

Developmental Milestones

Act Early. Learn the signs.



This checklist is a combination of the NSW Personal Health Record (Blue Book) and any Communication Milestones as indicated by Speech Pathology Australia. Use this checklist to track your child's development.

If you notice your child isn't meeting any of their milestones, take this checklist to your healthcare provider to discuss your observations and concerns.

8 Weeks Milestones

Social/emotional

- Begins to smile at people
- Can briefly calm self (may bring hands to mouth and suck on hand)
- Tries to look at parent.

Language/communication

- Coos, makes gurgling sounds
- Turns head towards sounds

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Pays attention to faces
- Begins to follow things with eyes and recognise people at a distance
- Begins to act bored (cries, fussy) if activity doesn't change

Movement/physical development

- Can hold head up and begins to push up when lying on tummy
- Makes smoother movements with arms and legs

Act Early by talking to your child's doctor or child and family health nurse if your child:

- Doesn't respond to loud sounds
- Doesn't watch things as they move
- Doesn't smile at people
- Doesn't bring hands to mouth
- Can't hold head up when pushing up when on tummy



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6 Months Milestones

Social/emotional

- Knows familiar faces and begins to know if someone is a stranger
- Likes to play with others, especially parents
- Responds to other people's emotions and often seems happy
- Likes to look at self in a mirror

Language/communication

- Responds to sounds by making sounds
- Strings vowels together when babbling ("ah", "eh", "oh") and likes taking turns with parent while making sounds
- Responds to own name
- Makes sounds to show joy and displeasure
- Begins to say consonant sounds (jabbering with "m", "b")

Cognitive (learning, problem-solving)

- Looks around at things nearby
- Brings things to mouth
- Shows curiosity about things and tries to get things that are out of reach
- Begins to pass things from one hand to the other

Movement/physical development

- Rolls over in both directions (front to back, back to front)
- Begins to sit without support
- When standing, supports weight on legs and might bounce
- Rocks back and forth, sometimes crawling backward before moving forward.

Act Early by talking to your child's doctor or child and family health nurse if your child:

- doesn't try to get things that are in reach
- shows no affection for caregivers
- doesn't respond to sounds around him/her
- has difficulty getting things to mouth
- doesn't make vowel sounds ("ah", "eh", "oh")
- doesn't roll over in either direction
- doesn't laugh or make squealing sounds
- seems very stiff, with tight muscles
- seems very floppy, like a rag doll.



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12 Months Milestones

Social/emotional

- Is shy or nervous with strangers
- Cries when mum or dad leaves
- Has favourite things and people
- Shows fear in some situations
- Hands you a book when he wants to hear a story
- Repeats sounds or actions to get attention
- Puts out arm or leg to help with dressing
- Plays games such as "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake"

Language/communication

- Responds to simple spoken requests
- Uses simple gestures, like shaking head "no" or waving "bye-bye"
- Makes sounds with changes in tone (sounds like speech)
- Says "mama" and "dada" and exclamations like "uh-oh!"
- Tries to say words you say
- Understands about 10 words
- Responds to their name
- Recognises greetings and gestures, such as 'hi' and 'bye-bye'
- Recognises a few familiar people and objects (e.g., mummy, blankie, teddy)
- Makes eye contact.
- Starts to use sounds, gestures, and say a few words
- Continues to babble
- Copies different sounds and noises.

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Explores things in different ways, like shaking, banging, throwing
- Finds hidden things easily
- Looks at the right picture or thing when it's named
- Copies gestures
- Starts to use things correctly. For example, drinks from a cup, brushes hair
- Bangs two things together
- Puts things in a container, takes things out of a container
- Lets things go without help
- Pokes with index (pointer) finger
- Follows simple directions like "pick up the toy"

Movement/physical development

- Gets to a sitting position without help
- Pulls up to stand, walks holding on to furniture ("cruising")
- May take a few steps without holding on
- May stand alone

Act Early by talking to your child's doctor or child and family health nurse if your child:

- doesn't crawl
- can't stand when supported
- doesn't search for things that she sees you hide
- doesn't say single words like "mama" or "dada"
- doesn't learn gestures like waving or shaking head
- doesn't point to things
- loses skills he/she once had



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18 Months Milestones

Social/emotional

- Likes to hand things to others as play
- May have temper tantrums
- May be afraid of strangers
- Shows affection to familiar people
- Plays simple pretend, such as feeding a doll
- May cling to caregivers in new situations
- Points to show others something interesting
- Explores alone but with parent close by

Language/communication

- Understands up to 50 words and some short phrases
- Follows simple instructions (e.g., 'throw the ball')
- Points to familiar objects when named
- Points to some pictures in familiar books.
- Says 6 to 20 single words – some easier to understand than others, but becoming more consistent
- Copies lots of words and noises
- Names a few body parts
- Uses objects in pretend play (e.g., hold toy phone to their ear and say 'hello?').
- Says several single words
- Says and shakes head "no"
- Points to show someone what he/she wants

Cognitive (learning, problem-solving)

- Knows what ordinary things are for; for example, telephone, brush, spoon
- Points to get the attention of others
- Shows interest in a doll or stuffed animal by pretending to feed
- Points to one body part
- Scribbles on his or her own
- Can follow 1-step verbal commands without any gestures; for example, sits when you say "sit down"

Movement/physical development

- Walks alone
- May walk up steps and run
- Pulls toys while walking
- Can help undress herself/himself
- Drinks from a cup
- Eats with a spoon

Act Early by talking to your child's doctor or child and family health nurse if your child:

- doesn't point to show things to others
- can't walk
- doesn't know what familiar things are for
- doesn't copy others
- doesn't gain new words
- doesn't have at least 6 words
- doesn't notice or mind when a caregiver leaves or returns
- loses skills he or she once had



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2 Years Milestones

Social/emotional

- Copies others, especially adults and older children
- Gets excited when with other children
- Shows defiant behaviour (doing what he or has been told not to)
- Plays mainly beside other children, but is beginning to include other children, such as in chase games

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem solving)

- Finds things even when hidden under two or three covers
- Begins to sort shapes and colours
- Completes sentences and rhymes in familiar books
- Plays simple make-believe games
- Builds towers of 4 or more blocks
- Might use one hand more than the other
- Follows two-step instructions such as "Pick up your shoes and put them in the cupboard"
- Names items in a picture book such as a cat, bird or dog

Movement/physical development

- Climbs well
- Runs easily
- Pedals a tricycle (three-wheel bike)
- Walks up and down stairs, one foot on each step

Language/communication

- Points to things or pictures when they are named
- Knows names of familiar people and body parts
- Says sentences with 2 to 4 words
- Follows simple instructions
- Repeats words overheard in conversation
- Points to things in a book
- Follows simple two part instructions (e.g., 'give me the ball and the car')
- Responds to simple wh-questions, such as 'what' and 'where'.
- Points to several body parts and pictures in books when named
- Understands when an object is 'in' and 'on' something.
- Says more than 50 single words
- Puts two words together (e.g., 'bye teddy', 'no ball')
- Uses their tone of voice to ask a question (e.g., 'teddy go?')
- Says 'no' when they do not want something
- Uses most vowel sounds and a variety of consonants (m, n, p, b, k, g, h, w, t, d)
- Starts to use 'mine' and 'my'.

Act Early by talking to your child's doctor or child and family health nurse if your child:

- falls down a lot or has trouble with stairs
- drools or has very unclear speech
- can't work simple toys (such as peg boards, simple puzzles, turning handles)
- doesn't speak in sentences
- doesn't understand simple instructions
- doesn't play pretend or make-believe
- doesn't want to play with other children or with toys
- doesn't make eye contact
- loses skills he/she once had



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3 Years Milestones

Social/emotional

- Copies adults and friends
- Shows affection for friends without prompting
- Takes turns in games
- Shows concern for a crying friend
- Shows a wide range of emotions
- Understands the idea of "mine" and "his" or "hers"
- Separates easily from either parent
- May get upset with major changes in routine
- Dresses and undresses self

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Can work toys with buttons, levers and moving parts
- Plays make-believe with dolls, animals, and people
- Does puzzles with three or four pieces
- Understands what "two" means
- Copies a circle with pencil or crayon
- Turns book pages one at a time
- Builds towers of more than six blocks
- Screws and unscrews jar lids or turns door handle

Movement/physical development

- Climbs well
- Runs easily
- Pedals a tricycle (three-wheel bike)
- Walks up and down stairs, one foot on each step

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- drools or has very unclear speech
- can't work simple toys (such as peg boards, simple puzzles, turning handles)
- doesn't speak in sentences
- doesn't understand simple instructions
- doesn't play pretend or make-believe

Language/communication

- Follows instructions with two or three steps
- Can name most familiar things
- Understands words like "in", "on", and "under"
- Says first name, age, and gender
- Names a friend
- Says words like "I", "me", and "you" and some plurals (cars, dogs, cats)
- Talks well enough for strangers to understand most of the time
- Carries on a conversation using two to three sentences
- Follows more complex two part instructions (e.g., give me the teddy and throw the ball)
- Understands simple wh-questions, such as 'what', 'where' and 'who'
- Talks about something in the past, but may use '-ed' a lot (e.g., 'he goed there')
- Uses a variety of words for names, actions, locations and descriptions
- Recognises some basic colours.
- Says four to five words in a sentence
- Sorts items into groups when asked (e.g., toys vs food)
- Asks questions using 'what', 'where' and 'who'
- Understands the concepts of 'same' and 'different'
- Has a conversation, but may not take turns or stay on topic.



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4 Years Milestones

Social/emotional

- Enjoys doing new things
- Plays "Mum" and "Dad"
- Is more and more creative with make-believe play
- Would rather play with other children than by self
- Cooperates with other children
- Often can't tell what's real and what's make-believe
- Talks about what she or he likes and what she or he is interested in

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Names some colours and some numbers
- Understands the idea of counting
- Starts to understand time
- Remembers parts of a story
- Understands the idea of "same" and "different"
- Draws a person with 2 to 4 body parts
- Uses scissors
- Starts to copy some capital letters
- Plays board or card games
- Tells you what she or he thinks is going to happen next in a book

Language/communication

- Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as correctly using "he" and "she"
- Tells stories
- Sings a song or says a poem from memory such as the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" or the "Wheels on the Bus"
- Can say first and last name
- Answers most questions about daily tasks
- Understands most wh-questions, including those about a story they have recently heard
- Understands some numbers
- Shows an awareness that some words start or finish with the same sounds.
- Uses words, such as 'and', 'but' and 'because', to make longer sentences
- Describes recent events, such as morning routines
- Asks lots of questions
- Uses personal pronouns (e.g., he/she, me/you) and negations (e.g., don't/can't)
- Counts to five and name a few colours.

Movement/physical development

- Hops and stands on one foot up to 2 seconds
- Catches a bounced ball most of the time
- Pours, cuts with supervision, and mashes own food

Act Early by talking to your child's doctor or child and family health nurse if your child:

- can't jump in place
- has trouble scribbling
- shows no interest in interactive games or make-believe
- ignores other children or doesn't respond to people outside the family
- resists dressing, sleeping or using the toilet
- can't retell a favourite story
- doesn't follow three-part commands
- doesn't understand "same" and "different"
- doesn't use "me" and "you" correctly
- speaks unclearly



Australian Institute of Early Childhood Ltd
(ABN 78640687074)
is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting children in the early years. You can find more information at aiec.org.au

NSW Health Blue Book-Maternal, Child and Family Health.
Available online: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/Pages/child-blue-book.aspx>
Speech Pathology Australia. Communication milestones.
Available online: <https://speechpathologyaustralia.cld.bz/Communication-Milestones-A4-sheets>
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5 Years Milestones

Language/communication

- Follows three-part instructions (e.g., put on your shoes, get your backpack and line up outside)
- Understands time related words (e.g., 'before', 'after', 'now' and 'later')
- Starts thinking about the meaning of words when learning
- Understands instructions without stopping to listen
- Begins to recognise some letters, sounds and numbers.
- Uses well-formed sentences to be understood by most people
- Takes turns in increasingly longer conversations
- Tells simple, short stories with a beginning, middle and end
- Uses past and future verbs correctly (e.g., 'went', 'will go')
- Uses most speech sounds, but still may have difficulties with 's', 'r', 'l' and 'th'.

