



# WYOMING EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES

For Children Ages 0-3



Brought to you by: Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council



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# ABOUT

This Publication



**Over the past thirty years, national researchers and advocacy groups have studied the critical period of birth to three years. Throughout the research, attention was placed on the importance of building a strong foundation for very young children and supporting parents and providers with resources and guidance to ensure the best outcomes for each child's lifetime success.**

## Wyoming Context

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Wyoming's legislatures and Governors have supported the development of a system for very young children that places parents at the center of care for their children. With the creation of the WY Quality Counts program administered by the Department of Workforce Services, parents and child care providers have access to information, resources, and activities to support young children's development. In addition, the Department of Family Services funds a child care resource and referral network to support parents in receiving information on availability of licensed care.

Wyoming has a unique system for early care and education, with services developed for infants and toddlers at the local community level. Early intervention services under Part C and Part B/619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are delivered through Child Development Centers in 14 regions across the state. Families can receive services that support developmental screenings, including mental health, from their local intervention system. The majority of these services are provided in the home so that families can be involved in developing functional goals with pediatric therapists.

Wyoming's health care system also provides services for nutrition through Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) system, and health services through KidCare (CHIP program), Public Health's Best Beginnings and Nurse Family Partnership program. Additional resources for families with infants and toddlers include: the non-profit organization Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc., which administers the Parent Information Center and the Parent Education Network; and Parents as Teachers, which is offered in four counties (Albany, Fremont, Natrona and Sweetwater) with the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting grant and is administered by the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel, a statewide non-profit organization.

Early Head Start programs in Wyoming provide comprehensive services in nine communities to families with very low incomes. Early Head Start services include: physical, mental, and dental health, nutrition, and safety, and child development all within a family engagement and cultural and linguistic responsiveness framework. On average annually the Early Head Start Programs serve between 500–550 infants and toddlers with 20–35 pregnant women receiving services. The Child Care Development Fund also provides additional support for infants and toddlers who are in home or center care. In addition, Wyoming's Child Care Facility Licensing requires an Infant-Toddler Certification for directors working with young children. The majority of children under age three are being served in homes with family friend and neighbor care due to the limited availability of licensed group care.

There was a desire to ensure resources and materials were available in local communities so these primary caregivers could have information on child development and activities to support growth. This included ensuring that the rich Native American heritage through the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes and a growing diversity in the number of families, who are primarily Latino, are represented in the document. Since Wyoming is also the home of F.E. Warren Air Force Base and the National Guard, many families in the military also reside in communities across our state and have a need for information on local and state services.

Wyoming Early  
Learning Guidelines  
for Children Ages 0–3

# INTRODUCTION



**The Early Learning Guidelines offer parents, caregivers, early childhood professionals, and policy makers a set of guidelines about development and early learning. This document provides information about what to look for as a baby grows and develops and how to nurture natural learning patterns and abilities in everyday activities and routines. Young children’s learning comes from the discoveries they make through play, in the context of caring relationships, rather than through structured lessons.**

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The Early Learning Guidelines describe characteristics, skills, and knowledge we want all children in Wyoming to develop, and reflect the unique culture and diversity of the state. The guidelines are divided into five age spans:

- Birth to 6 months
- 6 to 12 Months
- 12 to 18 Months
- 18 to 24 Months
- 24 to 36 Months

Within each age range, development is presented sequentially. However, we cannot stress enough that these are only guidelines. In looking at each child as a unique individual, no single baby will follow the exact pattern of development laid out in these guidelines. These are meant to provide a road map of what infants and toddlers are working on at a given stage, what caregivers can do to support growth, and when to seek intervention if needed.

## WITHIN EACH AGE SPAN, FOUR DISTINCT AREAS OR DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT ARE COVERED:

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**COMMUNICATION**—including understanding of the meaning of feelings and ideas expressed by others, the ability to express self, and the foundations of reading and writing.



**CURIOS MINDS**—including developing wonder and curiosity, simple problem-solving, creative self-expression, cause and effect, and developing memory skills.



**SENSE OF SELF AND RELATIONSHIPS**—including learning about self as a unique individual, the ability to express feelings/wants/needs, and the foundations of social skills.



**STRONG AND HEALTHY BODIES**— including the use and control of the body, hand-eye coordination, and the growing awareness of meeting basic needs.

Each domain has developmental benchmarks or **WHAT TO LOOK FOR** items followed by **PLAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT GROWTH**. Parents and caregivers can implement these strategies to promote development and learning. These activities are meant to be easy to include into everyday routines and to be fun for a variety of ages.

**DIGGING DEEPER** boxes are woven throughout the document to provide opportunities to gain deeper insights into areas critical to young children’s growth and development. In addition, there are resources and websites provided to enhance further study.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES<sup>1</sup>

**Broad principles about how infants and toddlers grow, develop, and learn have guided the development of these guidelines. Keeping these principles in mind will help you see each child as a whole person who is part of a family, community, and culture. These principles in turn suggest broad practices to be carried out by all adults who work with infants and toddlers. Each guiding principle is presented below with the major practices and actions it suggests. By following these principles and practices, you will make it possible for each child to develop to full potential.**

## Principle One

***Nurturing and responsive relationships are essential for healthy growth and development.***

Relationships with sensitive, caring adults are a must for children's development in all domains. Children develop strong emotional bonds, or secure attachments, with trusted adults. In fact, nurturing relationships promote healthy brain development. Infants and toddlers are much more likely to thrive when they have at least one close, secure relationship with a loving adult. These relationships can be with anyone who is a regular part of a child's life. It might be a parent, family member, teacher, or caregiver. All are important.

Caring relationships help infants and toddlers develop social skills and learn about their feelings. When infants and toddlers feel secure with their caregivers, they feel free to explore their world. This hands-on exploration helps them to learn. When a sensitive adult helps a toddler just enough to finish a challenging activity, the toddler develops problem-solving skills and self-confidence. Children's interest in the people they care about leads them to watch and listen to these adults, which helps them learn words.

Research even suggests that positive nurturing can make a child less vulnerable to stress, depression, and anxiety. All development takes place in the context of relationships. The characteristics described in these guidelines develop best when infants and toddlers have secure relationships with the adults who care for them.

### PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE ONE

*Build positive relationships with children. Support positive relationships between children and all the important adults in their lives.*

Nothing is more important for infant and toddler development than the relationships adults build with the children in their care. To form these relationships, respond sensitively to children's communication and feelings. Pay attention to their strengths, needs, and interests. Keep expectations flexible. During a hectic day, it is sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Used with permission from the *Infant and Toddler Foundations: Guidelines for development and learning for North Carolina's Infants and Toddlers (birth to 36 months)*. (2008). Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Child Development.

easy to focus mostly on completing activities, transitions, and routines, reaching particular learning goals, or managing children's behavior. Make relationships the first priority. All other goals then become easier to reach. Children are more motivated and able to participate in activities and follow guidance when they care about and trust their caregivers. The strategies suggested in this publication promote strong, loving relationships with infants and toddlers.

Parents and home environments have a major impact on children's development. Strengthen the relationships between children and their family members. Begin by forming supportive relationships with families. Communicate

daily with families about each child's care. Exchange information and suggestions and work as a team.

Sharing these guidelines can be a starting point to build relationships with families. Focus on the positive and affirm families' commitment to their children. These steps can be especially helpful for families who are raising children with disabilities. Some children do not respond to positive interactions in ways parents expect or hope they will. Your support can help parents continue their efforts and encourage them to try another approach. This support gives families confidence in their ability to raise healthy, happy, successful children.

## Principle Two

***Each child develops within a culture.***

Culture influences how people think about children's development and learning.

Members of each culture share beliefs, attitudes, and values about what is good for young children. A child's culture may seem obvious due to race or ethnic origin, but culture is much more than these obvious differences. It influences all aspects of everyday life, such as how people talk and listen and how they carry out daily routines.

Adults help children become successful members of their culture. Adults let children know what they value and how to behave. Success may mean different things in different cultures. Children's culture influences how they develop and learn. It may influence how they respond to the strategies and activities suggested in this publication. Wyoming is home to families and children from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Knowing each child's cultural background will help teachers and caregivers use these guidelines appropriately.

*A child's culture may seem obvious due to race or ethnic origin, but culture is much more than these obvious differences. It influences all aspects of everyday life, such as how people talk and listen and how they carry out daily routines.*

### **PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE TWO**

***Respect and value the diversity of children and families.***

Families from diverse cultures have varied hopes and expectations for their children. Culture also affects how families view children with disabilities and what they want for these children. Show respect for families by asking about their goals for their children and listening to what they tell you. Listening can lead to an understanding of the family's goals. Recognize that what feels "normal" and "right" may be different for different families. There are many ways to raise healthy, happy, successful children.

Help infants and toddlers feel secure and comfortable by providing care that is as much like home as possible. Include materials and activities from the cultures of the children and families in the group. Understand and support each child's culture and way of learning. "Correcting" behaviors and practices that are culturally based can confuse children and hurt their sense of self. Work with families to help children whose first language is not English to continue speaking their home language as they learn English. Most of all, think of the diversity of children and families as something to celebrate. Help all children to understand and enjoy the wonderful variety of people who are part of the human race.

## Principle Three

***Each child is unique.***

Although these guidelines describe what most young children from birth to 3 are likely to be learning and experiencing, each child is different. A wide range of abilities and behaviors is normal for children of the same age. A child may advance quickly in one area and proceed more slowly in another. Different children also have different temperaments. One child may be eager to try new things and meet new people, while another may hang back and need more support from a trusted adult before joining an activity or meeting a stranger. A young child with a disability may be very much like her peers in some ways and very different in others.

### **PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE THREE**

*Respect each child and work to meet his or her unique needs.*

Observe each child carefully to learn about his individual development, needs, interests, and temperament. Use these guidelines to pinpoint what each child is learning to do right now. Then choose strategies that are likely to support his efforts. This means keeping each child in mind when planning the routines of the day, creating activities, and adding materials to the environment.

Use what is learned from observing children to guide interactions with each child. Show you understand each child's language, behavior, and feelings. For children who have delays or disabilities, work with families and other professionals to make and carry out formal plans to meet their needs. An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is written for a child with a disability and his family. A health care plan is written for a child with a chronic health condition like asthma or food allergies. Carry out these plans as part of daily activities and routines.

## Principle Four

***Each child develops as a whole.***

Children's bodies, feelings, thinking skills, language, social skills, and love of learning all develop together. The guidelines in this document are divided into different domains and areas of development to make them easier to read and think about. In the child's life, they cannot be separated; a child develops and grows in all domains at once. Each new ability or skill builds on earlier ones. Each new ability or skill also helps the child develop in more than one domain.

For example, a young toddler learns to look for her mother's reaction to a noisy new toy. This shows that she trusts her mother and feels secure with her (Emotional and Social Development). She may also learn the name of the toy by looking at and listening to her mother talk about it (Language Development and Communication). The toddler also knows that her mother's face and body can tell her "try this toy" or "don't touch this toy." This knowledge will help to keep her safe and healthy in unfamiliar situations (Health and Physical Development). Similar guidelines sometimes appear in more

than one domain or area. This overlap occurs on purpose. It shows that development in one area is connected to development in other areas.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF A MEDICAL HOME

*All infants and toddlers should receive regular health care. Immunizations protect against life-threatening illnesses. Well-child visits help identify health or developmental needs that may require regular intervention services. Having a medical home means the child sees the same health provider regularly. A health provider who sees a child regularly is more likely to see anything out of the ordinary or notice any changes. This is one reason why a “medical home” is so important for infants and toddlers.*

#### PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE FOUR

*Promote the development of the whole child.*

Use activities, materials, and daily routines to support children’s development in all areas. To help children be ready for school, focus on their emotional and social development, health, and attitudes about learning. These contribute to

future learning and success. Children’s basic knowledge and thinking and communication skills also contribute. No one area is more important than another.

Strategies listed under “Play Activities to Support Growth” in one domain will help children to develop in other domains as well.

For example, use diapering as a special one-on-one time with a baby. This builds a secure relationship, a foundation for emotional and social development. The diapering routine also promotes cognitive development by helping the baby anticipate what comes next. Talking during diapering promotes language development by helping the baby to connect what is happening with the words for common objects and events.

Observe each child’s health daily and encourage each family to take their child to see the same health care provider regularly. These steps reduce the chance that health and physical problems will interfere with a child’s learning and development later. Remember, and remind parents and policymakers, that being ready for school involves much more than knowing colors, shapes, numbers, and letters.

## Principle Five

***Development begins before birth and continues throughout life.***

These guidelines focus on development between birth and 3 years. However, the infant’s body, brain, and abilities develop in amazing ways before he is born. Development in all areas—as well as in the brain—continues through the infant and toddler years into the preschool years and beyond.

An accurate picture of development does not focus only on the infant-toddler years. This focus begins too late and ends too soon, according to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. These guidelines cover a significant part in a child’s development, but they only lay the foundation for the growth and learning yet to come. As parents, caregivers, teachers, and policy makers, it is important to help children become lifelong learners.

#### PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE FIVE

*Promote prenatal care and education. Help children and families make smooth transitions. Strengthen programs for children of all ages.*

Prenatal care supports the health and well-being of a mother and her baby. The health of the mother and the family directly affect the infant’s development before birth. Families affected by depression, violence, or substance abuse need early treatment. Prenatal care supports the health of the family and the child developing in the womb.

Provide emotional support to families. Tell them about the benefits of prenatal care and healthy practices. Advocate for improved prenatal care and education programs in your community. These steps will help babies come into

## Guiding Principles & Practices *(continued)*

### Principle Five continued

the world ready to continue developing and learning as described in these guidelines.

Help children and families make a smooth transition when they leave infant/toddler programs. Work with preschool teachers and caregivers to promote programs that recognize and meet the needs of each child. High-quality

programs for preschoolers and older children build on the foundation created in the first three years. Work with other advocates to improve programs and schools for all children in your community. Children will reach their full potential only when high-quality environments, caring relationships, and effective teaching continue throughout their childhood.

### Principle Six

***Development occurs in predictable patterns.***

Even though each child develops at her own pace, there are predictable steps or stages of development. One ability or skill usually develops before another one. The earlier achievement forms the foundation for the later one. For example, most children sit up, crawl, pull to stand, “cruise” along furniture, and then walk independently. Children vary a great deal, however, in when and how they reach each stage. One child may progress quickly from a “belly crawl” to cruising and walking. Another child, with a quiet temperament, may be content to sit and explore toys that are within reach and begin walking rather late. A third child, with a physical disability, may need physical therapy and special equipment to help him walk. All three children eventually progress to walking in their own way and at their own time. These guidelines describe the typical steps in a young child’s development. There will be differences in the way children achieve these steps.

*Wyoming offers free screenings for children from birth through 5 at the Child Development Centers. It is considered essential to have at least one developmental screening before the age of five and ideal to have one before the age of two. Call toll free [866] 996-5437 or visit [cdswy.org](http://cdswy.org) to find a center near you.*

#### **PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE SIX**

***Know typical patterns of development and be able to recognize variations.***

Develop a thorough knowledge of the steps and stages of development. These guidelines outline typical patterns, but it is important to learn more about child development. Deeper knowledge leads to reasonable expectations for children. Creating environments and experiences that are appropriate for young children depends upon knowledge and application of child development principles. Understanding the typical patterns of development helps you to know the “next step” for each child.

Learn about the many ways that development is unique to each child. Be able to recognize variations within the range of normal development. Know when to ask for further evaluation to find out if a child has a possible delay or disability.

# Principle Seven

*Infants and toddlers are active learners and they learn through play.*

Infants and toddlers are ready to learn from birth. They learn best in safe environments where they can be actively involved in experiences that interest them. Children respond to what excites them and gives them pleasure. This stimulates them to move on to new discoveries.

To learn about the world and about what they can do, infants and toddlers must be able to play with toys and materials. They do not need special or expensive toys to help them develop and learn. What they need is time to explore the everyday world with all of their senses and to move their bodies freely. Children who have disabilities learn to explore in ways that work well for them. They may explore in different ways from their typically developing peers. Some children need prompting or coaching from adults to play and explore. These guidelines describe how infants and toddlers develop in settings where they can move about and explore their world for much of the day.

**Decide what comes next for baby in different areas and create opportunities to play and develop those abilities and skills.**

Young children learn through play. Play includes activities that are freely chosen by the child, and are meaningful and enjoyable. Infants and young toddlers often repeat actions that help them discover what objects are like and what their bodies can do. Later in the toddler years, play begins to be more symbolic. It becomes a way for children to show what they know and remember and to try out new roles. This kind of play helps children develop thinking skills and early literacy skills. As older toddlers begin to play together, they learn from one another and start to develop the social skills they will need for success in school and later in life. The strategies in this publication suggest many ways to help infants and toddlers develop and learn through play.

## PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE SEVEN

*Set up environments to encourage active exploration and play. Inform parents, colleagues, and policymakers about the importance of active learning and play.*

High-quality infant-toddler environments encourage exploration and play. Create a daily schedule that includes plenty of time for children to choose what they want to do. Plan activities, but do not require all children to participate. Place an assortment of materials where infants and toddlers can reach them. Arrange different spaces so children can move around and explore safely. Allow infants and toddlers to be on the floor for most of the day. Do not confine them in swings, bouncy seats, or playpens for long periods of time. Infants and toddlers also learn from their active involvement in caregiving routines. For example, they can experience textures of foods during mealtime and learn to separate trash from dishes to be washed during cleanup.

Setting up the environment and completing routines is not enough, however. Children learn more when adults get involved in their play. Notice what infants and toddlers are doing and respond to their interests. Help children pursue the things they are interested in, listen to them and answer questions, and talk about what they are doing. Show toddlers how to play together and resolve conflicts. For children whose disabilities make it harder for them to explore and play with other children, bring the environment to them. Show children new possibilities and skills and draw other children into play with those who have disabilities.

Tell others about the role of active exploration and play in children's learning. All parents, colleagues, and policymakers share the goal of preparing children to succeed in school. Some may believe that the best way to do this is to provide school-like experiences earlier in life. Be prepared to explain how active exploration and play are, in fact, better ways to help children prepare for school.

## Principle Eight

*All children are children first.*

Many infants and toddlers develop in ways that are not seen as “typical” for their age. They may have a disability or be delayed in reaching some milestones of development. They may be “at risk” for delays due to poverty, premature birth, abuse or neglect, or other circumstances. They may have special health care needs. Some infants and toddlers may need extra time or assistive technology to complete activities that other children do easily.

All children develop in their own unique way, as part of a family, community, and culture. They thrive on positive relationships and time to play with adults and other children. They are motivated to learn about and influence the world around them. Children with disabilities and other special circumstances will make progress on the abilities and skills listed in this document, but they may do so at different ages and in different ways than other children.

### **PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE EIGHT**

*Promote inclusion and high quality inclusive settings for all children.*

High-quality infant-toddler programs include all children and celebrate each child’s strengths. Anyone who works with infants, toddlers, and families is likely to have a child with a disability or other special need in their group at some point. According to a 2005 survey by Partnership for Inclusion, child care providers reported that 3.54% of the children in their programs had a delay or disability.

Learn new skills and strategies as needed to work with children in your group. Prepare the environment to be accessible to each child and encourage positive interactions among all children. The effort required to reach these goals benefits every child. Children with disabilities learn appropriate behaviors and new skills from their peers, who act as role models. All children in the program learn to appreciate the strengths and gifts of people with different abilities.

# Principle Nine

*Everyone in a child's life plays a role in his development.*

Relationships with family members, caregivers, and teachers provide the foundation for young children's development. However, many other people in a child's community also play a role in nurturing that development. People who administer early care and education programs set policies for their organizations. They supervise staff and emphasize the goals they believe are most important. Primary health providers monitor children's health. They are the experts many families turn to with questions about a child's development.

Lawmakers and other community leaders decide how to spend public money. They pass laws and make rules that affect the quality of the programs. Charitable programs and organizations fund programs that help infants and toddlers. Collaboration – or lack of collaboration – among different people and organizations affects the success of programs that support young children and their families.

Decisions made by people in these roles can affect the health and wellness of parents and caregivers. This in turn impacts the well-being of infants and toddlers. These guidelines focus on things parents and caregivers can do day to day to support young children's development and learning. However, many other people and organizations affect how well caregivers are able to realize their hopes and dreams for children.

## PRACTICES FOR PRINCIPLE NINE

*Work together with colleagues, families, administrators, policymakers, and communities to support young children's development.*

Individuals who work with infants and toddlers have a special responsibility to make others aware of how very young children develop. Use these guidelines as a starting point to educate people in the community about infant and toddler development. Explain the resources that are needed to support infant and toddler programs. This may be as simple as talking to a co-worker about appropriate infant and toddler practices. Or it may involve writing letters or attending public meetings. Learn about the services available in your community. Speak out for children! If you are an administrator, consider staff wellness when making decisions about your program. Staff members who are healthy and not under stress are more likely to provide the sensitive, caring interactions young children need. Use these Early Learning Guidelines for staff development. Share them with families.

Consider family needs as well as children's needs when setting goals and policies. All of these steps will help teachers and families to form positive relationships with infants and toddlers. Although parents, caregivers, and teachers have the daily responsibility for providing the support and the challenges that young children need to develop and learn, they cannot do it alone. They must have the support of their administrators, policy makers, and communities to achieve these goals.

Using the Wyoming 0–3

# EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES



It is important for everyone using the Wyoming Early Learning Guidelines to understand the Guiding Principles and to use this publication appropriately.

## THE WYOMING 0–3 EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES ARE USED TO:

- Provide a common set of guidelines for development and learning
- Recognize individual differences between infants and toddlers
- Promote shared responsibility for very young children’s care and education
- Support high-quality environments and experiences for all infants and toddlers
- Educate professionals, families, policy makers, and communities about the importance of the first three years of life and the contribution of the adults who work with very young children
- Support appropriate caregiving and teaching practices in infant and toddler programs
- Provide a guide for observing young children’s development and learning

## THE WYOMING 0–3 EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES ARE NOT USED:

- As an assessment checklist
- As a curriculum
- Instead of a developmental screening
- To deny access to programs or services
- To emphasize outcomes without recognizing the need for high-quality programs to promote those outcomes
- To create expectations or requirements for programs that conflict with other standards child care providers must follow
- To discredit the values, beliefs, or culture of any family



# HOW TO READ THE GUIDELINES

1

## KEY IDEAS

A table follows with Key Ideas including critical areas within each Domain. The Early Learning Foundations (presented under **WHAT TO LOOK FOR** in this document) describe knowledge and skills for each Key Idea.

2

## DIGGING DEEPER

Digging Deeper sections elaborate on Key Ideas presented within Domains and the Looking Ahead boxes describe knowledge and skills that children will be learning in kindergarten.

Key Ideas **BIRTH TO 6 MONTHS**

**"BABY TALK"**

Known as *Motherese*, *Mommy Talk* or *Daddy Talk*, or more formally as *infant-directed speech*, baby talk is characterized by short, simple sentences delivered in a high-pitched, sing-songy voice. Words are also dragged out, and each word of a sentence tends to be clearly spoken. Baby talk is often paired with exaggerated physical movements or facial expressions that grab the baby's attention.

Lead researcher Erik D. Thissen, PhD, of Carnegie Mellon University says infants learned words about 25% faster when exposed to baby talk. "Parents often hear that if they want their infant to grow up speaking like an adult they should talk to them like they are adults," Thissen tells WebMD. "But it turns out that talking to babies in this special way, as mothers have been doing for centuries, is pretty effective for learning language."

From "Baby Talk May Help Infants Learn Faster" by Sayoni Royce, WebMD Health News, March 18, 2015.

**LITERACY**

The foundations of reading and writing (literacy) begin in infancy. Infants and toddlers explore books, listen to songs and nursery rhymes, hear stories, draw and scribble as they build their literacy abilities.

**What to look for:**

- Looks at pictures of familiar faces or babies
- Listens to repetition of words, songs, or rhymes
- Enjoys listening to caregiver read out loud while sitting on caregiver's lap and looking at pictures

**Play activities to support growth:**

- Look at books with pictures of babies and family members. Name the people for baby, such as, "Here is Grandma."
- Sing simple songs and lullabies. Make up rhymes using baby's name and/or activities. Example: "Mommy puts on Kendra's blue sock, blue sock, blue sock. Kendra wears a blue smock, blue smock. Now Kendra's going to rock."
- Read to baby daily. Label objects and actions in book.
  - "See baby, she's smiling."
  - "Look at the cow. The cow is eating hay."

**DIGGING DEEPER**

**Early Language Development**

Children's language development is complex and multidimensional. Children are born to communicate and prefer speech to other environmental sounds. Children also begin to comprehend language about twice as fast as they are able to produce it. Therefore, it is important that adults engage children in conversation from birth.

Children's first speech sounds appear around 2-4 months. Children will coo, babble and cry to communicate a message. The first sounds produced are often vowel like sounds, such as "oo" and consonant-vowel combinations such as "babababa." Babbling appears to be a universal speech pattern. Even deaf babies exposed to sign language will babble with their hands. During this early stage of language development, children also learn the non-verbal aspects of communication such as turn-taking and eye contact. For example, a child will take turns cooing with an adult and/or look away from the adult when they are overstimulated by the conversational interaction.

Children's first words are limited by the amount of sounds they can produce. For example, first words

are the easiest sounds to produce and start with consonants and end with vowels such as "mama" and "dada." At about 10-12 months, children will begin to produce single words that often consist of one-word sentences. A one-word sentence might be "mine" or "go." One word sentences are accompanied by emotion and gesture. For example, children might use the word "go" forcefully and then point where they'd like to go.

As children develop, their one-word sentences will shift into two-word sentences that consist of a noun or a verb. For example, "all gone" or "go outside" are common two-word sentences. Children will also begin to use descriptive labels such as "big dog" or "red ball." Around age 2, children begin to produce multi-word sentences that have a subject and predicate. These early sentences are called "telegraphic speech" because they focus on the important words leaving out the smaller words. For example, children might state "my doll gone" or "want more milk" using salient words to get their message across.

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION

11

Wyoming Early Learning Guidelines for Children Ages 0-3

12

15



# COMMUNICATION

language + literacy

# BIRTH TO 6 MONTHS

## Key Ideas



### LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION (Receptive Language)

Understanding the meaning of feelings and ideas expressed by others. Increased vocabulary development.

*(Applies to child's and family's native language, and the language in which the child is fluent, including sign language, gesturing, assistive communication.)*

#### What to look for:

- Responds to sounds in the environment—startles or cries to unexpected sound
- Watches speaker's face or hands when she is talking or gesturing
- Prefers slower, high pitched sounds
- Turns and listens intently to familiar voices and sounds

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Pay attention to baby's moods, responding to cries/sounds.
- Talk to baby throughout daily routines such as diapering and feeding:
  - Use baby's name when talking to baby.
  - Sing to baby.
  - Add "baby talk" to your normal conversation.
- Talk to baby when walking toward baby or entering room—"Are you ready to eat? I'm coming to pick you up."
- Make motions to familiar words—wave bye-bye, blow kisses.



### LANGUAGE EXPRESSION (Expressive/language production)

Using sounds, gestures, words, phrases, and sentences to express self. Initial expression occurs during social relationships.

*(Applies to child's and family's native language, and the language in which the child is fluent, including sign language, gesturing, assistive communication.)*

#### What to look for:

- Smiles or vocalizes to initiate social contact
- Makes sounds to try and continue interactions
- Babbles and talks to self, exploring and playing with many sounds, such as blowing bubbles, and *bbb*, *mmm*, etc.

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Respond to baby after smiling, making sounds, expressions, and gestures:
  - When baby raises arms, say, "Do you want me to pick you up?"
  - When baby makes a face while eating, say, "You don't like that taste?"
- Imitate baby's sounds, such as cooing, smiling, babbling, blowing raspberries.
- Talk to baby and wait for baby to respond.



### LITERACY

The foundations of reading and writing (literacy) begin in infancy. Infants and toddlers explore books, listen to songs and nursery rhymes, hear stories, draw and scribble as they build their literacy abilities.

#### What to look for:

- Looks at pictures of familiar faces or babies
- Listens to repetition of words, songs, or rhymes
- Enjoys listening to caregiver read out loud while sitting on caregiver's lap and looking at pictures

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Look at books with pictures of babies and family members. Name the people for baby, such as, "Here is Grandma."
- Sing simple songs and lullabies. Make up rhymes using baby's name and/or activities. Example: "Mommy puts on Kendra's blue sock, blue sock, blue sock, Kendra wears a blue smock, blue smock. Now Kendra's going to rock."
- Read to baby daily. Label objects and actions in book:
  - "See baby, she's smiling."
  - "Look at the cow. The cow is eating hay."

### "BABY TALK"

Known as Motherese, Mommy Talk or Daddy Talk, or more formally as infant-directed speech, baby talk is characterized by short, simple sentences delivered in a high-pitched, sing-song voice. Vowels are also dragged out, and each word of a sentence tends to be clearly spoken. Baby talk is often paired with exaggerated physical movements or facial expressions that grab the baby's attention.

Lead researcher Erik D. Thiessen, PhD, of Carnegie Mellon University says infants learned words about 25% faster when exposed to baby talk. "Parents often hear that if they want their infant to grow up speaking like an adult they should talk to them like they are adults," Thiessen tells WebMD. "But it turns out that talking to babies in this special way, as mothers have been doing for centuries, is pretty effective for learning language."

*From "Baby Talk May Help Infants Learn Faster" by Salynn Boyles, WebMD Health News, March 16, 2005.*

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## DIGGING DEEPER

### Early Language Development

Children's language development is complex and multidimensional. Children are born to communicate and prefer speech to other environmental sounds. Children also begin to comprehend language about twice as fast as they are able to produce it. Therefore, it is important that adults engage children in conversation from birth.

Children's first speech sounds appear around 2–4 months. Children will coo, babble and cry to communicate a message. The first sounds produced are often vowel like sounds, such as "oo" and consonant-vowel combinations such as "babababa." Babbling appears to be a universal speech pattern. Even deaf babies exposed to sign language will babble with their hands. During this early stage of language development, children also learn the non-verbal aspects of communication such as turn-taking and eye contact. For example, a child will take turns cooing with an adult and/or look away from the adult when they are over-stimulated by the conversational interaction.

Children's first words are limited by the amount of sounds they can produce. For example, first words



are the easiest sounds to produce and start with consonants and end with vowels such as "mama" and "dada." At about 10–12 months, children will begin to produce single words that often consist of one-word sentences. A one-word sentence might be "mine" or "go." One word sentences are accompanied by emotion and gesture. For example, children might use the word go forcefully and then point where they'd like to go.

As children develop, their one-word sentences will shift into two-word sentences that consist of a noun or a verb. For example, "all gone" or "go outside" are common two-word sentences. Children will also begin to use descriptive labels such as "big dog" or "red ball." Around age 2, children begin to produce multi-word sentences that have a subject and predicate. These early sentences are called "telegraphic speech" because they focus on the important words leaving out the smaller words. For example, children might state "my doll gone" or "want more milk" using salient words to get their message across.



### LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

Language that children are able to understand or comprehend.

#### What to look for:

- Quiets down or gets excited when hearing a familiar voice
- Turns to look at familiar person or object when named
- Responds appropriately to familiar words
- Shows interest in conversations of others

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Talk to baby when entering room and throughout the day.
- Pair words with actions or objects during play or daily routines—such as “Where is your nose?” or “Let’s throw the ball.”
- Clap hands for Pat-a-Cake or raise hands for “So big.”
- Smile big, make silly faces, and vary voice tone.
- Use hand gestures and simple sign language appropriate for infants and toddlers, like waving your hand when saying, “Come here.”



### LANGUAGE EXPRESSION

Language that children are able to say or produce on their own.

#### What to look for:

- Babbles to self beginning to imitate changes in pitch
- Uses consistent sound combinations to label specific people or things—mama, dada, baba
- Responds to words or music with gestures—waves or kisses when saying hi or bye-bye, plays peek-a-boo, or dances to music
- Uses a few words to express objects or actions—up, go, baba

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Model changes in pitch and facial expression to show excitement, dislike, surprise, or other feelings.
- Respond when baby uses familiar words by repeating the word correctly:
  - When baby says “baba,” reply, “Yes, that’s your bottle.”
- Imitate simple facial expressions such as puckering your lips or sticking out your tongue.
- Make funny faces in the mirror with baby.
- Pair simple sign language for infants and toddlers with words and objects.



## LITERACY

The foundations of reading and writing (literacy) begin in infancy. Infants and toddlers explore books, listen to songs and nursery rhymes, hear stories, draw and scribble as they build their literacy abilities.

### What to look for:

- Shows increased interest in stories, books, and songs
- Looks at books, can hold book, pats pages
- Points to objects, animals, or people in pictures
- Explores marking on paper with a variety of materials

### Play activities to support growth:

- Use finger plays and other nursery rhymes with baby—"Pat-a-Cake", "Itsy, Bitsy Spider", "Where is Thumbkin?"
- Read with baby daily. Label objects, people, and actions in books—Ask "See the bunny?" and point to the bunny in the picture.
- Use materials that encourage creative interaction, such as puppets and dolls.
- Offer crayons and imitate child's strokes on paper.

## WHY TEACH MY BABY SIGN LANGUAGE?

For the past 20 years, research on baby sign language has found that teaching a baby simple signs can improve cognitive and emotional development. Far from slowing down speech, baby sign language can actually increase the rate of verbal development and strengthen the parent/child bond. Simple signing allows baby to communicate before verbal skills have matured, helping to decrease frustration. Later, it pairs new words with physical activity (word + sign) increasing the chance of the child remembering the word. There are many free resources online to help caregivers get started.





## DIGGING DEEPER

### Dual Language Acquisition

Families with infants and toddlers who are exposed to two languages simultaneously or who have a first language other than mainstream English are usually part of a non-dominant, non-mainstream culture. In the past, educators proposed that young children would slowly lose the ties to the “old culture” and be healthier as they move more into mainstream culture. But present day studies show that the cost is high. Families lose their identity and relationships suffer. New research states that children are able to learn two languages at the same time and milestones are reached within the same age span in both monolingual and bilingual children.

Supporting development of the home language facilitates development of self-awareness, thereby helping infants and toddlers make meaning of their environment and feel a sense of security. However, while it may be preferable, it is not necessary for a teacher to speak the home language of infants and toddlers in order to effectively support the child’s dual language acquisition. For infants and toddlers, early childhood professionals can support development by:

- Encouraging child-family interactions and support the use of the home language as parents talk to their children in the early care setting.

- Providing opportunities for infants and toddlers to problem solve, test, and discover new knowledge.
- Partnering with families and members of the children’s linguistic community to involve them in creating a rich and powerful learning environment.
- Learning important words in the child’s home language in order to ease the child’s transition and facilitate low-level communication in the first few weeks of enrollment. This will give the message that the language spoken at home is welcomed and valued.

Many immigrant families believe that to achieve success in school, children must abandon their home language and adopt English as quickly as possible, even if this means giving up linguistic, cultural, and personal identity. Parents should be informed, in culturally sensitive ways, about the benefits of speaking two (or more) languages and the costs of losing the home (or first) language. Family members can maintain the home language by storytelling and doing finger plays and rhymes with their infant or toddler. Family members who can read in their native tongue can do this as part of a daily routine in addition to giving skills and knowledge that may be transferred to the English language.

# 12 TO 18 MONTHS

## Key Ideas



### LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

Language that children are able to understand or comprehend.

#### What to look for:

- Understands the words that are used to name common objects
- Enjoys listening to stories, songs and finger plays
- Follows simple instructions—“Please bring me the ball”
- Understands over 50 words in his/her home language

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Play labeling games—“Where is your belly button?” “Where is your ball?”
- Talk with child and associate words with actions—“First we change your diaper; then we wash our hands.”
- Use child’s home language.
- Act out and tell stories, use finger plays, and sing lullabies and songs from child’s home culture.
- Give simple instructions to child (one action at a time). Repeat if needed.
- Expand child’s language by using words to describe what baby sees—“The red truck” or “The pretty doll.”



### LANGUAGE EXPRESSION

Language that children are able to say or produce on their own.

#### What to look for:

- Vocalizes familiar words when read or sung to
- Begins to speak in short sentences—“Me go”
- Uses 8–10 understandable words, e.g. dada, ball, up, baba, etc.
- Imitates words and adult actions that go along with simple songs and rhymes—Row, row, row your boat
- Uses non-verbal gestures, and begins to combine words and gestures
- Begins to change volume and reflect emotion to communicate meaning

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Sing songs and play rhyming games with child such as “Ring Around the Rosy” and “Pat-a-Cake.”
- Expose child to language by talking and reading together, and allow child to contribute words to the story.
- Make conversations fun and enjoyable throughout the day:
  - Take turns talking with your child, even before child can use real words.
  - Ask wh- questions (why?, what?, where?).
- Clap, stomp, dance, or finger tap to songs as they are sung. Use different voice tones with child when singing and reading.
- When you speak, be sure tone and facial expression match what is being said. Use a serious tone and don’t smile when saying, “Please don’t hit our friends. Hitting hurts.”

## LITERACY

The foundations of reading and writing (literacy) begin in infancy. Infants and toddlers explore books, listen to songs and nursery rhymes, hear stories, draw and scribble as they build their literacy abilities.

### What to look for:

- Sits on caregiver's lap and pays attention as she reads a simple book
- Pats pages and likes books with flaps, textures
- Shows preference for certain books
- Begins to imitate writing by making own mark or scribble
- Makes strokes on paper with paint brush and picks up crayons and markers using fist



### Play activities to support growth:

- Provide child with a language-rich environment through conversation and books:
  - Point to words and pictures when reading with child.
  - Make homemade books, including pictures from child's life, cultural backgrounds, and home language, with photos of significant people.
- Praise child when books are being held and used appropriately.
- Explore a variety of books such as photo albums, board and cloth books, plastic books, magazines, and song books.
- Provide opportunities for child to draw using a variety of different materials, such as crayons, markers, and chalk with different surfaces to experiment on.
  - Scribble with large crayons.
  - Draw pictures outside using sidewalk chalk.



## DIGGING DEEPER

### Literacy & Early Writing

Even as infants, children are in the process of becoming literate. Children learn to read and write as they participate in literacy practices both at home and in their communities. Children are surrounded by environmental print such as stop signs, food labels, books, billboards, and newspapers from the time they are born. A print rich environment helps children to learn that written symbols communicate meaning. Infants and toddlers benefit from being read to and being exposed to the concept that environmental print and words in books can be read. However, the “teach your baby to read” marketing products are not appropriate for these young children.

Before children can learn to write, they must understand that letters are symbols of representation. Young children are not expected to understand how letter patterns represent sound patterns. For example, in the pre-literate stage children mark on paper to communicate messages. They might even read their marks to an adult or peer. These types of experimental markings indicate children’s developing understanding about symbols and representation.

In the early-emergent stage of writing, children use inventive writing that resembles scribbles or lines. Young writers also will use circles, squiggles, crosses, or letter like formations. Children at this stage make a distinction

between formations that are “writings” and those that are drawings. Inventive writing is important because it allows children to make the connection between written symbols and their thoughts, ideas, and emotions.

Children begin to understand that letters are symbols that represent words in the emergent stage of writing. Often children will use letters and letter-like forms to create words that consist of repeating shapes. For example, apple might be spelled “aaaaa” or “ooooo.” Children understand that a group of shapes or letters make a word. Children may also use letter sequences that resemble important words such as their name. The letters will most likely be in random order and the words indecipherable to adults.

The stages of early writing are not linear and the strategies used in each stage will overlap as the child progresses. Adults can encourage children’s early writing by providing positive support and access to literacy materials and print from birth. Encouraging children to practice and experiment with drawing, scribbling, and inventive writing is central to children’s language and literacy development. These early stages of writing, which often appear as play, provide the foundation for conventional writing skills to develop.



### LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

Language that children are able to understand or comprehend.

#### What to look for:

- Uses actions in chants and finger plays started by caregiver
- Responds to action words by performing the action—waves when caregiver says, “Wave bye bye”; dances when caregiver says, “Let’s dance to the music”
- Enjoys learning new vocabulary and new concepts. Identifies some people, objects, and actions by name
- Responds to questions such as “What is she doing?” or “What do you want for a snack?”

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Sing “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” or “Hokey Pokey.”
- Ask simple questions, and give directions with just one or two familiar steps—“We’re going outside, get your coat.”
- Make up games like “What do you see?” and label aloud what you see around you.
- Stretch vocabulary by using position words such as inside, outside, on, and under.



### LANGUAGE EXPRESSION

Language that children are able to say or produce on their own.

#### What to look for:

- Needs are met by asking for objects by name
- Puts words together to make 2–3 word simple sentences
- Talks about what is happening in a familiar book
- Uses 2–3 words to talk to self or others about things they are working on, things they are doing and events of the day
- Learns and says new words building toward a base of 50 words

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Respond with object or action when baby asks—“Mama up.” “Yes, Mama will pick you up.”
- Write down child’s stories and label drawings and artwork.
- Use puppets or other props when telling or reading a story.
- Read stories and sing songs, such as “Wheels on the Bus,” and use hand motions that go along with the story or song.



## LITERACY

The foundations of reading and writing (literacy) begin in infancy. Infants and toddlers explore books, listen to songs and nursery rhymes, hear stories, and draw and scribble as they build their literacy abilities.

### What to look for:

- Listens to short and simple stories. Looks at and names pictures in a book
- Requests favorite story and wants it read repeatedly
- Recalls parts of previously heard story
- Explores using different writing materials
- Scribbles purposefully and will tell others what they mean and makes vertical and horizontal lines

### Play activities to support growth:

- Read daily, asking child to point to different objects and actions—“Where is the crying baby?”
- Make up rhymes for activities.
- Name pictures and describe actions when looking at books.
- Provide a variety of written materials, such as books, photo albums and magazines for child to look at.
- Sing nursery rhymes or finger plays like “Humpty, Dumpty” or “Five Little Ducks.”
- Provide chalk, markers, crayons, and paper for child to write and draw.



## DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Child development centers offer free screenings for all children from birth to age 5. They are quick check-ups to make sure your child is on track. Most children are, but if they're not, your local center will help develop a plan to get your child where she needs to be.

**For more information or for a center near you call Toll Free:**

Child Development Services of Wyoming  
[866] 996-5437

Wyoming Developmental Disabilities Division  
[877] 996-4769



### LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

Language that children are able to understand or comprehend.

#### What to look for:

- Learns new words quickly
- Understands contrasting words such as stop/go, yes/no, come/go, and up/down
- Follows multi-step daily routines when prompted
- Responds to questions

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Have frequent back and forth conversations with child.
- Label objects for child.
- Play games like “Hokey Pokey” that involve words such as in, out, around.
- Ask simple questions and give child two-step directions—“Pick up the block and put it on the shelf.”



### LANGUAGE EXPRESSION

Language that children are able to say or produce on their own.

#### What to look for:

- Vocalizes familiar words when read or sung to
- Recites phrases from familiar rhymes and songs or fills in the missing word
- Tries to initiate conversations with others about objects, people
- Uses sound effects in play
- Uses adjectives in speech—soft blanket, big dog
- Asks simple questions—What? Where? Why?

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Play a game reciting favorite songs or nursery rhymes, occasionally stopping and having child say the next word—“Twinkle, twinkle little \_\_\_\_.”
- Ask open-ended questions—“What do you think will happen when you add the color?” Be sure to wait for your child to respond.
- Encourage child to talk about what she draws—“Can you tell me what you’re drawing?” Write down what she says and make a book.
- While looking at pictures, imitate the sounds of pictures and encourage child to make them too, such as the cat says meow, the horn goes beep.
- Continue to extend child’s language by using describing words—fuzzy, soft blanket or big, black dog.
- Answer child’s questions by getting down and making eye contact.

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## LITERACY

The foundations of reading and writing (literacy) begin in infancy. Infants and toddlers explore books, listen to songs and nursery rhymes, hear stories, and draw and scribble as they build their literacy abilities.



### What to look for:

- Begins to identify common sounds that he hears in the environment—animal sounds, car horns, etc.
- Imitates speed and tempo of sounds—talks fast and slow, claps hands fast and slow
- Recognizes signs and symbols in the everyday environment
- Holds book right side up and turns pages one at a time
- Retells a story by looking at pictures
- Imitates adult's writing motions through scribbling
- Participates in rhyming games and notices sounds that are the same and different

### Play activities to support growth:

- Sing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," providing the animal sounds.
- Read child's favorite book and let child turn the pages.
- Have a special story time and let child choose the book to be read.
- Model the use of reading, writing, and drawing in everyday activities.
- Bring books, paper, and writing/drawing tools outside for child to use and enjoy.
- Make sure child often sees own name in writing such as on cubby or personal space, on all personal belongings, and on artwork or other creations, if child wishes.
- Provide different writing materials to child.
- Provide dramatic play materials, such as dress-up clothes, props, and puppets.



# SENSE OF SELF & RELATIONSHIPS

social + emotional development





### DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF

Children learn about themselves as unique individuals through interactions with the world around them. They develop an awareness of their bodies, feelings, and ability to influence the world around them.

#### What to look for:

- Begins to show attachment to primary caregiver(s)
- Develops awareness of hands, fingers, feet, toes, and face. Enjoys looking at own face in a mirror
- Recognizes that adults respond to baby's cues
- Begins to develop social skills by smiling back at caregiver(s), imitating facial expressions, and smiling at familiar people

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Immediately respond to baby's cries to promote bonding and healthy brain development. You cannot spoil a baby!
- When baby notices fingers and toes, talk about what baby is seeing. For example, say, "Look, at your hands. You are moving your fingers."
- From birth, call baby by name and respond to individual needs.
- Hold and talk to baby throughout the day during diapering, dressing, and eating routines. Cuddle and talk to baby while reading a book or playing with a toy.

### DIGGING DEEPER

#### Attachment & Bonding

From a very early age, a young infant develops an attachment to their primary caregivers that is an essential part of emotional development. The infant's ability to create a secure attachment is vital to the success of relationships throughout the lifespan. A child's emotional development is influenced by the continuing quality of the parent-child and/or child-caregiver relationship.

In the first few weeks of life, infants will look to parents and caregivers for signals of comfort such as friendly smiles, gazes, and gentle speech patterns. We know that they recognize and respond to familiar faces, sounds, and smells. These signals lead to a positive attachment and bonding process. However, at this early age, infants typically do not develop a strong feeling of anxiety in the arms of other adults.

In the next few weeks up to about 8 months of age, infants continue to develop bonds with people who are consistent in their lives. A level of trust is built based on how adults respond to their many needs. Typically, immediate responses to infants' needs help develop a strong level of trust and do not lead to the child being "spoiled." As infants become strong and capable toddlers around 14–18 months of age, the attachments they have made become much stronger and more evident. Many times young toddlers will show a general level of anxiety and may become worried or hesitant around strangers. This stranger anxiety as well as separation anxiety (fear of being left by a parent or caregiver) does not usually last more than a few months, but is a very important time in young children's life as they look closely to those adults for signals of safety and security. It is always important to give the toddlers signals of confidence if they show anxiety. By using consistent communication and calming signals and facial expressions, parents and caregivers will help support children during transitions into new spaces and when around new people. They look to adults in their lives to learn how to respond to situations that are unfamiliar to them.

### SOCIAL INTERACTIONS & FEELINGS

Infants and toddlers develop the beginnings of social skills as they observe and interact with other people. They form attachments, show care and concern for others, and learn how to play with others. They learn to express their wants, needs, and emotions. As they grow and develop, they gain control over some of their feelings and learn new ways to express them.



#### What to look for:

- Shows increasing alertness during waking periods and is awake for longer periods of time
- Calms when rocked, swaddled, or held. Enjoys being gently bounced or moved around
- Communicates being overwhelmed through yawning, fussing, turning away, arching back, and extending arms and legs
- Smiles and coos to show happiness. Cries to communicate distress or pain
- Becomes upset or irritable when regular routine is disrupted
- Demonstrates increasing ability to calm self
- Shows distress when another baby is crying
- Uses whole body to express emotion

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Respond to baby's cues (efforts to communicate) consistently and try to determine what baby needs. Dissatisfaction is not always due to hunger.
- Hold and cuddle baby whenever you can. This is important for emotional growth.
- Pay attention to baby's signals and give some quiet time or extra cuddling time with you to help baby recover when overwhelmed.
- Take baby out of situations with too many people or too much noise.

### ADULT TIME OUT

Babies are growing and changing rapidly and parents are often challenged to understand baby's signals. Until a baby settles into a routine, parents can easily become stressed when sleep deprived and trying to find the right response to baby's cries. Each baby responds uniquely in temperament and to changes in environment. Some have compared this period to learning to dance to each other's rhythms. Paying attention to baby's signals and responding will help you and baby learn to synchronize these initial communications. In the meantime, there may be moments where you may need a break or a time out. Ask for help, take time away from baby, and if you feel the stress may affect your interaction with the baby, put the baby in a safe place. Because babies are fragile, any angry handling or shaking may seriously injure a child. If you believe your child may have colic or sensitivity to foods or stimuli, seek the advice of your pediatrician.



### DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF

Children learn about themselves as unique individuals through interactions with the world around them. They develop an awareness of their bodies, feelings, and ability to influence the world around them.

#### What to look for:

- Shows interest in their image in a mirror (stares, smiles, reaches out to touch image)
- Explores face and body parts of others—touches face, pats cheek, explores hands, etc.
- Responds to own name
- Shows preference for certain foods, textures, sounds, and music

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Get on the floor and interact with baby. Play and follow baby's lead.
- Place unbreakable mirrors in different areas down low so baby gets to see own reflection.
- Hang pictures of familiar people and objects low enough on wall for baby to approach, touch, and see.
- Express enthusiasm as baby makes new discoveries or solves simple challenges.
- Name body parts during routines and play.
- Support and encourage baby by making eye contact and talking back and forth.
- Play simple games, such as "Where's Jamie? There's Jamie!"

### DIGGING DEEPER

#### Routines & Young Children

Young children and their caregivers benefit from a daily routine that includes feeding, playing, changing, and sleeping. As the infant begins eating solid food, the feeding routine becomes an eating event. As the infant grows to toddler age, and begins toilet training, the changing routine becomes toileting time. Infants and toddlers feel secure and loved when routine events follow each other in a predictable order.

Routines are times when an adult and baby are interacting and form a relationship. The infant trusts the adult to take care of his needs and when the adult is warm and positive, the infant looks forward to these special one on one times. Parents and caregivers can help the young child relax and enjoy each routine by having the same way of starting and ending each one.

The sleeping routine is especially important. An infant's sleep/wake cycle is regulated by light and dark, but does take some time to develop. The patterns are very important as they directly impact mental and physical development. Some research has shown that lack of sleep in young children can be attributed to issues in brain development as well as some behavior disorders. Newborns may need as much as 13–18 hours of sleep per day. By the time infants reach 3–11 months of age, sleep times may vary by 9–12 hours per day and they will gradually sleep through the night without needing to be fed. To assist in good sleep habits, putting infants in their cribs when they are drowsy and not asleep can help them in their routines of becoming self-soothers. Toddlers, ages 1–3 years, will typically need 12–14 hours of sleep. A consistent routine to get ready for sleep allows the young child to calm down and prepare for sleep. In the morning, a wake up routine is also important. A young child's morning routine will depend upon how quickly he is ready to move into changing, feeding, and preparing for the day. Allowing enough time will make the routine feel comfortable for both the parent and the child.

Routines are a special time to interact. The adult is providing care while building a relationship that promotes growth and development in the infant and toddler.

**SOCIAL INTERACTIONS & FEELINGS**

Infants and toddlers develop the beginnings of social skills as they observe and interact with other people. They form attachments, show care and concern for others, and learn how to play with others. They learn to express their wants, needs, and emotions. As they grow and develop, they gain control over some of their feelings and learn new ways to express them.

**What to look for:**

- Begins to sleep for extended/longer periods during the night by exploring ways to go back to sleep, such as pacifier, comfort object, thumb-sucking, or music
- Prefers to be with a familiar person and reacts when separated
- Reacts to changes in established routines by fussing, crying, or showing discontent
- Communicates needs through gestures, vocalizations, and cries
- Responds to other baby's feelings and interactions
- Begins to respond to supportive guidance—distraction, accepting a substitute item, etc.

**Play activities to support growth:**

- Help baby manage feelings:
  - Provide comfort when baby cries.
  - Acknowledge feelings of frustration and help baby calm down and try again.
  - Use words to describe baby's feelings—"Oh, are you feeling tired?"
- Offer a comfort object such as a blanket or stuffed animal to help baby feel secure in times of stress.
- Tell baby what is happening and what will come next—"After your milk it is time for a nap." Routines let baby know what to expect.
- Use "feeling" words to acknowledge and label emotions baby is experiencing—"You're very mad! You look sad." This helps baby to feel understood and learn to use words to describe feelings.

# 12 TO 18 MONTHS

## Key Ideas

### DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF

Children learn about themselves as unique individuals through interactions with the world around them. They develop an awareness of their bodies, feelings, and ability to influence the world around them.



#### What to look for:

- Recognizes self in mirror by smiling, patting, and vocalizing
- Can touch parts of the body when asked such as nose, ear, toe, and head
- Explores environment and shows preference for certain toys, activities, clothing, and experiences
- Repeats behaviors to get attention—banging, vocalizing, etc.
- Begins to demonstrate strong will and tests limits as she develops independence
- Allows adults to distract him or negotiate disputes

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Have a small cup and spoon available so child can practice scooping food.
- Let child explore. Childproof your environment so saying “no” is kept to a minimum.
- Give child many chances to make choices and decisions. For example, if child tries to grab a toy from another child, offer two other similar toys to choose from. Offer two different snacks, or let child choose which book to read.
- Provide activities such as songs, short activities, or finger plays to keep child busy when waiting or during transition times.
- Make a Book About Me—a book about child that includes pictures and stories of child and family.
- Involve child in self-help tasks like washing hands and undressing.

**SOCIAL INTERACTIONS & FEELINGS**

Infants and toddlers develop the beginnings of social skills as they observe and interact with other people. They form attachments, show care and concern for others, and learn how to play with others. They learn to express their wants, needs, and emotions. As they grow and develop, they gain control over some of their feelings and learn new ways to express them.

**What to look for:**

- Clings to primary caregiver upon separation
- Has strong feelings that may be demonstrated physically—hitting, pulling hair, and biting
- Expresses different emotions such as affection, delight, frustration, and shyness
- Uses body language and facial expressions to communicate feelings
- Begins to respond to supportive guidance—may need help to stop unsafe behavior
- Looks to caregiver(s) for help and for cues about behavior
- Shows interest in other children by watching and tracking behavior—follows them around, imitates behavior, begins to play alongside peers

**Play activities to support growth:**

- Engage in social games with familiar people through playful back and forth interactions, such as the Drop Game, simple hide and seek with toys, etc.
- Provide opportunities for child to feel accepted in the group:
  - Build trust by providing support while child is interacting with others.
  - Speak to child in a calm voice at eye level.
- Read books that talk about feelings. Connect what you are reading to child's experiences.
- Model appropriate ways to express feelings. Show child how to express angry feelings like using words, jumping up and down, stomping feet, or squeezing pillows.

# 18 TO 24 MONTHS

## Key Ideas

### DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF

Children learn about themselves as unique individuals through interactions with the world around them. They develop an awareness of their bodies, feelings, and ability to influence the world around them.



#### What to look for:

- Expresses thoughts and feelings by saying “no” as a way of showing independence
- Prefers certain toys, games, activities, comfort objects, and clothing
- Needs adult help to take turns or to share toys
- Developing ability to respond positively to choices
- Asserts ownership by saying “mine”
- Notices likeness and differences between self and others: hair color and texture, boys and girls, family members

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Remain supportive while child learns new skills.
- Empathize with child’s feelings. When child is upset communicate you understand how sad or disappointed child is.
- Help child to use words rather than aggressive actions in relationships with others—ask peers to share, express feelings in words, etc.
- Anticipate emerging independence and expression:
  - Be ready for delays as child does it in own time.
  - Compromise when possible—“You put on this sock and I will put on that sock.”
  - Distract and redirect if needed—“You look at your favorite book while I put on your shoes.”
- Help child develop self-awareness. Point out the result of child’s actions—“You put the toys away. Now we have time to read another book before bed.”

**SOCIAL INTERACTIONS & FEELINGS**

Infants and toddlers develop the beginnings of social skills as they observe and interact with other people. They form attachments, show care and concern for others, and learn how to play with others. They learn to express their wants, needs, and emotions. As they grow and develop, they gain control over some of their feelings and learn new ways to express them.

**What to look for:**

- Initiates simple social interactions with peers
- Imitates actions to express emotions:
  - Stomps feet like brother when frustrated, raises arms like sister when excited
- Begins to separate from parent or main caregiver without being overcome by stress
- Responds to others' verbal, physical, and facial expressions of emotion
- Calms self after excitement or frustration with familiar comfort items and reminders

**Play activities to support growth:**

- Model "gentle touches" as child interacts with other people and animals.
- Play back and forth games to help child understand and practice turn-taking.
- Make sure child has lots of opportunities to play with other children. Be a guide in learning to share. Developing the concept of sharing takes time and practice.
- Help child slow down or take a break when you see signs that child is getting frustrated or overwhelmed.

# 24 TO 36 MONTHS

## Key Ideas



### DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF

Children learn about themselves as unique individuals through interactions with the world around them. They develop an awareness of their bodies, feelings, and ability to influence the world around them.

#### What to look for:

- Recognizes own identity—"Do it myself", "me big boy", or using own name
- Begins to recognize family members, roles, and names
- Demonstrates a growing sense of competence and confidence in own abilities
- Indicates likes and dislikes such as with food, playmates, activities
- Makes comparisons between self and others

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Respect child's need for independence and doing something her own way.
- Be patient and give child time to work at things. Help child to communicate needs and wants.
- Make poster of a simple family tree with pictures and names, including siblings, parents, and grandparents. Talk about child's family.
- Help child understand and appreciate own culture and background, as well as those of others. Talk respectfully about others who look or act different from child.
- Use materials that show persons from different backgrounds and abilities in a positive way—pictures, books, dolls, magazines, and crayons.



### SOCIAL INTERACTIONS & FEELINGS

Infants and toddlers develop the beginnings of social skills as they observe and interact with other people. They form attachments, show care and concern for others, and learn how to play with others. They learn to express their wants, needs, and emotions. As they grow and develop, they gain control over some of their feelings and learn new ways to express them.

#### What to look for:

- Shows new fears based on new understanding about the world—monsters, animals, etc.
- Uses words, signs, or gestures to communicate emotions such as frustration, anger, sadness, and love
- Stays occupied in a self-chosen activity for a short period of time
- Includes others in play. Play begins to include imitating familiar people, activities, or animals—pretending to be a kitty, drive a truck, or cook soup

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Help child talk about fears through puppets, stuffed animals, or stories.
  - Putting feelings into words can help child understand and feel in control of them.
  - Knowing how child feels will also help you provide the reassurance needed.
- Practice and reinforce positive social interaction—turn-taking during simple games, hugs, playing side by side.

**Play activities to support growth (continued):**

- Anticipate the actions of child to keep from getting hurt or hurting others.
- Make plans for child to spend time with other children.
  - Child will learn about the pleasure of making friends.
  - The more opportunities to interact with peers, the more a child will learn about how to get along well with others.
- Maintain consistent and individualized routines to meet the physical and emotional needs of the child.
- Provide reminders of ways child can calm self.
- Provide many opportunities for pretend play. Have objects and materials available for child to use, such as dress up clothes, empty boxes and kitchen items. Help child work through feelings in pretend play.

communities expect children to do specific tasks and activities on different timetables. For example, some communities may expect children to walk sooner than others. If children are expected to walk by age one, the cultural routines of the community will support this milestone.

Most people assume that culture influences development. Cultural psychologists, however, argue that development is a cultural process. Children are not simply influenced by culture; children develop and grow as they actively participate in and contribute to their cultural communities. This perspective further suggests that development must be examined within social and cultural contexts. Thus, culture and development must not be viewed as separate processes, but taken together to get a complete and accurate account of the child.

Understanding the cultural nature of development is also about valuing differences in infant and toddler environments. This can be achieved by reflecting similarities and differences in the images and materials that are selected for play activities, ensuring that children's cultural communities and practices are identified and respected by all.

**DIGGING DEEPER****Culture**

It would be difficult for an early care provider to understand all of the different ways children develop and learn in various cultural communities. We should not make general assumptions about the practices and activities associated within a particular cultural community. Therefore, it is vital to make strong home-school connections. Home-school connections allow the teacher to understand the child's home culture practices. They also allow the parent to understand the school's culture and practices. The teacher and parent can gather information from one another and share about these practices as related to developmental expectations and norms.

To understand a child's development within a cultural context, it is important to determine in what ways development is different and the same in various communities. Variation is not about what are "right" and "best" practices for children. Variation reflects what is valued in a particular community. Different cultural



# CURIOUS MINDS

cognitive skills, general knowledge + approaches to learning



### EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

Experiencing things, developing curiosity, and inquiring about the world.

#### What to look for:

- Reacts to touch by moving feet, hands, and head
- Turns head toward caregiver's voice—gazes, moves arms or legs
- Responds to touch or sound with purposeful movements—kicks feet, moves arms, or coos in response to caregiver's interaction
- Watches people, objects, and activities intently
- Reacts to new objects, voices, sounds, and touches by becoming more active or quiet
- Explores single object held nearby or in own grasp

#### Play activities to support growth:

- As you go about your day, talk so baby can follow and find your voice.
- Offer new and familiar objects, allowing baby to explore objects, understanding that this is how baby primarily discovers the world.
- Smile and laugh and show that you enjoy being with baby. Find time daily to have fun with your child.
- Talk calmly to baby when moving into a new routine, saying what is happening next.



### PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Developing the ability to find a solution to a simple problem and learning to be creative in self-expression.

#### What to look for:

- Reacts to the rhythm of simple daily routines—rocking to sleep, listening to familiar adult talking or singing, being carried and handed to caregiver
- Engages in self-soothing activities—sucks thumb, fingers, or fist; cries softly and rhythmically; rubs hand over soft texture
- Prepares body to be lifted by familiar adult—reaches with arms, moves body in anticipation
- Experiments with behaviors that make something happen
  - Splashes water to make object move
  - Makes sounds or moves to keep familiar adult's attention

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Describe in words what baby is doing so baby can follow caregiver's voice.
- Hold, rock, or swaddle baby and respond to needs quickly—baby learns to self-soothe when needs are quickly and consistently met.
- Avoid startling baby with sudden noises, bright lights, or changes in position.
- Talk about what is happening as baby repeats actions over and over—"Oh, the ball made a big sound! Did you do that? Can you make the ball make that sound again?"

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## CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND MEMORY

Understanding cause and effect and the permanence of things. Developing memory skills.

### What to look for:

- Holds attention of adults by smiling, vocalizing, and gesturing
- Uses more than one sense at a time—when holding a toy will shake it, look at it, and listen for a sound
- Follows path of dropped object—looks down when dropping a toy
- Enjoys repeating sounds and actions
  - Transfers an object from hand to hand
  - Bangs an object again to repeat the sound



### Play activities to support growth:

- Get down on floor and show enjoyment in watching baby move and explore objects in the environment.
- Expose baby to different textures and types of fabrics. Display toys that are black and white and other bright contrasting colors.
- Have baby follow a rattle with eyes.
- Provide objects for infant to create and repeat sounds—wrist or foot rattles, batting toys.
- Place objects just beyond reach and encourage baby to reach for small rattle or favorite toy.
- Use a familiar doll or stuffed animal to sing and talk to baby.
- Encourage baby to bat at toys that make noise with hands and feet.



## DIGGING DEEPER

### Sensory Integration

Starting at birth, children use their senses to learn about the world and to take in new information. Sensory integration refers to the way the child's brain works to understand the information it receives from the senses of touch, taste, sight, sound, smell, space, and balance.

Children need concrete experiences in order for them to learn and grow. Concrete experiences are any experiences that use the senses of touch, taste, sight, sound, and smell. Activities using the senses help infants and toddlers build up their memory bank of experiences, which is very important for future growth, development, and learning. The brain uses the memories to understand new information.

The brain is the "control center" that organizes and makes meaning of all the information coming through the senses. The nervous system has receptors throughout the body. The receptors receive input from various senses and carry it through the spinal cord to the brain.

The brain has numerous steps to refine the information before making a response. The three major areas of the brain that refine sensory input are the brain stem, the cerebellum, and the cerebral hemispheres.

The senses and their receptors must work efficiently and collaboratively for the child to function normally. If one of the senses is not functioning at its optimal level or if there is a problem in information processing, the message the brain perceives will be distorted.

Children are still developing their senses (the cerebellum does not complete development until the age of 15) and may have a disruption in how they process sensory input. It is important to provide many sensory experiences and play opportunities during the infant's and toddler's waking hours.

# 6 TO 12 MONTHS

## Key Ideas



### EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

Experiencing things, developing curiosity and inquiring about the world.

#### What to look for:

- Manipulates things in the environment and watches what happens—bangs on table with object or hand; fingers, touches, and mouths objects
- Notices new people and objects in familiar environment
- Uses several senses at once to explore environment—mouths and holds a toy
- Demonstrates intense curiosity through constant exploration

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Enjoy the repetition of the “Drop Game”—play partners take turns dropping toy while the other picks it up.
- Avoid too many toys or activities at one time to prevent baby from becoming overwhelmed.
- Provide objects that have different textures to feel.
- Extend child’s exploration by playing together with familiar objects—texture books, blocks, banging on pots, pans.



### PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Developing the ability to find a solution to a simple problem and learning to be creative in self-expression.

#### What to look for:

- Problem solves by moving body towards object of interest—rolls toward an item of interest
- Begins to stay with an activity until successful by trying different approaches
- Picks up piece of food and tries to put it in mouth
- Begins to explore art materials
- Seeks assistance from caregiver to solve problem using vocalizations, gestures, and facial expressions

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Provide opportunities and time for problem-solving—find the familiar object under the scarf.
- Give baby a variety of safe and interesting objects to move toward, reach for, and manipulate.
- Encourage baby to keep working and praise efforts. Focus on effort rather than on results.
- Play music. Hit pots and pans with a wooden spoon to rhythm, and move to music together.
- Recognize baby’s cues when becoming frustrated with a problem and provide comfort or assistance.

**CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND MEMORY**

Understanding cause and effect and the permanence of things. Developing memory skills.

**What to look for:**

- Remembers simple games and objects from the day before—Pat-a-Cake, So-Big, Peek-a-Boo
- Discovers repeated actions have similar effects
  - Someone picks up dropped toy each time
  - Pushing a button on a toy causes a noise
- Uses some objects for their real purpose/function—cup for drinking, spoon for eating
- Understands “more” in reference to food or play
- In play, imitates aspects of daily routine—rocks baby doll to sleep, feeds stuffed animal
- Imitates older peer’s or caregiver’s actions—clapping hands, using baby sign language, hugging stuffed animal

**Play activities to support growth:**

- Place unbreakable mirrors in crib or along base board or low wall for baby to see own image.
- Organize space and provide time so that baby can work on activity for as long as desired. Allow baby to repeat activities and experiences.
- Let baby enjoy being surprised by pop-up toys—Jack-in-the-Box or activity boxes.
- Allow baby to explore with real pots, pans, plastic cups, spoons, containers, and lids.

# 12 TO 18 MONTHS

## Key Ideas



### EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

Experiencing things, developing curiosity, and inquiring about the world.

#### What to look for:

- Explores different textures in the natural environment on their own
- Continues to show curiosity about surroundings and becomes more interested in exploring new activities and environments
- Notices changes in play materials—adding more play dough, cutting pieces, pounding with object

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Provide objects for play on low shelves that toddler can reach—plastic containers and lids, measuring cups and spoons.
- Take child to new places to explore, including library, park, or play group.
- Provide baby with new toys, books, and experiences as they grow, change, and develop new interests.
- Extend child's exploration through playing together with familiar objects—texture books, blocks, banging on pots, pans.



### PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Developing the ability to find a solution to a simple problem and learning to be creative in self-expression.

#### What to look for:

- Begins to solve simple problems:
  - Tries to climb to reach a desired object
  - Tries to open doors and cupboards
- Uses active exploration and trial and error to figure out how things work
- Engages in imaginative play using props—pretends to feed the baby, drive the car, build a house

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Allow plenty of time and objects for child to experiment with and learn how things in the environment work:
  - Turn things on and off.
  - Open and close drawers and doors.
  - Make noises.
- Provide dress up clothes and toys that can be used in different ways—scarves, blocks, blankets.
  - Participate with child—dance, sing, enjoy art activities.
  - Use blocks as pretend phones and have a conversation with your child.



### CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND MEMORY

Understanding cause and effect and the permanence of things. Developing memory skills.

#### What to look for:

- Follows simple directions and consistent routines—“Please get your shoes; we are going outside”
- Remembers the games and objects from the day before
- Points to an object when named by the caregiver(s)—Child points in response when asked, “Where’s the doggie?”
- Recognizes position words such as in, out, up, down, under, behind
- Begins to build an understanding of quantity, such as “all”, “all gone”, “more”, “one more”

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Play the Freeze Game to music—move rhythmically to the music, say “freeze” as you turn off the music, and hold still until you start the music again.
- Take a walk describing what child sees, collecting things of interest, pointing out big and small, colors, shapes, etc. The next day, look at items collected and let child dump and sort while talking about the walk.
- Ask questions about objects and people in books or photos—point to Grandma in the picture.
- Provide experiences where child can explore with their senses (touch, sight, smell, hearing, taste), such as sand and water play.

### DIGGING DEEPER

#### Importance of Play

Play, according to many early childhood authorities, is children’s natural way of learning. In play, young children can do some things they cannot do outside of the play setting. For example, an older toddler pretends to be a kitty and does only things that kittens can do. Or the toddler pretends to be an injured child during play and lies still for a long time while playmates look for a rescuer. The toddler may not use this kind of self control outside of a play situation but can reach to this higher level of self regulation while playing. Thus, play is a natural way for children to learn important skills that later will carry over into their lives even when not playing.

Infants benefit from play. Playing games like Peek-a-Boo and repeating nursery rhymes with gestures are ways infants and young toddlers learn important concepts about the world. In play, all the domains of development including physical, cognitive, language, and social/emotional are addressed. This is a major benefit of play. From the very first day, the caregiver can place an infant on the tummy. This allows muscle development in the neck, arms, back, and legs. The adult can get down to the infant’s level and encourage active movement. Adults learn about the infant’s development by observing what the infant can do. Based on this information, the adult can choose a play object or play activity for that level of development.

Adults can set up an environment that supports play by choosing play objects that are open-ended (the infant or toddler can do many things with this object) and by allowing plenty of time for play. Battery-operated play objects do not lead to the child feeling strong and capable because the object does the work for the child. Let the child explore the objects in the natural world. In play, it is important to slow down and enjoy sharing time together, always following the infant’s or toddler’s lead. Every child has his own style of playing and adults can affirm it by interacting appropriately.

# 18 TO 24 MONTHS

## Key Ideas

### EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

Experiencing things, developing curiosity, and inquiring about the world.

#### What to look for:

- Explores different textures in the natural environment on her own
- Continues to show curiosity about surroundings and becomes more interested in exploring new activities and environments
- Notices changes in play materials—adding more play dough, cutting pieces, pounding with object
- Searches for a favorite object

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Let child explore natural materials such as sand, water, rocks, snow, leaves.
- Visit various environments such as the park, library, grocery store.
- Change toys and location often to maintain child's interest.
- Provide empty boxes (shoe boxes, cereal boxes) for stacking, building, knocking down, exploring.
- Spend time each day observing child's interests and playing with child, allowing him to lead.

### PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Developing the ability to find a solution to a simple problem and learning to be creative in self-expression.

#### What to look for:

- Begins to solve simple problems:
  - Tries to climb to reach a desired object
  - Tries to open doors and cupboards
- Uses active exploration and trial and error to figure out how things work
- Engages in imaginative play using props:
  - Pretends to eat, sleep, drink
  - Pretends to feed the baby, drive the car, build a house

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Play simple counting games during daily routine—counting shoes, snacks, books, dolls, trucks, fingers.
- Provide simple shape sorting toys, matching or interlocking toys that can be taken apart and put back together.
- Offer art materials that allow children to engage in self-expression and make-believe play.
- Provide simple 4- or 5-piece piece puzzles.

## CHANGING THE ENVIRONMENT

Young children can get bored or lose interest quickly. So, to keep children active and engaged, play in different areas of your home or outdoors each day. Offer different materials or toys to explore. It's okay to pick and choose what your child plays with at different times. One morning may be spent exploring pots and wooden spoons in the kitchen. Later in the afternoon might find you outside with shovels and trucks. Evening play might be in the family room with your laundry basket and rolled up socks. No new toys are required. Spending time with you as you go through your day and playing with materials familiar to your family is the most ideal play and learning environment for your young child.

### CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND MEMORY

Understanding cause and effect and the permanence of things. Developing memory skills.



#### What to look for:

- Uses familiar objects in combination—spoon in bowl, doll in bed, and person in car
- Fills and empties containers with sand, water, small toys
- Shows some understanding of daily time sequence—time for nap, lunch, outdoor play
- Tries to put large single puzzle pieces into the matching space
- In play imitates the use of most everyday objects
- Stays with the same self-chosen activity on occasion
- Knows the name or sound of many animals

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Talk about objects child sees and hears when visiting various environments.
- As you go about your day or while looking at books, point out things that go together, such as baby and bottle or dog and barking. You can expand this with simple matching games.
- Give child a variety of containers to fill with sand, water, toys. Allow space to dump and fill repeatedly.
- Provide child routines and talk about what happens “before” and “after.”
- Sing songs, chant rhymes, do finger plays to establish memory and to understand concepts, such as cows moo or kitties meow.
- Join your child in play and follow child’s lead.

## LET’S DO IT AGAIN!

Every time a child hears the same story, something new is learned. New connections are made in the brain when you read a story to or have a conversation with your child. These connections are reinforced through repetition. Repetition is a critical part of a child’s learning because it builds the brain’s wiring that makes new information permanent. The more connections a child has, the more ways information can be processed.

Our brains continue to grow and change throughout our lives, based on the experiences we have. Brain development is not complete at birth. The changes in the brain that happen during early childhood form the foundation for a child’s later development.



### EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

Experiencing things, developing curiosity, and inquiring about the world.

#### What to look for:

- Tries new activities, materials and equipment—different or unfamiliar art materials or new musical instruments
- Explores and notices ways that materials can change—snow melting, water freezing, wind moving leaves and other things, sand holding its shape when it gets wet, etc.
- Takes time to investigate and complains if interrupted
- Tries to make objects move or work—opening a container or using a faucet

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Include child in simple cooking projects—allow child to help pour, dump, stir, and enjoy time together in the kitchen.
- Make homemade musical instruments—drums, shakers, horns, cymbals.
- Offer a variety of art supplies:
  - Finger paint
  - Chalk
  - Fabric material
  - Stamps and ink pads
  - Scrap paper for cutting and tearing
- Ask open-ended questions and questions that help child notice patterns and connect ideas:
  - “Where do you think the butterfly is flying?”
  - “What happened to the jello after we put it in the refrigerator?”

### DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Child development centers offer free screenings for all children from birth through age 5. They are quick check-ups to make sure your child is on track. Most children are, but if they're not, your local center will help develop a plan to get your child where she needs to be.

**For more information or for a center near you call Toll Free:**

Child Development Services of Wyoming  
[866] 996-5437

Wyoming Developmental Disabilities Division  
[877] 996-4769

### PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Developing the ability to find a solution to a simple problem and learning to be creative in self-expression.

#### What to look for:

- Matches simple shapes using foam boards or puzzles—circles, squares, triangle
- Classifies, labels, sorts objects by characteristics—size, color, shape
- Can use words when asked, “What happened?”
- During pretend play, uses objects for other than their intended purpose, such as using a small block for a cell phone
- Plays house, plays store
- Expresses self creatively through singing, dancing, drawing



#### Play activities to support growth:

- Go on a treasure hunt and find simple shapes—circles, squares, triangles—around the house or play area.
- Sort and categorize throughout the day:
  - While doing laundry, separate colors from whites and make piles of socks, shirts, pants.
  - Child can help set the table and organize the forks, plates, spoons.
  - At clean-up time, child can put the cars on one shelf and books on another.
- Ask open-ended questions that allow toddlers to describe what they are doing and what they are thinking.
- Allow child to do things in own way and to take some risks. Intervene when needed to keep child safe.
- Help child test out different solutions to problems:
  - When stuck, suggest other ways to approach the problem.
  - For example, if child needs a wand for pretend play, ask what household object child might be able to use.
- Decorate a large box in different ways to create—a castle, house, barn, doghouse, hospital, lemonade stand.

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## CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND MEMORY

Understanding cause and effect and the permanence of things. Developing memory skills.

### What to look for:

- Engages in make believe play, acting out simple dramatic play themes with others—playing store, house, animal hospital
- Enjoys simple sorting activities, such as sorting mixed up pairs of mittens, animals go in this box and cars go in that box
- Uses some number words during play or activity—“I want two”
- Imitates counting rhymes—“One, Two, Buckle My Shoe”, “Five Little Monkeys”
- Remembers past events that happened and were meaningful such as own birthday, getting shots, going to the doctor
- Notices how things are different and the same
- Can put/stack a series of 2–4 nesting cups or blocks in order



### Play activities to support growth:

- Make homemade puppets out of socks or gloves for finger plays and storytelling.
- Play homemade memory games using familiar items like cereal box logos.
- Encourage child to count out snacks or food items at meal time—3 Cheerios® or 2 crackers.
- Allow child to help with putting a cup at each place on the table or putting toys away.
- Ask questions about where child is going or what was experienced:
  - “What shall we buy at the grocery store?”
  - “Who did you play with at the park?”
- Plant seeds together (grass seeds work well). Let your child water them and put the pot in a sunny place. Suggestions to extend learning:
  - Watch the calendar, marking off days until you see a shoot peeking through the soil.
  - Take pictures as the plant grows. Put the photos together in a book about your plant.
  - Talk with your child about how the plant is growing.
- Share family pictures including baby pictures of child. Tell stories of when child was younger.
- Have measuring cups and different sized boxes or pots and pans available for arranging by size and stacking.



# **STRONG & HEALTHY BODIES**

*physical health and development*



### GROSS MOTOR

Gross motor refers to the use and control of the large muscles, such as head, back, arms, and legs, allowing infants and toddlers to explore and interact with people and their environment.

#### What to look for:

- Turns head toward nipple or caregiver's face while being held
- Actively explores moving arms, legs, and head while on tummy or back
- Rolls from back to stomach and stomach to back
- May move from place to place by rolling
- Sits with support on caregiver's lap or cushions
- Enjoys bouncing when held in standing position on caregiver's lap

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Hold baby close to your face. Cuddle baby and talk or sing softly while feeding.
- Move baby's legs in a bicycling motion.
- Encourage baby to reach for rattles and toys that are dangled in front of baby.
- Place baby in safe places where there is freedom of movement. Limit time in restrictive environments, such as car seats, swings, Johnny-Jump-Ups®, walkers, and bouncers.
- Place favorite toys just out of reach to encourage rolling.
- Allow baby to spend time playing on tummy.
- Smile and encourage baby's efforts.

### TUMMY TIME

Play and interact with baby during wakeful moments on the tummy 2–3 times each day for a short period of time (3–5 minutes), increasing the amount of time as the baby shows enjoyment in the activity. A great time to do this is following a diaper change or when the baby wakes up from a nap. Tummy time prepares babies for the time when they will be able to slide on their bellies and crawl. As babies grow older and stronger they will need more time on their tummies to build their own strength.

Some babies may not like the tummy time position at first. Lie on your back and place the baby on your chest. Your baby will work hard to try to see your face. Place a toy in reach to encourage play. Eventually your baby will enjoy tummy time and begin to enjoy play in this position.

*From a brochure published by the American Academy of Pediatrics. See the Resources section on page 74 for where you can find this guide online.*



### FINE MOTOR

Fine motor refers to the small muscles of the hands, arms, legs, and feet that children use to move objects. Infants and toddlers develop finger and hand and eye coordination allowing them to explore toys, pick up food, and begin to draw and scribble.

#### What to look for:

- Grasps finger when placed in her hand
- Shows awareness of hands and begins to use hands to hold breast/bottle during feeding time
- Follows a slowly moving object with eyes
- Uses hands to bring objects to mouth, such as toes, fingers, toys placed in hands

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Have baby play with rattles and different types of fabrics and textures.
- Sing songs to baby.
- Let baby play with your fingers and explore bottle or breast during feeding.
- Play games such as “Peek-a-Boo,” “So Big,” or “Pat-a-Cake” with baby. Encourage baby to follow a rattle or toy with eyes.

### DIGGING DEEPER

#### The Benefits of Home Visitation

As we discuss how to empower families, it is essential that we directly connect with families on a personal level. Home visitation offers opportunities for that type of connection. Trained professionals work regularly with families in the comfort of their own homes, providing opportunities for families to bond and create a lasting relationship with early childhood experts in order to support family needs and values. Home visitation can expand caregiver knowledge about child development, community resources, and healthy growth. These visitations can start during the prenatal period to play a proactive role in preparation for the new arrival and the impacts it will have on family dynamics. There are several options for home visitation throughout Wyoming that focus on family engagement and educational support for child development.

### A NOTE ON IMMUNIZATION (VACCINES)

It is very important for children to receive their immunizations (vaccines) per the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations. For further advice and discussion parents should consult their child’s primary physician or visit the Parents section at [cdc.gov/vaccines](http://cdc.gov/vaccines) for the recommended immunization schedule.

## HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION

### Physical Health

In an effort to detect delays and disabilities as early as possible, newborns are screened within the 24–48 hours of birth for hearing impairments or conditions for which early treatment can prevent death, intellectual, or physical disability.

Screening children as early as possible is a best practice because babies' brains begin developing in utero and continue throughout life. All the developmental domains including speech, language, motor, vision, and cognitive are interrelated. When a child has a delay in one domain, the delay can affect growth and development in other domains. For instance, when a baby has delays in language, it is very possible that the child will have delays in small motor (using hands and fingers) or large motor development (crawling, walking, and running) as well.



Early screening leads to early identification of delays and early intervention services.

Early screening informs parents and the providers about

their child's developmental stage so that they can implement strategies to help the child advance to the next developmental level. Wyoming's widely advertised "One Before Two" campaign is a Wyoming initiative promoting free developmental screenings for early identification of delays and disabilities among children from birth through 5.

Your child's doctor will tell you how often to visit for check-ups. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the following schedule from birth through year one: 1 week, 1 month, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, and 18 months.

### Oral Health

Clean the infant's gums with a soft clean damp cloth at least once a day.



### Vision Health

Even if no eye or vision problems are apparent, the American Optometric Association recommends scheduling your baby's first eye assessment at 6 months. InfantSEE®, a public health program, managed by Optometry Cares® — the AOA Foundation, is designed to ensure that eye and vision care becomes an essential part of infant wellness care to improve a child's quality of life. Under this program, participating optometrists provide a comprehensive infant eye assessment between 6 and 12 months of age as a no-cost public service. To find a doctor in your area who can provide a free assessment, visit [infantsee.org](http://infantsee.org).

### Safe Sleep

Babies can sleep up to 18 hours a day, usually 1-3 hours at a time and can benefit from a consistent sleep routine. Practice the ABC's of safe sleep for at least the first 12 months—place baby ALONE, on their BACK, in their safety approved CRIB only. To read the AAP's safe sleep recommendations, visit [healthychildren.org/safesleep](http://healthychildren.org/safesleep)

### Safety

Ensuring the health and safety of a child requires the adults to be proactive and always a step ahead of the child. This means that the environment has to be created with the child's safety and health in mind. It is crucial to take precautions like covering all outlets, checking toys for breakage and choking hazards, and keeping any harmful items out of the child's reach. It is important to keep electrical cords, window blind cords, and anything that is dangling out of reach. The best way to check the environment is to get down on all fours and crawl through the environment checking for anything that might be unsafe for a crawling/walking child.

Babies should always ride in a rear facing, correctly installed car seat. More safety tips can be found at [safekids.org](http://safekids.org).

A child has a curious mind and learns by investigating the world, so put safety latches on all cabinet doors that the infant should not explore. Keep safe items in lower cabinets and create an “infant cabinet” in every room that has objects infant can explore.

An infant or toddler explores and learns about the world by mouthing objects so it is vital to sanitize on a daily basis. Keeping the floors free of debris and cleaning on a daily basis will reduce the chance of injury and illness.

Go to the Resource section on page 74 to see where you can find more tips on providing a safe environment at home.

### **Nutrition**

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about the first six months of a baby’s life. During the first six months, breast milk or formula provides all the nutrients the infant needs.

To learn more about breastfeeding from the AAP, visit [healthychildren.org/breastfeeding](http://healthychildren.org/breastfeeding).

Remember that the infant is growing rapidly and will require frequent, on-demand feedings. Signs that your baby may be ready for solid food include good head and neck control and sitting alone or with support. Check with your doctor about when it is best to add solid foods.

# 6 TO 12 MONTHS

## Key Ideas



### GROSS MOTOR

Gross motor refers to the use and control of the large muscles, such as head, back, arms, and legs, allowing infants and toddlers to explore and interact with people and their environment.

#### What to look for:

- Able to sit up without support
- May crawl, scoot, or creep to get where baby wants to go
- Develops ability to stand (usually in this order)
  - Pulls to stand
  - Stands and “cruises” while holding onto furniture
  - Stands alone

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Allow baby to explore in a safe environment.
- Play with baby on the floor. Place cushions around until baby can sit without support.
- Place an interesting object far enough away to encourage baby to move toward it.
- Create an environment that is safe for exploration. Be careful of placing baby in a position that baby couldn't have gotten into alone.
- Remember that each baby develops motor skills at a different rate than other babies.
- Provide materials and objects on the floor and at different heights to encourage different types of movement, such as pillows to crawl over or low furniture for standing or cruising.



### BABIES ON THE MOVE!

“Even before birth, babies are moving! Physical movement is important for infants because new muscle tone and strength is rapidly being added as babies grow and develop. The earlier young children learn that being active is fun, the more likely they are to develop physical activity as a habit for life. For infants, getting down on the floor and wiggling and moving is physically good for them. Toddlers enjoy active play as well as imitation games like Simon Says and the benefits are two-fold: they promote both physical activity and learning in young children.”

So have fun moving with your child: crawl, jump, dance!

*From an interview with Rachel Téllez, M.D., Medical Advisor to the Head Start Bureau*



### FINE MOTOR

Fine motor refers to the small muscles of the hands, arms, legs, and feet that children use to move objects. Infants and toddlers develop finger and hand and eye coordination allowing them to explore toys, pick up food, and begin to draw and scribble.

#### What to look for:

- Swipes at and gets desired object
- Manipulates object in hand, moves object from one hand to the other
- Picks up and looks at small object using thumb and index finger
- Begins to grasp, release, and manipulate objects, such as putting blocks in a container

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Provide touch-and-feel books.
- Allow baby to play with blocks and toys that are easy to move from one hand to the other.
- Provide a variety of safe toys for the bath—containers, rubber toys, plastic ladles. Join the exploration and show different ways to use the objects.
- Roll or throw soft balls and toys of different textures back and forth.
- Provide materials in containers that allow baby to dump and fill over and over.



### SELF-HELP

Infants and toddlers develop a growing awareness and interest in their own needs. They first get their needs met by communicating with trusted adults. Then they begin to participate in taking care of themselves.

#### What to look for:

- Begins finger feeding self small pieces of food, such as a piece of biscuit or other finger foods
- Cooperates with caregiver during care routines such as diapering, dressing, etc.

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Offer a variety of finger foods that baby can feed to self.
- Establish consistent routines for naptime and bedtime—read a story, sing a song, cuddle, turn out the lights.

## HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION

### Physical Health

Your child's doctor will tell you how often to visit for check-ups. During this time period, well-child visits should occur at 6 and 9 months. As much as possible, maintain a consistent and predictable daily routine for your baby. This will help him learn how to manage his own behavior appropriately. Protect children from germs by keeping surfaces in and outside of the home clean.

### Oral Health

The first oral exam, by a dentist, should occur within 6 months of a baby getting their first tooth, and no later than 12 months of age. Making this appointment will help establish a dental home. A dental home is an ongoing relationship between a patient and a dentist. For an oral health guideline, visit the Bright Futures website address found on page 74.

### Vision Health

Even if no eye or vision problems are apparent, the American Optometric Association recommends scheduling your baby's first eye assessment at 6 months. InfantSEE®, a public health program, managed by Optometry Cares® – the AOA Foundation, is designed to ensure that eye and vision care becomes an essential part of infant wellness care to improve a child's quality of life. Under this program, participating optometrists provide a comprehensive infant eye assessment between 6 and 12 months of age as a no-cost public service. To find a doctor in your area who can provide a free assessment, visit [infantsee.org](http://infantsee.org).

### Sleep

Babies are sleeping 6–8 hours at a time and parents should support a baby's ability to put themselves to sleep.



### Safety

Babies are starting to be more mobile. Ensure there is a safe environment by placing gates over stairways, using straps on highchairs and strollers, and keeping steps free from debris that may trip you while you are holding baby. Find more safety tips at [safekids.org](http://safekids.org).

### Nutrition

The AAP recommends breastfeeding until at least 12 months of age, or as long as mutually desired by mother and baby. Solid foods added between 6–12 months should be simple in texture and flavor. Early solid foods include baby cereal and fruits and vegetables that can be easily mashed or pureed such as bananas, applesauce, peaches, squash, carrots, and peas. Introduce one new food at a time and allow a few days between food introductions to ensure there are no adverse reactions. Check with your doctor for more information about introducing solid foods. Nine months is the perfect time to introduce using a cup without a lid. By a baby's first birthday, bottles should no longer be used.



### GROSS MOTOR

Gross motor refers to the use and control of the large muscles, such as head, back, arms, and legs, allowing infants and toddlers to explore and interact with people and their environment.

#### What to look for:

- Walks alone with increasing confidence
- Throws, carries, pushes, and pulls objects
- Walks up stairs holding a hand
- Climbs simple structures
- Squats and stands again
- Begins to run, but awkwardly

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Provide items to push and pull, such as a small wagon or grocery cart.
- Encourage child to throw balls to you or at a target.
- Go to the park or playground. Encourage child to physically explore—push the stroller, bend down to examine an object, climb the stairs.
- Provide items to build with, such as large blocks and boxes.
- Provide pillows, small mounds, balance beams, stepping-stones, and other low barriers for child to climb on or over. This develops balance, builds strength, and improves coordination.



### FINE MOTOR

Fine motor refers to the small muscles of the hands, arms, legs, and feet that children use to move objects. Infants and toddlers develop finger and hand and eye coordination allowing them to explore toys, pick up food, and begin to draw and scribble.

#### What to look for:

- Uses thumb and forefinger to pick up small items
- Turns pages in a book
- Shows interest in exploring sensory and art materials

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Provide opportunities for child to string large beads, and explore large Lego® blocks, small building blocks, stacking and nesting toys, puzzles, dolls, trucks, dress-up clothes (purses, boots, and hats), cooking utensils, pots, and pans.
- Provide sturdy board books and encourage child to turn the pages when you read together.
- Provide experiences where child can explore with all senses (touch, sight, smell, hearing, taste), such as sand and water play.



## SELF-HELP

Infants and toddlers develop a growing awareness and interest in their own needs. They first get their needs met by communicating with trusted adults. Then they begin to participate in taking care of themselves.

### What to look for:

- Undresses self with some assistance
- Picks up food with fingers—exploring different textures or tastes
- Feeds self by handling a cup with minimal spilling or a spoon for self-feeding
- Assists with dressing, undressing, diapering
- Washes and dries hands with assistance

### Play activities to support growth:

- Encourage child to help pick up toys and books. This can be turned into a fun game by adding music.
- Continue to provide a variety of foods and encourage the use of a cup and utensils.
- Encourage child to help with dressing and diaper changing, for example giving you the wipes, pulling pants up and down, taking shoes off, or throwing a diaper away.

## BABY TEETH ARE IMPORTANT!

Tooth decay can develop as soon as the first tooth appears. It is important to care for your child's baby teeth because they act as placeholders for adult teeth. If baby teeth are lost too early, the teeth that are left may move and not leave any room for the adult teeth to come in. And tooth decay in baby teeth can be painful and cause health problems like infections, which can at times be life-threatening. It can also lead to teasing and speech development problems.

*First Steps to a Healthy Smile (Copyright © 2008  
American Academy of Pediatrics)*

**HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION****Physical Health**

Your child's doctor will tell you how often to visit for check-ups. During this time period, well-child visits should occur at 12 and 15 months. Although a toddler's level of activity increases significantly at 12 months, his rate of weight gain decreases and eating struggles may arise. A child at this age will test boundaries and look to parents for reactions. Temper tantrums are more frequent as your child struggles with his move toward independence and autonomy. Distracting your child with something new or directing attention to a new activity are excellent ways to reduce unwanted behaviors. Praise your toddler for good behavior and accomplishments.

**Oral Health**

If the child has not yet been to a dentist, be sure to make the child's first dental visit, thereby establishing a dental home. For children with special health care needs, dental visits may need to be more frequent based on their needs. Obtain special equipment (such as a mouth prop) from the dentist to aid in brushing the child's teeth. For children under age 2, brush teeth with plain water twice a day (after breakfast and before bed). For children at increased risk of tooth decay, consult with a dentist or physician about brushing teeth with a pea-sized amount (small smear) of fluoridated toothpaste. For more information on oral health, visit the Bright Futures website address found on page 74.

**Sleep**

It is important to follow a specific bedtime routine so that your child can predict it. Your child should sleep approximately 14 hours per day: 11 hours at night and 3 hours of naps. During this time period you may want to transition from two naps to one longer nap.

**Safety**

Children are upright beings now and are exploring new areas of your home. Be sure your home is child proof including securing cabinets, drawers and other areas that have hazardous materials. For more information, visit [safekids.org](http://safekids.org).

**Nutrition**

Toddlers will find enjoyment participating in family meal times and being independent while feeding themselves. It is important to create a structured meal and snack schedule for the whole family. Offer a wide variety of foods realizing that toddlers need to be exposed to some foods at least 10–15 times before accepting them. Toddlers are more likely to eat foods they see their family eating.

# 18 TO 24 MONTHS

## Key Ideas



### GROSS MOTOR

Gross motor refers to the use and control of the large muscles, such as head, back, arms, and legs, allowing infants and toddlers to explore and interact with people and their environment.

#### What to look for:

- Pounds object with intention such as hammering a peg
- Walks and runs with increasing control
- Squats to pick up a toy and stands again
- Walks upstairs and downstairs holding onto a hand or railing
- Pushes large objects such as boxes, chairs, wagons, strollers
- Enjoys climbing, swinging, sliding, walking up inclines

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Take child to the park or playground.
- Provide a variety of riding toys, rocking toys, and large and small balls.
- Encourage child to walk on different surfaces such as grass, up and down hills, or on sand.
- Play hopping and jumping games.
- Push child on a swing or in a laundry basket on the floor.
- Create mazes and obstacle courses that are age appropriate. For example, invite child to move through tunnels, under chairs, around tree trunks, and over low hills.



### FINE MOTOR

Fine motor refers to the small muscles of the hands, arms, legs, and feet that children use to move objects. Infants and toddlers develop finger and hand and eye coordination allowing them to explore toys, pick up food, and begin to draw and scribble.

#### What to look for:

- May alternate left and right hands for eating and grasping
- Can use a crayon or large paint brush with an overhand grasp (fist) to scribble and imitate marks
- Uses both hands to control or manipulate objects—stack blocks, roll a ball
- Pours liquid from one container to another

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Provide simple puzzles.
- Build with blocks and large Legos® together.
- Provide lots of opportunities for child to explore, create, and “scribble” using a variety of materials, including: play dough, paint, sidewalk chalk, or washable markers.
- String large beads or cereal together.
- During bath time, have different measuring cups and containers for child to measure and pour from one container to the other.



### SELF-HELP

Infants and toddlers develop a growing awareness and interest in their own needs. They first get their needs met by communicating with trusted adults. Then they begin to participate in taking care of themselves.

#### What to look for:

- Cooperates in dressing and undressing self. Can put on some easy clothing
- Uses spoon and child-sized cup
- Indicates wet or soiled diaper by pointing, verbalizing, pulling on diaper
- Communicates wanting dry clothes if wet or muddy

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Encourage child to help dress and undress self, i.e. take off shoes and remove socks, pull up pants, push arms into shirt, etc.
- Allow child to practice making choices—provide two shirts and let child choose. This allows a sense of control and lets child know you value what they like.
- Make getting dressed part of a game. Child will be more attentive (and less wiggly!) when you make it fun.
- Provide bite size finger food so child can feed self.
- Offer child a cup without a lid to drink from at meal times. Spills will happen! Start with small amounts of liquid and gradually increase.
- Encourage child's efforts to communicate toileting needs.

### HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION

#### Physical Health

Your child's doctor will tell you how often to visit for check-ups. During this time period, well-child visits should occur at 18 and 24 months. If your toddler demonstrates aggressive behaviors during this time, brief time-outs are a good way to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Reinforce limits and appropriate behavior. Toilet training should start when your toddler is dry for period of about 2 hours, knows the difference between wet and dry, can pull his pants up and down, wants to learn, and can indicate when he is about to have a bowel movement.

#### Oral Health

If the child has not yet been to a dentist, be sure to make the child's first dental visit, thereby establishing a dental home. For children with special health care needs, dental visits may need to be more frequent based on their needs. Obtain special equipment (such as a mouth prop) from the dentist to aid in brushing the child's teeth.

For children under age 2, brush teeth with plain water twice a day (after breakfast and before bed). For children at increased risk of tooth decay, consult with a dentist or physician about brushing teeth with a pea-sized amount (small smear) of fluoridated toothpaste.

For children ages 2 and above, brushing the teeth with no more than a pea-sized amount (small smear) of fluoridated toothpaste twice a day (after breakfast and before bed). Making sure the child spits out the toothpaste after brushing, but does not rinse with water. The small amount of fluoridated toothpaste that remains in the mouth helps prevent tooth decay.

For effective plaque removal, make sure that a parent brushes the child's teeth. Because brushing requires good fine motor control, young children cannot clean their teeth without parental help. Typically by age 7 or 8, they can clean their teeth effectively but should be supervised by a parent.

Discuss with a dentist the need to apply dental sealants (thin plastic coatings applied to pits and fissures on the chewing surfaces of the teeth) to prevent tooth decay by creating a physical barrier against dental plaque. Dental sealants should be applied shortly after teeth erupt.

For more information on oral health, visit the Bright Futures website address found on page 74.



### **Sleep**

It is still important for your child to get approximately 14 hours of rest per day. Your child is now starting to assert independence so it is important to provide your toddler with some acceptable bedtime choices while still maintaining a routine.

### **Safety**

Children at this age are curious about their environment. Encourage them to explore play equipment safely and utilize helmets on riding toys. Child safety helmets are available through Safe Kids Wyoming.

### **Nutrition**

Offer foods from all 5 food groups, continuing to offer new foods. Have familiar foods available at each meal. Allow the child to stop eating at the earliest sign of unwillingness. Limit distractions during meals by turning off the TV and electronic devices. Provide breakfast, lunch, dinner, and 2–3 healthy snack at the same time every day.

## WHY EAT FAMILY-STYLE?

Mealtime is a wonderful time for families to commit to spending quality time together. Unfortunately, research has shown that more families have become the victims of busy schedules and the amount of time they spend together at mealtime becomes less and less frequent. What we do know is that it is important for children to get their parents' undivided attention as well as for parents to get their children's attention. While your children are young, creating positive meal times can help your child with life-long skills. Children can learn by watching parents model good manners, self-help skills, fine motor skills, and positive communication.

Also in support of family-style eating, other research has also shown that children and teenagers who have infrequent family dinners (fewer than three per week) are:

- More likely to develop eating disorders
- Twice as likely to use tobacco or marijuana
- More than one and a half times likelier to use alcohol
- More likely to have poorer academic performance

Good habits begin early, so find ways to have everyone present at the dinner table when children are young, and healthy habits are more likely to continue on into later grades.

*"The Importance of Family Dinners." The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, September 2009.*

### GROSS MOTOR

Gross motor refers to the use and control of the large muscles, such as head, back, arms, and legs, allowing infants and toddlers to explore and interact with people and their environment.

#### What to look for:

- Can jump up and down in place
- Climbs on jungle gym and ladders
- Throws a ball using whole body. Catches a ball by trapping it with arms and hands
- Has increasing control over body movement and is beginning to change speed and direction when running
- Plans and completes movements that require a series of steps—climbing a ladder and going down a slide, crawling under a table and backing out

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Play the child's favorite music and have child jump, dance, or hop on one foot to the rhythm—fast and slow.
- Provide safe musical instruments that make all kinds of sounds. Use household items as rhythm instruments and make musical instruments with materials that are easy to find (empty boxes, plastic bottles, paper tubes). Then have a parade marching around the house, yard, or play area.
- Go to a playground with swings, climbers, ramps, hills, low stairs, and allow child to run, jump, and explore.
- Provide opportunities for child to ride a tricycle.
- Play with scarves, bean bags, foam balls, socks, and large pompoms. Wad paper or material into balls and throw them at a large target or in a box/basket.
- Play pirates and create a treasure map of x's for child to follow. Cut 5–10 large x-shapes from colored paper and lay them in a path leading through your house or yard. Have the path end at a "treasure"—a small healthy snack, sticker, or favorite toy.



### FINE MOTOR

Fine motor refers to the small muscles of the hands, arms, legs, and feet that children use to move objects. Infants and toddlers develop finger and hand and eye coordination allowing them to explore toys, pick up food, and begin to draw and scribble.

#### What to look for:

- Holds object with one hand while manipulating it with the other such as twisting a lid off a container
- Shows more control of drawing materials
- Enjoys messy, creative play, such as finger painting, scribbling, gluing, ripping, taping
- Uses eyes and hands together with more control, such as with stacking blocks or threading beads with large holes

#### Play activities to support growth:

- Build with blocks and other materials together.
- Color or draw with crayons, paint, or finger paint. Paint without brushes. Let child be creative with art by using unusual objects to paint with. Try painting with sponges, the wheels of a toy car, feathers, dropping a plastic basket in paint, apples, potatoes, field corn, or use a paint-covered leaf. Use wide brushes or markers to help child with limited grasping ability.
- With supervision, provide scissors and allow child to snip paper, yarn, etc. with them.
- Have fun in the kitchen! Roll cookie dough into fun shapes to bake.
- Allow child to hold a book and turn the pages as you read together.

## SELF-HELP

Infants and toddlers develop a growing awareness and interest in their own needs. They first get their needs met by communicating with trusted adults. Then they begin to participate in taking care of themselves.

### What to look for:

- Continues to progress with self-feeding and uses a spoon or a fork more independently
- Pours liquid from a small pitcher into a cup with some help
- Continues to work on dressing self:
  - Able to put on clothing except for buttoning
  - Puts on shoes (does not lace, but can manage Velcro fastening)
  - Puts on own jacket and hat
- Shows increased interest and success with toileting skills:
  - Increasing bowel and bladder control
  - Willingness to use toilet
  - Willingness to wash hands
- Participates in sleeping routines—getting book, arranging pillows or comfort items
- Cooperates/assists with tooth brushing
- Uses tissue to wipe nose with assistance
- Shows interest in helping or imitating caregiver tasks—can help clean up toys with caregiver assistance



### Play activities to support growth:

- Give child lots of chances to do “real” jobs. Helping you with chores offers many opportunities to take on a responsibility and feel successful, such as:
  - Preparing meals—tossing lettuce into a bowl, pouring milk into cereal, breaking eggs.
  - Matching socks or separating shirts from pants, folding towels.
  - Watering plants, dusting.
- Eat meals together as a family providing child silverware and model how to use it.
- Provide a regular cup and a small pitcher at meal times allowing child to pour own milk, water, or juice.
- Allow child to help pick out own clothes and encourage child to help put them on.
- Provide many opportunities and encouragement to use the toilet when child shows interest. Allow child to sit on toilet and spend time in the bathroom.

**HEALTH, SAFETY AND NUTRITION****Physical Health**

Your child's doctor will tell you how often to visit for check-ups. During this time period, well-child visits should occur at 24 and 36 months. Daily active play and exercise are important for preventing childhood obesity. Enjoy being physically active as a family. The AAP recommends that children older than 2 limit television and video viewing to no more than 1–2 hours of quality programming per day. Help your child wash his hands after diaper changes or toileting and before eating. Teach your child to sneeze/cough into his shoulder to prevent spread of germs.

**Oral Health**

If the child has not yet been to a dentist, be sure to make the child's first dental visit, thereby establishing a dental home. For children with special health care needs, dental visits may need to be more frequent based on their needs. Obtain special equipment (such as a mouth prop) from the dentist to aid in brushing the child's teeth.

For children ages 2 and above, brushing the teeth with no more than a pea-sized amount (small smear) of fluoridated toothpaste twice a day (after breakfast and before bed). Making sure the child spits out the toothpaste after brushing, but does not rinse with water. The small amount of fluoridated toothpaste that remains in the mouth helps prevent tooth decay.

For effective plaque removal, make sure that a parent brushes the child's teeth. Because brushing requires good fine motor control, young children cannot clean their teeth without parental help. Typically by age 7 or 8, they can clean their teeth effectively but should be supervised by a parent.

Discuss with a dentist the need to apply dental sealants (thin plastic coatings applied to pits and fissures on the chewing surfaces of the teeth) to prevent tooth decay by creating a physical barrier against dental plaque. Dental sealants should be applied shortly after teeth erupt.



For more information on oral health, visit the Bright Futures website address on page 74.

**Vision Health**

All children aged 36–72 months should be screened annually (best practice) or at least once (acceptable minimum standard) during the interval between their third and sixth birthdays.

**Sleep**

Children still require approximately 11 hours of sleep per night and a nap during the day. Your child will be transitioning between sleep patterns during this phase which makes it important for your child to have the ability to put him/herself back to sleep. This is also a period where you might be transitioning the child into a toddler bed from a crib so it is a good idea to create an award system for remaining in her bed through the night.

**Safety**

Children at this age want to assert their independence. Be sure to talk about safety on sidewalks and streets and in parks such as holding hands to cross streets. It is important to set boundaries for children at this age. See social emotional development for more information.

**Nutrition**

Involving children in shopping and cooking activities helps—see the self-help section on page 69 for examples of “real” jobs for children to help with cooking. Parents are responsible for choosing the foods, time and locations for eating. The child is responsible for if they are going to eat and how much. If you do your job, trust your child to do their job. For more nutritional guidance, see [ellynatterinstitute.org](http://ellynatterinstitute.org).

notes

A large rectangular area with a blue border and horizontal blue lines, intended for writing notes. The lines are evenly spaced and cover most of the page's width and height.



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**Maryland: Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care for Young Children (Birth-3 years of age).** (2007). [www.dhr.state.md.us/cca/pdfs/guidechild.pdf](http://www.dhr.state.md.us/cca/pdfs/guidechild.pdf)

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**Supporting Maine's Infants and toddlers: Guidelines for Learning and Development** <http://www.maine.gov/education/fouryearold/documents/infantsandtoddlerguidelines.pdf>

**Tennessee Early Childhood/ Early Developmental Standards** (2004) <http://www.state.tn.us/education/ci/earlychildhood/>.

### RESOURCES

**The Alliance for Childhood** <http://www.allianceforchildhood.org>

"The Loss of Child's Play: A Public Health Issue" Policy Brief. Nov. 2010.

**Baby Sign** <http://www.babies-and-sign-language.com/>

**Brazelton Touchpoints Center** <http://www.touchpoints.org/faculty.html>

**Bright Futures Oral Health** <http://www.brightfutures.org/oralhealth/about.html>

**Bright Futures Oral Health Pocket Guide** <http://mcoralhealth.org/PDFs/BFOHPocketGuide.pdf>

**Developing Child-Harvard University** <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

**Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center** <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

**Healthy Child Care Tummy Time** <http://healthychildcare.org/pdf/sidstummytime.pdf>

**ITFDC** <http://www.infanttoddler.com>

**Infant-Toddler Development** <http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/toddlers/development/development.htm>

**Kids Health Safe Environment Checklist** [http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/home/household\\_checklist.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/home/household_checklist.html)

**MedlinePlus: Infant and Toddler Development** <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/infantandtoddlerdevelopment.html>

**National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center** <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/>

**NNCC Homepage** [http://cyfernet.ces.ncsu.edu/cyfdb/browse\\_3.php?cat\\_id=462&category\\_name=infants+and+Toddlers&search=NNCC&search\\_type=browse](http://cyfernet.ces.ncsu.edu/cyfdb/browse_3.php?cat_id=462&category_name=infants+and+Toddlers&search=NNCC&search_type=browse)

**Parents Action Store** <http://www.iamyourchild.com>

**Parents as Teachers** <http://www.parentsasteachers.org>

**Prevent Blindness** <http://www.preventblindness.org/>

**Program for Infant-Toddler Care (PITC)** <http://www.pitc.org/>

**Resources for Parents about Kids Health** <http://kidshealth.org>

**Wyoming Department of Family Services** <http://dfsweb.wyo.gov>

**WY Quality Counts** [www.wyqualitycounts.org](http://www.wyqualitycounts.org)

**Zero To Three** [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

## acknowledgements

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## 2015 updates

Wyoming Department of Health, Maternal Child Health Unit

Wyoming Department of Family Services

Wyoming Department of Workforce Services

Linden – Design



# WYOMING EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES

For Children Ages 0-3

.....

Early Learning Guidelines describes the characteristics, skills, and knowledge we want children in Wyoming to develop from birth to 36 months of age.

.....

**Brought to you by: Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council**

.....

2015 Revision brought to you by: Wyoming Department of Health, Behavioral Health Division, Early Intervention Unit; Wyoming Department of Health, Maternal Child Health Unit; Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, WY Quality Counts; Wyoming Department of Family Services; Parents as Teachers through HRSA Grant #D90MC257067

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