp 	Check-ups: Visit the doctor in the fourth and sixth months (doctors generally do not schedule a routine checkup in the fifth month) for a physical examination.

Six to Nine Months

Type of Development	Typical Skills	Tips to Stimulate Your Child's Growth
<p>Cognitive Development (Self-awareness, perception and thought processes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Perceives connections between behavior and outcomes. ◆ Begins to connect gestures with actions, such as waving "bye-bye." ◆ Memory becomes sharpened by playing hiding games, watching others and anticipating outcomes. ◆ Notices when someone leaves the room; anticipates his or her return. ◆ Recognizes his or her own name when spoken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Play games like "Peek-a-Boo" and "Pat-a-Cake" to stimulate your baby's memory skills. ◆ Ask simple questions. ◆ Change and label your facial expressions. ◆ Ask your baby to point to family members in the room including him or herself.
<p>Social-Emotional Development (Cooperative interaction with others and expression of feelings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ May react to strangers with soberness, anxiety or fear; buries head in parent's shoulder when meeting new people. ◆ Shows disappointment at loss of a toy. ◆ Responds favorably to children. ◆ Shows humor and laughs at funny facial expressions. ◆ Interacts with others by vocalizing after they speak. ◆ Is clear-eyed and alert. ◆ Imitates simple adult actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Promote imitation by mimicking each other. ◆ Have your baby peek in the mirror while you ask, "Who is that?" ◆ Have your baby sit in front of a mirror to coo at his or her image. ◆ Visit with other parents and their babies.
<p>Language Acquisition (Ability to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Engages in private babbling and cooing conversations. ◆ Attempts to imitate adult sounds. ◆ Learns to make new sounds by changing the shape of his or her mouth. ◆ Combines babbling sounds: "mama, dada" in one breath. ◆ Understands names of familiar people and objects. ◆ May test parents by refusing to follow directions. ◆ Raises arms to be picked up. ◆ Turns his or her head to familiar sounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Practice basic words and combine different sounds. ◆ Play music, read books and recite nursery rhymes. ◆ Enunciate words clearly to name objects and emotions. ◆ Encourage your baby to babble. ◆ Repeat sounds and gestures together by playing "Follow the Leader." ◆ Call your baby by name often.
<p>Gross and Fine Motor Skill Development (Large and small muscle control)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sits up without support. ◆ Reaches for objects in a raking motion while seated. ◆ Picks up objects with thumb and forefinger. ◆ Feeds him or herself finger foods. ◆ Rolls over in both directions. ◆ Scoots forward on belly, pushing with legs. ◆ Clasps hand around objects and bangs and/or throws them. ◆ Supports weight on legs and bounces when held upright. ◆ Gets into sitting position by pushing up with his or her arms. ◆ Rocks on all fours and may crawl. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lay your baby down on a blanket to practice reaching for toys, shifting weight, rolling and crawling. ◆ Hold your child upright and allow him or her to support his or her own weight on legs and bounce. ◆ Clap your hands. ◆ Provide rattles, teething rings and other baby-safe toys for fine motor play. ◆ Allow your baby to hold on to tables, chairs and people to practice standing.
<p>Neurological Reflexes (Automatic physical responses of a healthy central nervous system)</p>	<p>Persisting Reflexes (see page 3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Palmar Grasp ◆ Plantar Grasp 	<p>Check-ups: At six months, visit the doctor for a physical examination and immunizations.</p>

Nine to 12 Months

Type of Development	Typical Skills	Tips to Stimulate Your Child's Growth
Cognitive Development (Self-awareness, perception and thought processes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Knows his or her name. ◆ Smiles and plays with his or her image in the mirror. ◆ Plays independently for longer time spans. ◆ Begins to show possession of toys. ◆ Checks for caregiver's presence frequently. ◆ Has improved visual detail. ◆ Begins to associate objects with their functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Encourage simple tasks—like turning a page or retrieving an item—to promote listening and comprehension skills. ◆ Use facial cues to encourage or discourage specific actions. ◆ Reward your child's efforts even if he or she fails.
Social-Emotional Development (Cooperative interaction with others and expression of feelings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ May learn to assess and imitate others' moods. ◆ Imitates others' actions. ◆ Plays games like "Peek-a-Boo." ◆ Gleefully continues when applauded. ◆ Demonstrates jealousy of others. ◆ Begins to notice peers. ◆ Becomes aware of social approval/disapproval. ◆ Begins to define likes and dislikes. ◆ May use security blanket/item for comfort in unfamiliar places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use names frequently, including your baby's. ◆ Allow your child some time to play alone each day while you watch from a distance. ◆ Engage your baby with broad smiles or by laughing. ◆ Place your baby next to another baby for parallel play.
Language Acquisition (Ability to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Babbles using varied sounds. ◆ Turns when you call his or her name. ◆ Imitates gestures and sounds. ◆ Links a combination of words, gestures and sounds to meanings by age one. ◆ Responds to and utters simple concepts/words. ◆ Communicates need with words like: "no," "bottle," "milk," "mama." ◆ Understands and uses two to eight vocabulary words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Read stories every day. ◆ Present activity choices to your child. ◆ Continue to call your child by name regularly. ◆ Engage your child in conversation. ◆ Sing songs such as "Old MacDonald" to stimulate vocabulary development.
Gross and Fine Motor Skill Development (Large and small muscle control)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Puts objects in containers and takes them out. ◆ Enjoys toys with moving parts. ◆ Opens and closes doors. ◆ Stands holding onto furniture by one year old. ◆ Takes first supported steps. ◆ Sits up well. ◆ Learns to bend knees and sit down from a standing position. ◆ Becomes intrigued by tiny things. ◆ Holds large crayons. ◆ Grasps small food items. ◆ Feeds him or herself with a spoon. ◆ Likes to turn pages of a book. ◆ Begins to walk a few steps on his or her own—then stumbles and falls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Encourage your child to grasp your hands and stand or walk with assistance. ◆ Encourage your child to explore on his or her own. ◆ Tickle, share stories and snuggle before bed. ◆ Let your child play with baby-size cups and utensils. ◆ Color with large crayons and heavy paper. ◆ Expect your baby to try to achieve and fail; anticipate his or her disappointments.
Neurological Reflexes (Automatic physical responses of a healthy central nervous system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Most infant reflexes fade and are replaced with smoother voluntary actions and more precise involuntary responses. 	<p>Check-ups: At age one, go to the physician for a check-up to assess weight gain and motor skills.</p>

12 to 18 Months

Type of Development	Typical Skills	Tips to Stimulate Your Child's Growth
<p>Cognitive Development (Self-awareness, perception and thought processes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Will explore environment when he or she feels secure. ◆ Is aware of opportunities to make things happen with his or her own actions. ◆ Indicates strong sense of self through assertiveness. ◆ Directs actions of others. ◆ Identifies his or her own basic body parts. ◆ Identifies some objects upon request. ◆ Has limited attention span. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Name daily objects and activities so that associations can be made. ◆ Ask simple questions to stimulate the decision-making process. ◆ Offer limited choices. ◆ Provide age-appropriate puzzles. ◆ Hold eye contact to stimulate increased attention.
<p>Social-Emotional Development (Cooperative interaction with others and expression of feelings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Personality emerges. ◆ Actively demonstrates affection for familiar persons: runs toward, leans against and hugs them. ◆ Shows anxiety at separation from his or her primary caregiver. ◆ Focuses anger at people or objects—throws items as a result. ◆ Expresses negative feelings. ◆ Shows pride for new accomplishments or mastery. ◆ Plays alongside others but not with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide safe places for play. ◆ Get involved in a play group. ◆ Supervise safe play at a playground or sandbox. ◆ Talk about daily events, people or your home with your child. ◆ Label and discuss all emotions to increase your toddler's self-control and self-expression. ◆ Allow your child to spend quality time with others while you are present to reduce stranger anxiety.
<p>Language Acquisition (Ability to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Begins to use words to express needs. ◆ Understands more words than he or she can say. ◆ Identifies 20 or more familiar objects when named. ◆ Shakes head "no." ◆ Looks at picture books with interest. ◆ Communicates primarily through gestures. ◆ Enjoys rhymes and jingles. ◆ Understands several new words a day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Read books to your child. ◆ Sing songs and read nursery rhymes. ◆ Speak slowly, ask questions and give your child time to respond. ◆ Ask your child to name simple objects. ◆ Repetitively introduce new items for your child.
<p>Gross and Fine Motor Skill Development (Large and small muscle control)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Points with accuracy. ◆ Picks up items with thumb and index finger. ◆ Walks with feet wide apart—uses arms for balance. ◆ Holds up to three objects in hands. ◆ Dumps contents of containers. ◆ Stoops to pick up toys. ◆ Walks up steps; crawls down stairs. ◆ Pushes toys while walking. ◆ Learns to walk sideways and backwards. ◆ Walks more quickly when chased. ◆ Throws a ball. ◆ Drinks from a cup. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Allow your child to practice walking on his or her own. ◆ Have your child climb up (forward) and down (backward) steps to coordinate gross motor skills. ◆ Practice kicking and rolling large balls. ◆ Provide small toys for fine motor play. ◆ Play a variety of music for movement and enjoyment. ◆ Provide paper and crayons for coloring.
<p>Neurological Reflexes (Automatic physical responses of a healthy central nervous system)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Most infant reflexes fade and are replaced with smoother voluntary actions and more precise involuntary responses. 	<p>Check-ups: At 15 months, go to the doctor for vision, hearing and reflex exams.</p>

18 to 24 Months

Type of Development	Typical Skills	Tips to Stimulate Your Child's Growth
<p>Cognitive Development (Self-awareness, perception and thought processes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Demonstrates beginnings of sense of self (basic desires, needs, wishes) and says "no" to some adult requests. ◆ Experiences him or herself as a powerful doer. ◆ Grasps concept of "now." ◆ Explores everything in sight. ◆ May refer to him or herself by name. ◆ Differentiates between "you" and "me." ◆ Understands more about cause and effect, but not potential dangers. ◆ Focuses on key words and objects. ◆ Learns that everything has a name. Asks "What's that?" ◆ Recalls familiar people/objects when they are not around. ◆ Improves his or her memory skills and attention span. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Have conversations with your child. ◆ Pay attention to what your child expresses—children notice if you are not listening. ◆ Select books that encourage touching and pointing. ◆ Give choices. ◆ Create picture albums of family members to name. ◆ Show your child pictures of him or herself as a baby. ◆ Ask "yes-or-no" questions. ◆ Demonstrate confidence in your toddler. Allow him or her to work through challenges. ◆ Promote independence by encouraging individual play.
<p>Social-Emotional Development (Cooperative interaction with others and expression of feelings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Displays some aggressive behavior (temper tantrums). ◆ Experiences mood variations and shifts. ◆ Becomes more fearful as imagination develops. ◆ Begins to learn to verbally label emotions. ◆ Communicates desire for closeness and love. ◆ Is motivated by praise and attention. ◆ Recognizes others' feelings. ◆ Fears rejection. May be shy. ◆ Likes both solitary and group play. ◆ Asks for help, if needed. ◆ Helps put things away. ◆ Starts to understand toilet needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Take walks with your child and greet neighbors in your community. ◆ Encourage your child to have his or her own responsibilities, like putting away toys. ◆ Continue to congratulate your child's accomplishments and attempts. ◆ Begin to teach your child to say "please" and "thank you." ◆ Encourage your child to help you with tasks.
<p>Language Acquisition (Ability to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ May begin to utter "you," "me" and "my." ◆ Steadily increases vocabulary to approximately 100 to 200 words and combines words in three-word sentences. ◆ Says "no!" ◆ Listens to stories readily. Understands and responds to basic comprehension questions. ◆ Refers to him or herself by name. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Don't pressure your child to speak before he or she is ready. ◆ Be a model; always let your child hear the words that match your body language. ◆ Explain how things work in simple terms. ◆ Read to your child often.
<p>Gross and Fine Motor Skill Development (Large and small muscle control)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Walks with greater ease and can go up and down stairs with help. ◆ Unzips clothes. ◆ Paints with whole arm in motion. ◆ Balances block towers and knocks them down. ◆ Loves to inspect new objects and places. ◆ May try to climb out of bed. ◆ May try to take off his or her shoes/socks. ◆ Kicks a ball; throws overhand. ◆ Climbs into adult chairs. ◆ Pushes and pulls toys. ◆ Finger-paints, colors and plays with clay. ◆ Moves to musical rhythms. ◆ Prefers using one hand versus the other. ◆ Puts on shoes—often on the wrong feet. ◆ Runs, walks, sits and stands with greater fluidity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Play "Follow the Leader." ◆ Make a basic obstacle course to improve coordination. ◆ Play movement games like "Ring-Around-the-Rosie." ◆ Provide large crayons or finger paints and paper. ◆ String beads. ◆ Paste collages. ◆ Play with large and small outdoor balls. ◆ Play at a playground. ◆ Go on nature walks and collect rocks, sticks, shells or feathers. ◆ Run together at a park or beach.
<p>Neurological Reflexes (Automatic physical responses of a healthy central nervous system)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Infant reflexes fade and are replaced by voluntary actions such as the fine pincer grasp of thumb to index finger. ◆ Smooth coordination replaces mass reflexes. 	<p>Check-ups: At 18 months, visit the doctor for a physical examination.</p>

2 to 2½ Years

Type of Development	Typical Skills	Tips to Stimulate Your Child's Growth
<p>Cognitive Development (Self-awareness, perception and thought processes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is aware when being evaluated by others. ◆ Begins to learn cooperation. ◆ Identifies self with children of the same age/gender. ◆ Begins to perceive others' feelings. ◆ Begins to problem solve, count and classify objects regularly. ◆ Matches and uses associated objects. ◆ Listens carefully to what others say. ◆ Asks "why" questions to understand how things work. ◆ Enjoys small group activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Don't draw attention to your child's difficulties in any skill ◆ Provide reassurance that your child is special and loved. ◆ Provide puzzles and matching card games. ◆ Promote your child's independence by allowing private play time. ◆ Encourage symbolic imaginative play with dolls, toys or stuffed animals.
<p>Social-Emotional Development (Cooperative interaction with others and expression of feelings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sympathizes with others' feelings. ◆ Expresses feelings in brief symbolic interactive play. ◆ Begins to share and cooperate. ◆ May act manipulative or bossy (tests independence). ◆ Trusts adults. ◆ Acts sociable—imitates older children. ◆ Assumes everyone thinks and acts like he or she does. ◆ May show signs of jealousy or revert to immature behavior if a new baby arrives. ◆ Begins to develop the concept of a "friend." ◆ Is more interested and concerned with family members and siblings. ◆ Demonstrates frustration at not being understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Label relevant emotions (yours, sibling's and child's) to promote speech and emotional control. ◆ Make a scrapbook of facial expressions and label emotions (happy, sad, etc.). ◆ Praise your child for any successful toileting. ◆ Help your child learn to share. ◆ Encourage your child to initiate activities on his or her own. ◆ Encourage your child to initiate play with other children.
<p>Language Acquisition (Ability to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has a vocabulary of approximately 200 to 300 words. ◆ Develops fantasy through language. ◆ Plays pretend games aloud. ◆ Makes negative statements. ◆ Understands use of household items. ◆ Follows two requests strung together. ◆ Speaks three to four words in succession. ◆ Can sustain a conversation with an adult. ◆ Uses pronouns regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Encourage your child to speak. Do not expect perfect diction. ◆ Slow down your own speech, to help your child slow his or hers. ◆ Provide reassurance and help when necessary. ◆ Read to your child regularly.
<p>Gross and Fine Motor Skill Development (Large and small muscle control)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sits at the table and in the car appropriately. ◆ Steadily runs everywhere. ◆ Jumps in place. ◆ Stands on one foot with aid. ◆ Enjoys dancing to music. ◆ Walks up and down stairs. ◆ Coordinates movements of the wrist and palm; unscrews lids. ◆ Begins using child-safe scissors. ◆ Holds crayon with thumb and fingers. ◆ Enjoys playing on a playground. ◆ Can pedal a small tricycle. ◆ Walks on tiptoes. ◆ Draws a circle. ◆ Counts steps. Jumps off last one. ◆ Begins to dress and undress him or herself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Assist with outdoor playground play—help your child swing, go down the slide, etc. ◆ Let your child push the stroller. ◆ Climb stairs holding your child's hands. ◆ Play "Simon Says." ◆ Play with clay or papier maché. ◆ Encourage your child to play simple musical instruments. ◆ Encourage marching and clapping in rhythm. ◆ Teach your child to brush teeth, comb hair, and go to the toilet; reinforce progress.
<p>Neurological Reflexes (Automatic physical responses of a healthy central nervous system)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Infant reflexes fade and are replaced by voluntary actions such as the fine pincer grasp of thumb to index finger. ◆ Smooth coordination replaces mass reflexes. 	<p>Check-ups: Visit the doctor for a two-year examination including blood work, a skin test, vision and hearing exams, a growth assessment and an informal evaluation of physical and intellectual development.</p>

2½ to 3 Years

Type of Development	Typical Skills	Tips to Stimulate Your Child's Growth
<p>Cognitive Development (Self-awareness, perception and thought processes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Becomes capable of self-evaluation. ◆ Calls him or herself and others by name. ◆ Can identify six or more body parts. ◆ Exhibits increased impulse control and self-regulation. ◆ Understands the relationship between objects. ◆ Remembers story plots and characters. ◆ Knows his or her own age but does not comprehend the concept of time. ◆ Begins to understand past, present and future. ◆ Counts to ten. ◆ Names some colors. ◆ Understands the concept of "pretend." ◆ Remembers some songs or nursery rhymes. ◆ Has improved attention span. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Play make-believe games, such as "house." ◆ Let your child look through books and magazines. ◆ Do art projects together. ◆ Name the color of things. ◆ Count everything. ◆ Act out stories or songs for your child. ◆ Ask your child to tell you his or her full name, address, etc. ◆ Have your child anticipate the story-lines of familiar books or videos. ◆ Ask your child about his or her day.
<p>Social-Emotional Development (Cooperative interaction with others and expression of feelings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Expresses emotions with increasing control. ◆ Wants to be included in group activities. ◆ Asserts him or herself more frequently. ◆ Shows pride in creation and production. ◆ Shows interest in new experiences. ◆ Realizes what is and is not acceptable behavior. ◆ Feels guilt or shame when scolded. ◆ May dislike sharing attention. ◆ Looks forward to social interaction (play groups/preschool). ◆ May have an imaginary friend. ◆ Is more independent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Give puppet shows together to stimulate imagination. ◆ Teach your child to dress him or herself one article at a time, using a full-length mirror hung at your child's height. ◆ Grow plants together. ◆ Cook together. ◆ Label feelings for your child—especially in times of distress.
<p>Language Acquisition (Ability to communicate thoughts and feelings effectively)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has vocabulary of roughly 900 words. ◆ Speaks in compound sentences. Uses adverbs and adjectives descriptively. ◆ Learns verb tense and pluralization. ◆ Differentiates between word meanings. ◆ Understands the functions of familiar objects. ◆ Asks and responds to basic "who, what and where" questions. ◆ Identifies cause and effect. ◆ Understands concrete forms of verbal humor. ◆ Discusses experiences. ◆ Carries out two to three verbal directions in a row. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Listen and talk to your child. ◆ Ask your child to tell you about interesting experiences. ◆ Ask your child about specific friends. ◆ Teach your child a rhyme or a joke to tell others. ◆ Ask your child about his or her dreams. ◆ Make up stories together, write them down and draw accompanying pictures.
<p>Gross and Fine Motor Skill Development (Large and small muscle control)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Manipulates child-safe scissors. ◆ Threads beads. ◆ Scribbles with a marker/crayon. ◆ Imitates a vertical or horizontal crayon stroke. ◆ Completes a simple jigsaw puzzle. ◆ Uses a heel-to-toe walking gait. ◆ Gallops, trots and jumps. ◆ Alternates feet when walking upstairs. ◆ Crouches without falling. ◆ Can complete multiple actions while walking. ◆ Draws circles, crosses and squares. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Teach your child to ride a tricycle. ◆ Play catch with a small ball to improve eye-hand coordination. ◆ Dance freely with your child. ◆ Have your child walk on tiptoes and hop on one leg to improve balance. ◆ Run noncompetitive races. ◆ During the summer, provide a sprinkler for outdoor play in a grassy area.
<p>Neurological Reflexes (Automatic physical responses of a healthy central nervous system)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Infant reflexes fade and are replaced by voluntary actions such as the fine pincer grasp of thumb to index finger. ◆ Smooth coordination replaces mass reflexes. 	<p>Check-ups: Visit the dentist every six months beginning at age three. Go for an annual physical examination at age three.</p>

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