

Early Learning and Development Guidelines

Older Infants 9 to 18 Months



“A mother was trying to get her 13 month-old boy to stand by himself. He would get his legs bent with feet on the floor, but his head was still on the floor, too. All of a sudden, he rolled up into a squat. Then he pulled himself up almost to standing. And boom! Down he went to sit on the floor again. But he thought this was fun! He’d pull himself up and fall back down over and over, laughing. Eventually he got the hang of it and could stand on his own next to his excited and proud mom.”

Sabrina Fields, Home Visitor, Denise Louie Education Center, Seattle

WHAT YOU'LL FIND HERE

First there are some questions for families to reflect on. They offer a springboard for families, caregivers, child care professionals and teachers to talk together about fostering each child's growth and learning.

Next under each area of development, the Guidelines are in two columns. "Children may . . ." provides examples of things that children this age are learning to be, do and know. "Ideas to try with children . . ." offers examples of things families, caregivers, child care professionals, teachers and other caring adults can do to help children learn and develop in healthy ways. Different families may encourage learning and development in different ways.

These Guidelines are a resource. They are not an exhaustive guide to child development, and are not intended to be an assessment tool, a curriculum or a tool to collect data on children.

What families already know about their children

Five questions to reflect on

1. What has your child done that surprised you with a new ability, skill or understanding?
2. How does your child go about trying something new?
3. What does your child really enjoy doing?
4. How does your child respond to new situations or challenges?
5. Who among your family and friends does your child enjoy spending time with? What are some of the things that person does with or teaches your child?

“When working with children, I am constantly amazed at the unlimited potential that each child has. The glow in children’s eyes and excitement on their faces as they learn new skills and reach new achievements is the ultimate reward. We, as adults, have the power and responsibility to keep this glow and excitement alive as children move through their educational journey.”

Lexi Catlin, Early Childhood Professional Development Coordinator, Educational Service District 105



Note: Child continues the growth and learning from the prior age.

1. About me and my family and culture

↓ Children may ...

Family and culture

Older Infants develop trusting relationships with familiar adults

- Respond when someone speaks the child’s name.
- Seek out trusted caregiver(s) for comfort and support.
- Demonstrate fear of unknown people and places.

Self concept

Older Infants show their preferences

- Protest when does not want to do something; know what he or she likes to do.
- Point to indicate what he or she wants.
- Choose things to play with.
- Try to do things on own. Show joy when completing a simple task.

↓ Ideas to try with children ...

Family and culture

Older Infants develop trusting relationships with familiar adults

- Hold, cuddle, hug, talk and play with child.
- Respond consistently to child’s requests for attention or help. Soothe child in distress with closeness and words.
- Involve your child in family and cultural traditions, rituals, routines and activities.
- Prepare for transitions or separations; tell what will happen next; use a consistent departure routine.
- Arrange a meeting with all the adults caring for your child, to become acquainted.

Self concept

Older Infants show their preferences

- Respond in a positive and helpful way to child’s moods, gestures, words and facial expressions.
- Use your child’s name when talking with him/her.
- Talk with your child about parts of the body and what they do (“We use our teeth to chew”).
- Provide objects for the child to learn to use.
- Be aware that change of routine, being overtired, or being ill may result in more protests and resistance.

↓ Children may ...

Self management

Older Infants use trusted adult as a secure base from which to explore

- Look for caregiver's response in uncertain situations or when trying something new. Test caregiver's response, such as reaching for a forbidden object, then looking to see how caregiver responds.
- Move away from caregiver to explore environment; may do so repeatedly.
- Pay attention to an object a caregiver is looking at or talking about.
- Make an effort at times to reengage a caregiver's attention if he or she is distracted.

Older Infants begin to participate in repeated routines

- Participate in repeated routines, such as lifting arms toward caregiver to be picked up.
- Follow some rules and routines, and simple directions.

Older infants continue to express emotions

- Either relax or cry harder when adult pays attention. Grow more confident when encouraged to release strong feelings.
- Express and respond to a variety of emotions.

Learning to learn

- Use all senses and a variety of motions to explore.
- Learn through play and interaction with others.
- Try different approaches to reaching a desired object or achieving a goal.
- Make creative use of items, such as turning a bucket upside down to be the base for a tower.
- Actively play games with caregivers that involve repetition, such as peek-a-boo; anticipate own turn.
- Experiment to see if objects have the same effects, such as shaking a stuffed animal to see if it makes a noise like a rattle.
- Apply something already learned to something new, such as banging on a drum to make a sound, then banging on a bucket.
- Repeat a simple activity until successful.
- Stay focused on an activity for a sustained period of time.
- Begin to be able to hold information in mind (such as the location of a hidden object) and keep track of simple changes (track the movement of a hidden object).

↓ Ideas to try with children ...

Self management

Older Infants use trusted adult as a secure base from which to explore

- Provide a safe and interesting environment for the child to explore; stay nearby.
- Stay close to your child in a new setting for reassurance; show your trust and respect for adults that are new to the child.
- Point out interesting objects or events to your child.

Older Infants begin to participate in repeated routines

- Continue consistent routines for daily activities such as mealtimes and naptimes; give child a chance to participate more (e.g. help with dressing, using spoon).
- Talk with your child about routines and any changes to the routine, if appropriate.
- Give simple directions and give the child time to respond.

Older infants continue to express emotions

- Let the child express unhappy feelings and distress; respond with closeness and soothing words.
- Respond with words and understanding to new emotional expressions, such as surprise, interest.
- Help your child learn to calm self by using a favorite toy or blanket, talking to self.
- Give your child choices when appropriate.
- State rules in positive ways (such as "we use a gentle touch").

Learning to learn

- Offer a variety of safe and interesting toys and objects.
- Play with your child every day; encourage curiosity and effort.
- Observe your child to understand his or her temperament, activity level and preferences.
- Give the child time to try out different materials and master them (such as time to put together a puzzle).
- Look at storybooks and tell stories with your child.
- Play hiding games with your child.

2. Building relationships

↓ Children may ...

Interactions with adults

- Enjoy playing with adults.
- Follow adult's pointing or gaze to share the same activity or topic.
- Initiate interactions by smiling, with vocalizations or gestures.

Interactions with peers

- Respond to others' smiles and emotions. React when someone is crying or upset.
- Show interest in other children by watching and trying to imitate them (such as following an older sibling around).
- Recognize other children, their names and their family members.

Social behavior

- Laugh when others laugh.
- Interact with children; notice similarities and differences.
- Take turns in social games.

Problem solving, conflict resolution

- Accept adults stepping in when there are disputes over toys and play.

↓ Ideas to try with children ...

Interactions with adults

- Talk and play with the child; introduce materials and games the child hasn't tried before.
- Model cooperation and sharing in daily activities, such as making a meal with family members.

Interactions with peers

- Give the child opportunities to interact with other children at home, at friends' or relatives' homes, or in small groups.
- Help the child play with others by talking about and showing how to share and take turns.

Social behavior

- Read or tell stories about families and friends.
- Help your child learn to identify family members, friends, and their relationships and roles.
- Show your child how to be kind to others.
- Share stories, songs and poems about your child's culture and traditions.

Problem solving, conflict resolution

- Step in to resolve conflicts; talk about how to resolve the conflict; practice when the child is calm.

“Working in early childhood classrooms I have come to realize: Children are the best teachers I know! A child's smile is the most honest expression I have ever seen.”

Gail Neal, Director, Multicultural Child & Family Hope Center, Tacoma



3. Touching, seeing, hearing and moving around

↓ Children may ...

Using the large muscles (gross motor skills)

- Rock back and forth on hands and knees; creep or crawl.
- Pull self up to a stand, holding onto something or someone.
- Walk holding onto furniture (“cruising”).
- Walk.
- Climb.
- Dance or move to music.

Using the small muscles (fine motor skills)

- Use fingers and toes in play.
- Manipulate balls and other toys. Enjoy using different ways to manipulate, such as pounding, tapping, etc.
- Pick up things (such as cereal O’s) between thumb and forefinger.
- Coordinate eye and hand movements, such as putting things into a box.

Using the senses (sensorimotor skills)

- Use sense of smell, touch, taste, sight and hearing to experience objects.
- Enjoy exploring and responding to different textures, such as hard tabletops or soft cushions.

↓ Ideas to try with children ...

Using the large muscles (gross motor skills)

- Provide safe places and times for child to move around, including frequent opportunities outdoors.
- Provide sturdy furniture or people for the child to use to pull self to standing.
- Offer balls, games, toys and other activities that encourage movement.
- Dance, sing songs, play games, play music to encourage rhythmic movement.
- Let the child walk while outside as well as indoors.

Using the small muscles (fine motor skills)

- Provide toys or safe objects to reach, grasp, shake, poke, drop.
- Continue to play finger plays and hand games with your child.
- Introduce safe objects and toys to encourage more controlled movements and investigation, such as busy boxes, activity centers and such.
- Let the child pick up cereal or similar food to practice thumb and finger grasp.

Using the senses (sensorimotor skills)

- Let your child play on safe rocking, swinging or climbing structures.
- Give your child safe objects with different textures, shapes, colors, smells and sounds; talk about what the child feels, sees, smells, hears.
- Go outside to explore or for playtimes.



“The health and education of the child is the power of the state, the nation and the world!! That trajectory is developmental in nature and starts early, even prior to conception. Success over the child’s life span depends on a healthy start.”

Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH, Director,
Washington State Department of Health

4. Growing up healthy

↓ Children may ...

Daily living skills (personal health and hygiene)

- Begin to be aware of own needs (cry when need changing, get blanket when tired, etc.).
- Soothe self and fall asleep.
- Help with dressing, undressing and diapering.
- Wash and dry hands, with help.

Nutrition and health

- Grasp and drink from a cup.
- Feed self with a spoon.
- Eat finger foods.
- Eat a variety of nutritious foods.
- Be able to control the speed of eating.

Safety

- Be able to tell who are his or her main caregivers and family, and who are strangers.
- Be distracted from unsafe behavior with words (such as “no-no” or “stop”) or signals from adults.
- Look to adults before initiating an unsafe behavior.

↓ Ideas to try with children ...

Daily living skills (personal health and hygiene)

- Give your child a safe and comfortable place to sleep; put infant to sleep on his/her back. See <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/mch/documents/SIDS.pdf>
- Make sure he/she gets adequate sleep.
- Acknowledge child’s understanding of need for diaper change, something to drink, etc.
- Continue to practice cleanliness routines such as washing the child’s hands, brushing teeth and gums, wiping nose etc.; let child help with daily living skills.
- Keep nap and mealtime routines.

Nutrition and health

- Take your child for regular health visits and developmental screenings. Keep immunizations up-to-date. Take your child to a dental clinic or dentist at 1 year of age. (See Child Profile, <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/childprofile/default.htm>)
- Understand the typical signs of illness in a child and respond to help and soothe; get outside help if needed.
- Safely provide a variety of healthy foods and snacks (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, dairy, lean proteins), including foods from various cultures. Limit sweetened beverages overall and juice to one serving per day.
- Let child have opportunity to feed self with spoon and cup, and eat finger food, as appropriate.
- Include your child in family-style meals.
- Avoid screen time (viewing television, DVDs, computers, tablet computers) for the child. (See American Academy of Pediatrics, <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;128/5/1040>)

Safety

- Explain when things are too hot or too cold.
- Use a consistent phrase like “no-no” or “stop” to help child learn to stop unsafe behavior.
- Supervise and guide your child’s activities as he or she gets more active and curious.
- Provide a healthy and safe environment (remove choking hazards, cover electrical outlets, put poisons out of reach, avoid cigarette smoke and mold, etc.).
- Understand the risk factors and signs of child abuse and neglect; respond appropriately. (See <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/What-to-Know-about-Child-Abuse.aspx> and DEL’s Child Care Center Licensing Guidebook, Section 7)

5. Communicating (literacy)

Note: Communication skills begin before birth. Language is an important part of cultural identity. Language skills begin in the child's home language(s). Tribal children may be learning their tribal language at the same time as a home language. Bilingual and bicultural families may speak more than one language at home.

↓ Children may ...

Speaking and listening (language development)

- Turn to the person speaking, and pay attention to what the speaker is looking at or pointing to.
- Turn, stop or speak when name is called.
- Respond appropriately to familiar words (such as clapping when caregiver says “Clap”).
- Point to familiar persons and things in answer to the question “Where is _____?”
- Use words, sounds and gestures to get attention, make requests, comment, greet.
- Use consistent sounds to indicate a specific person or thing, such as saying “dada” for daddy.
- Name familiar people, animals and objects.
- Use eight to 20 understandable words in home language.
- Use single-word speech (such as saying “Up” to be picked up) and short, two-word sentences (“Me go.”).
- If learning two languages, may not use words in the second language, but communicate with gestures and facial expressions.
- Take part in simple conversations.
- Enjoy following single-step directions. (“Bring me the ball”)

Reading

- Make the sounds of familiar words when read to.
- Show awareness of the sounds of spoken words by focusing on the person speaking.
- Point to pictures and words in book; have favorite books; increasingly able to handle books, with help; try to turn pages.
- Bring a book to an adult to read aloud.
- Focus attention for a short period of time when looking at books.
- Participate in stories, songs, finger plays and rhymes.

Writing

- Scribble or make marks on paper without help.
- Grasp marker or crayon with fist and mark on paper in any location.

↓ Ideas to try with children ...

Speaking and listening (language development)

- Read story books and tell stories with your child.
- Describe everyday objects and activities (such as red car, rock the baby); talk about daily routines.
- Introduce new words in context (“This is a juicy peach”).
- Repeat questions and directions as needed; demonstrate or show the answer if needed; ask who, what and where questions.
- Play naming games while exploring outside, looking at books, putting toys away, etc.
- Acknowledge child's attempts to say new words; expand what child says.
- Show you understand your child's words and gestures; have conversations.

Reading

- Read books, recite lyrics and poems with rhymes and repetitive language.
- Select books with familiar activities; introduce books from diverse cultures; use the library if available.
- Have child point to pictures as you read or tell the story.
- Use cloth, plastic or board books. Show how to hold the book and turn pages. Be aware that child may treat a book as a toy.
- Sing songs and play games with the sounds of words and rhymes.

Writing

- Provide your child with writing and drawing tools (crayons, markers, chalk, etc.) and surfaces (paper, sidewalk).
- Write your child's name and say the letters or sounds as you write.
- Draw and label pictures while talking about family members and familiar activities.
- Have your child help “sign” greeting cards with name or handprint.

“Inspiring a generation of life-long learners should be the foundation of our educational system from birth and beyond. If a child loves to learn, our job as educators is made easy. Play, wonder, creativity and intention should be our roadmap to achieve this goal!”

Diane Kroll, Director Early Childhood,
Puget Sound Educational Service District



6. Learning about my world

↓ Children may ...

Knowledge (cognition)

- Observe others' activities. Then imitate their actions, gestures and sounds.
- Use imitation to make a desired effect, such as activating a toy, or obtaining an object.
- Explore things in many ways, such as shaking, banging, poking and throwing.
- Enjoy playing hiding games; locate an object that has been hidden from view.
- Use objects as intended, such as pushing buttons on a toy phone, or drinking from a cup.
- Use objects as a means to an end, such as using a bucket to take toys from one place to another.
- Seek caregiver's help by making sounds, words, facial expressions or gestures to obtain an object or start an activity.
- Match similar objects.
- Begin make-believe play and imitate the actions of others, such as rocking and feeding a baby doll.
- Explore objects in nonconventional ways.

Math

- Understand the idea of “more” related to food or play. Use gestures to ask for more.
- Imitate rote counting using some names of numbers.
- Play with toys and objects of different size and shape.
- Put things together, such as simple matching puzzles, nesting cups.
- Follow simple directions that use words like “in,” “on,” “up” and “down.”

↓ Ideas to try with children ...

Knowledge (cognition)

- Give your child safe experiences that show cause and effect, such as turning the lights off or on. Show and explain cause and effect. (“If you throw your toy out of the crib, you can't reach it.”)
- Give your child things to explore; try assembly toys, such as big pop beads or simple puzzles.
- Play games with your child that show that things that are hidden are still there, such as peek-a-boo and hide and seek.
- Explain how different experiences relate to each other. (“It's raining so we need the umbrella.”)
- Help your child try to do things in different ways, such as stacking blocks in a different order.
- Respond to your child's signals for help but also encourage trying a little longer.
- Show your child books and pictures with people who look like the child and people from other cultural groups.
- Provide safe objects, dolls or other toys that encourage the beginnings of pretend play.

Math

- Count out toys or objects, let child touch while you count. Name colors and shapes.
- Sing songs and read books with numbers and counting, and that name colors or identify shapes.
- Involve your child in activities that show “more” and “less.”
- Offer your child blocks with numerals or other number toys.
- Give the child toys that have a set of sizes, such as nesting cups or stackable rings.
- Explain and give your child the chance to sort and classify (“Please bring me my white shoes.”).
- Use number words to say how many are in a group.

↓ Children may ...

Science

- Take action to achieve a goal, such as fitting puzzle pieces together, or activating a toy.
- Express surprise and delight to play outdoors and with natural elements, such as water, sand and mud.
- Express excitement when seeing animals, birds and fish. Show interest in animals and representations of animals.
- Notice the characteristics of natural things, such as leaves, or events, such as rain or wind.
- Respond to caregiver's guidance on how to act appropriately toward and around living things.
- Enjoy using or playing with technology objects, such as a wind-up toy.

Social Studies

- Be eager for regular daily activities.
- Recognize the start and end of an event (such as by clapping at the end of a song).
- Explore spaces, such as trying to fit into an open cardboard box.
- Recognize some familiar places, such as home, store, grandma's house.
- Know where favorite toys or foods are kept.
- Know where the trash can and recycle bin are.

Arts

- Try a variety of art materials, such as paint, crayons, markers, play dough, clay.
- Try a variety of sound sources, such as rattles, bells, drums.
- Show interest in sounds, tones, voices, music, colors and shapes.
- Enjoy rhythms and movement.

↓ Ideas to try with children ...

Science

- Join your child in exploring objects, things found in nature.
- Sing songs and read books together about plants and animals, and how they grow and change.
- Visit a farm, park or zoo to watch animals.
- Show your child how to treat animals respectfully, without harming them.
- Give your child the chance to safely explore dirt, sand and water.
- Talk with your child about changes in the weather.

Social Studies

- Talk about what happens before and after daily routines.
- Show how to care for the environment by picking up trash and discarding it in the right place.

Arts

- Use descriptive words to talk about what you and your child are looking at.
- Give your child the chance to try safe art materials.
- Clap, stomp, dance, or finger tap to songs, rhymes and rhythms.
- Expose your child to a variety of voice sounds (singing, speaking, humming) and styles of music.

See also, Parent Help 123 on infant child development, <http://www.parenthelp123.org/infants/child-development>, and more in the Information Resources section.

DIFFERENCES IN DEVELOPMENT

As a parent, you know your toddler best.

You notice things such as how and when your toddler walks, plays with toys, talks, or feeds himself/herself using a spoon or fork. What you are seeing is how your toddler is growing through different stages of development.

Every child grows and develops at his or her own pace. It is important to talk with your toddler's healthcare provider at every visit about the milestones your toddler has reached and what to expect next. It is also important to tell your toddler's healthcare provider if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay. Please make sure to discuss your concerns if:

By age 12 months, your child:

- Doesn't crawl
- Can't stand when supported
- Doesn't search for things that he or she sees you hide
- Doesn't point to things
- Doesn't learn gestures like waving or shaking head
- Doesn't say simple words like "mama" or "dada"
- Has lost skills he or she once had (some backsliding is normal)

By age 18 months, your child:

- Doesn't point to show things to others
- Can't walk
- Doesn't know what familiar things are used for
- Doesn't copy others' actions or words
- Doesn't gain new words
- Doesn't have at least six words
- Doesn't notice when a caregiver leaves or returns
- Has lost skills he or she once had (some backsliding is normal)

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children be screened for general development at the 18-month visit. Ask your child's healthcare provider about your child's developmental screening.

For more information:

Babies can't wait. If there is a question about your child's development, talk with your child's health care provider. If you have concerns about your child's development, you can also call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588. This hotline can tell you about free developmental screening and other services, and give you the name of the Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) in your local area. The FRC can help you find out if your child needs further evaluation.

For concerns about children birth to three years old, you can also find information from the state Department of Early Learning's Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program at <http://www.del.wa.gov/esit> or click on http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/esit/docs/PrescreenChart_English.pdf for more information on developmental milestones.

The Family Health Hotline can also provide information about immunizations, state-sponsored health insurance, and other resources: www.withinreachwa.org. Parent Help 123 offers information on infant development, screening and other resources: <http://www.parenthelp123.org/infants/child-development>

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-800-CDC-INFO or at www.cdc.gov/concerned also offers information. See CDC's *Milestone Moments* brochure: http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/MilestoneMomentsEng508.pdf

EARLY TRANSITIONS

Transitions are part of everyday life. Adjusting to new surroundings and people is an important lifelong skill that children need to learn. Children's first transitions are usually between home and a relative's or caregiver's home, or between home and a child care or preschool. A child may have somewhat different routines on different days of the week. Moving from one environment to another can be hard for a child.

What parents, caregivers and teachers can do: Good communication among families, caregivers and teachers is key. Parents can talk with caregivers and teachers early on about the family's traditions, language and daily routines, and the family's and child's preferences for foods and activities. Together, they can look for ways to provide continuity, such as having consistent meal times and familiar foods. Caregivers and teachers can make sure they say the child's and family's name correctly, learn a few key words and phrases in the child's home language, and find out what the child enjoys. They can also include in the care setting or classroom some materials, pictures and/or art that reflect the interests of the child and family.

Parents can talk with their child about the new daily routine. For example, they might say the names of the adults the child will be with, how long the child will be there, and the names of any friends the child will be seeing. Over time, the parents can pay attention to their child's connection with the various caregivers to ensure there are strong attachments.