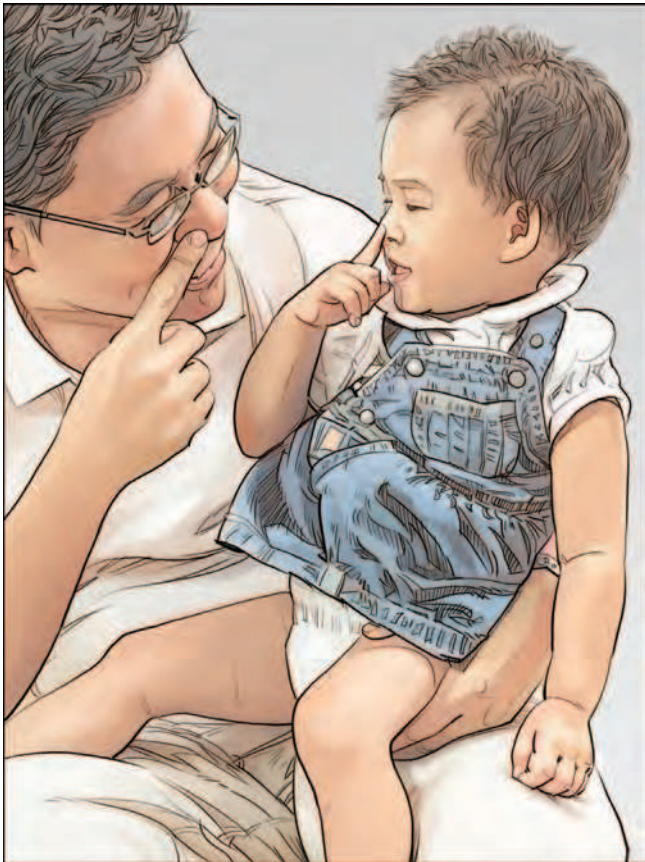


# Child Development in the Toddler Years

You may have heard the saying “the first years last forever.” This means that the experiences that your toddler has in the early months and years of life affect her health, well-being, and coping skills for the rest of her life.



## The Five Areas of Child Development

During the toddler years, your child will go through a time of rapid change in all areas of development. Many experts divide child development into five areas: physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language.

The different areas of development are closely linked. The progress your toddler makes in one area affects—and is affected by—the progress she makes in another area. No one area of child development is more important than any other.

Many things affect your toddler’s growth and development, including:

- The genes she inherited.
- The kind of nurturing and support she receives from you and her other caregivers.
- Her experiences in your home and community.

Learning about child development can help guide your parenting. The following table describes each area of child development. It also gives you some parenting suggestions for each area.

Portions of content provided by *Invest in Kids*. (For more information on *Invest in Kids*, see Child Development in the Resources chapter.)



### Physical Development

Usually divided into gross and fine motor skills.

Gross motor skill is the control of the large muscles that he needs for physical activities such as sitting, crawling, walking, running, climbing, and jumping.

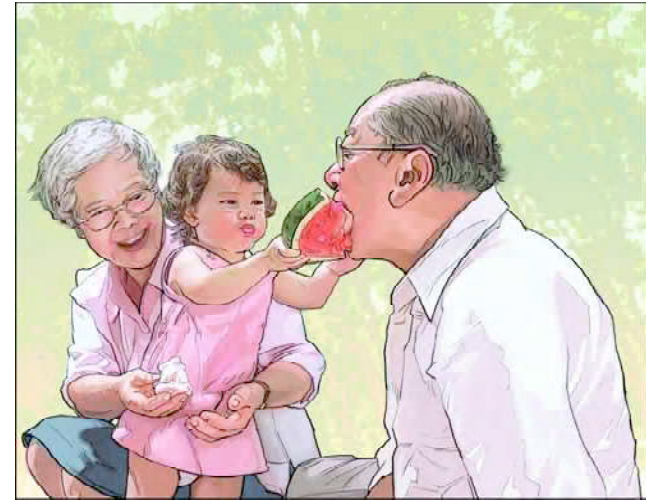
Fine motor skill is the control of the muscles in the hands and fingers. It also covers hand-eye co-ordination, needed for actions such as reaching for and picking something up.

### Parenting Suggestions

Help him develop gross and fine motor skills through physical activity.

He'll do well when you:

- Create safe, interesting places and activities for him to explore and be active in.
- Respond to him with physical affection (hugs and cuddles). Physical touch helps his brain release hormones that he needs to grow.



### Social Development

Learning to make friends and get along with others.

### Parenting Suggestions

Help her learn to co-operate, trust, and become confident with others.

She'll do well when you:

- Respond as often as you can when she shows that she wants help and attention.



### Emotional Development

Learning to know and show a full range of feelings.

#### Parenting Suggestions

Help her learn to know emotions in herself and others, and how to show feelings.

She'll do well when you:

- Help her know and show her feelings.
- Comfort her often.
- Set reasonable limits and consequences.



### Cognitive Development

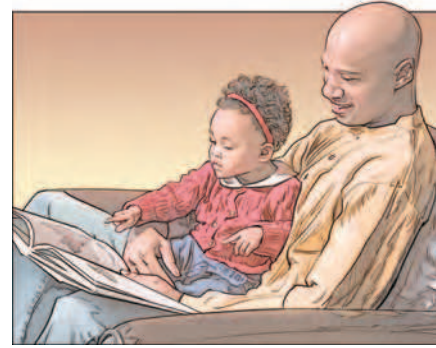
Learning to think, remember, imagine, gather and organize information, solve problems, and develop judgment.

#### Parenting Suggestions

Help him become a lifelong learner.

He'll do well when you:

- Give him safe and stimulating chances to play.
- Play with him.
- Praise and encourage him.



### Language Development

Learning to communicate through talking and listening.

#### Parenting Suggestions

Help her develop language skills.

She'll do well when you:

- Tell her stories and talk to her.
- Listen to her and encourage her to talk.
- Read to her as much as you can.
- Sing, talk, and play with her.
- Respond to her signals, such as cries, sounds, movements, and eye contact.

## Child Development by Age

The overall pattern of child development is the same for most toddlers. Most reach the milestones of development at about the same pace. However, sometimes a toddler will develop more quickly or more slowly than expected.



### To Do

#### Keeping Track of Your Toddler's Development

As a parent, you are the best source of information about your toddler's development. To add to your knowledge, there are tools that you or your health-care provider can use to review your toddler's development. One tool is called the *Ages and Stages Questionnaires*. Another is the *Nipissing District Developmental Screen*. To learn more, contact your public health unit or the infant development program in your community.

The charts on the following pages show the skills you are most likely to see at each stage. They will also give you ideas about how you can support your toddler's healthy development.

## From 6–9 Months

### Physical Development

#### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Sit steadily without help for longer periods.
- Sit and bounce on his bottom.
- Push up from his tummy onto his hands and knees, and rock back and forth.
- Sit up by pushing from a crawling position with his arms at his sides.
- Crawl with an object in one or both hands.
- Help when you pull him up to a standing position.
- Stand firmly on his legs when held in a standing position.
- Progress from holding things in his palm to using his thumb and first and second fingers.
- Rake at tiny objects with his hands.
- Pick up larger objects with his fingers.
- Chew or gum finely minced foods (six to seven months).
- Feed himself small pieces of food (by nine months).
- Pick up a cup and put a cup to his mouth.
- Pick up, hold, and control an object using both hands.
- Bang objects together.
- Explore objects by grabbing, shaking, sliding, and banging them.
- Lower himself to sitting from a hanging-on position.
- Crawl up stairs.
- Step sideways while holding on to furniture.
- Throw objects.
- Build a tower of two blocks.
- Point with his index finger.
- Poke his fingers into holes or anything that looks interesting.
- Take objects out of containers.
- Release objects with no fuss.

#### How You Can Help Physical Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Get down on the floor at his level.
- Provide safe places for him to crawl and explore.
- Encourage movement. For example, put some distance between you and him when playing on the floor, put toys just a bit out of reach, or hold his hands and go for a walk.
- Give lots of opportunities for “tummy time” and crawling. (See p. 16 for more information on tummy time.)
- Provide soft pieces of food for snacks and meals to develop finger control and chewing skills.
- Offer him a spoon (but he won’t be able to use it correctly).
- Roll a ball back and forth on the floor with him while he’s sitting.
- Make noisemakers with plastic bottles for him to grasp and shake.
- Play finger games.

#### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Pull himself up using furniture.
- Move by shuffling on his bottom or turning in circles on his stomach.
- Stand by himself while holding on to your hands. He may then put one foot in front of the other.
- Extend his arms to keep from falling backwards.

# 6-9 months

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## Social Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Play social games, such as peekaboo or patty cake.
- Want to take part in activities with people.
- Point to things for a reason.
- Seek attention.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Show fear of people he doesn't know.
- Begin copying what he sees, such as sticking out his tongue or opening his mouth.
- Show he feels some control over his life. For example, he may show you a toy but won't give it to you.
- Learn to protect himself and his things.
- Won't do something he doesn't want to do. For example, he may push a spoon away when you try to feed him.
- Focus when doing something, ignoring other things that are going on.

### How You Can Help Social Development

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- Continue to respond when he shows that he wants help or attention.
- Keep to regular routines.
- Model good manners: use "please" and "thank you."
- Play "seeking" games to help him understand he is not part of you: "Where's Liam?"
- Play with him and invite others to play too.
- Join a playgroup for parents and toddlers.
- Follow his lead; let him decide what to do.
- Go slowly. Help him approach new people by following his pace.
- Have him eat at the table with you and others.



# 6-9 months

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## Emotional Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Show strong feelings about likes and dislikes.
- Laugh.
- Not want to be away from you or other caregivers.
- Show fear (possibly by crying) if he is scared.

### How You Can Help Emotional Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Smile at him.
- Hold and comfort him, especially when he is upset, sick, or hurt.
- Create and stick to routines.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Look worried about loud noises, such as vacuum cleaners, loud stern voices, or banging.
- Show clear likes or dislikes for certain people, objects, or places.
- Be sensitive to other children and perhaps cry if they cry.
- React to other people's moods. If you are sad, he may cry. If you are happy, he may laugh along with you.

# 6–9 months

## Key Points

### Crawling and “Tummy Time”

Putting your child on her tummy for some supervised play time helps her get ready for crawling. Tummy time is when you lay your child on her stomach or side when she is awake. Your child can be on the floor, on a safe firm surface, on your lap, or on your chest. It is a time when you can show her toys or pictures, sing or talk, or massage her back. When on her tummy, your child pushes up with her arms and raises her head in order to see around. Tummy time will help your child develop the upper body strength needed for crawling. Crawling usually develops between six and eight months.

Until she can roll over on her own, put her to sleep on her back to decrease the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). (See p. 100 for more information on safe sleeping.)

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## Cognitive Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Notice the size of objects, reaching for smaller objects with her finger and thumb and larger objects with both hands.
- Know whether objects are near or far.
- Understand how objects can be used. For example, she may bang blocks on the floor, shake a noisemaker harder, or push buttons on a toy.
- Search briefly for an object when it is taken away from her.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Drop objects and then look for them.
- Understand the concepts of “in” and “out.” For example, she may drop several large beads in a cup, dump them out, and repeat.
- Use problem-solving skills. For example, she may pull the string of a pull toy to get it closer.
- Start to combine known behaviours in new ways. For example, she may reach and crawl at the same time.
- May think of herself when she sees a child in photos or a mirror.

### How You Can Help Cognitive Development

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- Continue to breastfeed.
- Give lots of praise for her new skills.
- Give her a range of objects or toys (fill-and-dump toys; toys for stacking, nesting, and sorting; toys with a variety of textures, shapes, sounds, colours, and weights; childproof books). (See p. 48 for more information on toys.)
- Read toddler books with her.
- Play copy games, such as sticking out your tongue or banging a pan.
- Play hide-and-seek games.
- Play in-and-out games, such as putting blocks in a container and taking them out.
- Dance, play music, and sing with her.



# 6-9 months

## Key Points

### Sign Language

Many community centres offer sign language classes for toddlers and parents, even when both child and parent are hearing. This may be a fun way to communicate with your toddler before he learns to talk. Remember that he has learned to understand many more words than he can show with movement or sounds.

## Family Stories

### Just Out of Reach

When our daughter, Maya, was just starting to crawl and move around, I would get on the floor and sit or lie just out of her reach with a toy. She would work hard to reach the toy and me. I would then talk about the toy: "What a great teddy. Yes, it's teddy bear." Then I would pick up another toy and move a few feet away. Again, she would work away to get to me. It kept her occupied and active, and helped her learn words. If I were tired at the end of the day, I would lie there reading a book until she got to me. We both were happy.

## Language Development

### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Say several sounds (ma, mu, da, di, ba) all in one breath.
- Repeat sounds (da-da-da, ga-ga-ga).
- Respond to some words, such as "Mommy," "Daddy," or "ball."
- Babble.
- Turn to listen to familiar sounds, such as the telephone.
- Look at you when you say his name.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Recognize familiar words like "no-no."
- Do simple things, such as showing you a ball or waving goodbye, when asked.

### How You Can Help Language Development

- Talk to him whenever you can. This is how he'll learn language: "Let's change your diaper," "Let's find your doll."
- Respond to his babbling sounds with the words he is trying to say. Say "mama" or "dada" when he gets close to the words.
- Give names and labels to things that catch his attention.
- Use simple sentences to talk about what each of you is doing: "We are looking at the cat," or "Daddy is throwing the ball."

# 9-12 months

## From 9 – 12 Months

### Physical Development

#### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Turn in a circle when sitting.
- Twist to pick up objects.
- Stand by flexing her knees and pushing off from a squat.
- Walk while holding on to furniture.
- Walk when supported by both hands.
- Crawl up stairs.
- Crawl very well.
- Use the tip of her index finger and thumb to pick up small items.
- Put objects in and take them out of containers.
- Point, poke, touch, and pry with her index finger.
- Place one block on top of another.
- Give objects to another person, if asked.
- Hold a spoon, although she will need help to use it.
- Chew small pieces of food.

#### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Walk, with one hand held.
- Squat down, stoop, bend over, then get up.
- Crawl up and down stairs.
- Climb two or three steps without help.
- Drop down from a standing to a sitting position.
- Use both hands freely.
- Pull off socks and hats.
- Hold large felt markers and make marks with them.
- Build a tower using two blocks.
- Feed herself with a spoon and drink from a cup.

#### How You Can Help Physical Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Provide lots of encouragement.
- Go for walks outside and give her practice walking with your support.
- While playing on the floor, place favourite toys just far enough away so that she has to reach for them.
- Let her practise climbing a few stairs, making sure you support her from behind or by holding her hand.
- Increase the variety of foods and textures. Place small pieces of food on her plate or tray.
- Offer water to drink from a cup.
- Show her how to place soft building blocks one on top of another.
- Create a safe play space in the kitchen with lots of different-sized plastic containers, bowls, wooden spoons, and other objects.
- Play finger games with her, such as *Round and Round the Garden*.
- Introduce her to toys that require handling, such as activity tables or toys that make a noise when a button is pressed.

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## Social Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Know when a parent likes or dislikes her behaviour.
- Hold out her arms and legs while being dressed.
- Mimic simple actions.
- Imitate other children.
- Repeat sounds or movements that made you laugh.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Show fear of strangers.
- Dance to music.
- Know routines.
- Try different ways of getting attention, such as copying sounds.
- Enjoy being the centre of attention.

### How You Can Help Social Development

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- Respond to her calls or signals for help and attention (whenever you can) to build her trust.
- Create and follow regular routines.
- Offer choices you are comfortable with. For example, "Do you want this cup or that cup?"
- Model good manners: use "please" and "thank you."
- Play face-to-face games, such as peekaboo or making faces together.
- Talk about what happens next in routines or upcoming events.
- Provide safe places for her to explore.

# 9-12 months

## Key Points

### Introducing Books

It is never too soon to start sharing books together. Toddlers will flip the pages and stare at the pictures. It won't be long before your toddler is quietly listening to children's stories while you read. Visit your local library. There are many children's books that your toddler will enjoy. Make books a part of your toddler's world.

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## Emotional Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Seek comfort when upset.
- Show many emotions, such as being sad, happy, mad, scared, hurt, or uncomfortable.
- Show distress when she does something wrong.
- Show that she always needs to be within sight and hearing of the caregiver.
- Display affection in hugs, kisses, pats, and smiles.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Cry when you leave her with other caregivers.
- Show empathy, such as starting to cry when another toddler cries.
- Express a desire to do things herself.
- Show like or dislike of certain people and toys.
- Show discomfort when fearful or stressed.
- Express new fears and insecurity with situations that were fine before.

### How You Can Help Emotional Development

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- Continue to breastfeed.
- Smile at her.
- Cuddle her.
- Comfort her, especially when she is upset, sick, or hurt.
- Create routines and structure in her day.
- Turn everyday routines into playful moments.
- Talk about her emotions: "I see you are feeling sad/happy/frustrated."
- Ask her for hugs and kisses.
- Provide her with chances to play with other children and to be around people.

# 9-12 months

## Family Stories

### Copy and Learn

Whenever my friend, who was a teacher, would come to visit us, she would take the time to talk with our 10-month-old. She would also pull out keys, toys, or whatever and say the names of them carefully. Often our son would copy her and say the word (or something like the word). It was a good example of what I needed to be doing every day. I would just get busy and forget how kids copy and learn so much from us. She didn't need to tell me to do it. I just watched and copied her, just like our son did.

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## Cognitive Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Try to find objects that you have hidden.
- Try out new actions to reach the same goal, or change old actions through trial and error.
- Connect animals with actions and sounds, such as meows, barks, or chirps.
- Copy the actions of others.
- Develop stronger memory skills.
- Become aware of parents as separate people from herself. She may point when asked, "Who's Mommy? Who's Daddy?"
- Recognize her own name, when spoken.
- Start to see cause and effect, such as the fact that things fall when dropped.
- Match shapes. For example, she may place a cube in a matching square hole.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Enjoy looking at pictures.
- Point to the correct parts of the body when asked where they are.
- Know that smaller objects fit into larger ones.
- Search more for hidden objects.
- Repeat an action that gets a reaction, such as knocking over blocks.
- Put two ideas together, such as going to another room to get a toy and bringing it back.
- Leave an activity and return to it later.

### How You Can Help Cognitive Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Praise her new accomplishments.
- Keep adding to the range of objects/toys you are providing for her.
- Play action games in which you and she take turns. Try blowing kisses, clapping, or peeking.
- Ask her to help you find lost objects.
- Talk about cause and effect: "You dropped Teddy, so now Teddy is on the floor."
- Read toddler books with her.
- Play music for her and encourage dancing and movement.

# 9–12 months

## Family Stories

### Play Dates

When our daughter was little we used to have play dates with other kids the same age. We moms would all laugh about it being a “play” day—the kids didn’t really play with each other. It was the moms who loved it the most. We would visit, talk, and share stories and tips. Gradually, the kids got old enough to actually play with each other. It was the moms who formed the strongest bonds. We still get together now.

## Key Points

### Early Literacy

Early literacy does not mean trying to teach your toddler how to read or write. Reading, talking, chanting, singing, and having conversations with your toddler are the best ways to build early language and literacy skills.

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## Language Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Babble in long, repetitive strings.
- Understand simple sentences, questions, and requests, such as “Please give the book to Daddy.”
- Take turns making sounds with you.
- Copy speech sounds.
- Respond to her own name.
- Point and talk to specific objects.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Copy sounds, such as “bow-wow” or “woof.”
- Use a few words: “no,” “baby,” “bye-bye,” “Mommy,” or “Daddy.”
- Use simple words with matching gestures. For example, she may say “no” and shake her head or say “bye-bye” and wave.
- Use a single word to express a whole thought, such as “more” for “I want more.”
- Talk less while learning how to walk.

### How You Can Help Language Development

- Talk to her whenever you can.
- Respond to her babbling sounds with the words she is trying to say.
- Continue to introduce new words to her.
- Talk to her while doing regular activities and tell her what you are doing.
- Describe her actions. For example, “You stacked the blocks into a tower.”
- Read to her every day.

## From 12 – 18 Months

### Physical Development

#### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Walk alone.
- Crawl or walk upstairs one step at a time, holding on to a railing or your hand.
- Push and pull toys while walking.
- Squat to pick up a toy without falling.
- Climb by himself on things (for example, chairs, sofas, and tables) or climb by himself out of things (for example, cribs, high chairs, and strollers).
- Give an object to another person if asked.
- Pick up and eat small pieces of food.
- Drink from a cup.
- Turn a container upside down to get something out.
- Turn pages of a book.
- Stack three or more blocks.
- Scribble with a big crayon.

#### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Walk down stairs holding a railing, placing both feet on the same step.
- Try to kick a ball.
- Ride toys.
- Run, but fall and run into things.
- Walk backwards.
- Feed himself with a spoon.
- Throw a ball forward.
- Begin to unlatch, unscrew, open, and take apart things.
- Squeeze, poke, and pat playdough.
- Copy simple lines drawn on paper.

#### How You Can Help Physical Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Spend lots of time playing outdoors in safe places. Try running and kicking balls.
- Play favourite music or songs and encourage dancing.
- Build an obstacle course for him to crawl through using boxes, chairs, big pillows, and other objects.
- Provide different-sized balls to kick and play with.
- Let him feed himself with small pieces of food at mealtimes.
- Offer him plastic bowls for stacking and nesting.
- Provide big crayons and lots of paper.
- Provide pots with lids to encourage matching.
- Help him solve simple, large-piece jigsaw puzzles.



# 12-18 months

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## Social Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Love being the centre of attention.
- Begin to show a sense of humour.
- Play best by himself.
- Be unlikely to share toys.
- Copy adult activities, such as driving a car, reading, or cooking.
- Separate himself from you for brief periods of time.
- Change his food likes and dislikes often.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Strongly resist the limits you set.
- Co-operate, or not.
- Want to do things on his own.
- Fight with other children as he is learning to share.

### How You Can Help Social Development

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- Create and stick to regular routines.
- Offer choices you are comfortable with: “Do you want to put your coat or your shoes on first?”
- Have happy goodbye routines when you and family members leave each other.
- Give him chances to help with chores. He could put clothes in the laundry basket, pick up toys, or put away clean clothes.
- Provide regular chances for him to play beside children the same age.
- Don’t force him to play with other children.
- Play with him and teach sharing.
- Use “yes” and “no” to clearly set reasonable limits. Briefly explain your reasons and be consistent.
- Model good manners: use “please” and “thank you.”

# 12-18 months

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## Emotional Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Enjoy familiar places.
- Boldly explore and try new things.
- Take risks, if a trusted adult is present.
- Identify himself in a mirror or photo.
- Hug and kiss parents and other very familiar people and pets.
- Enjoy being the centre of attention.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Show jealousy when attention is given to other family members.
- Get frustrated easily.
- Display a sense of owning toys and people.
- Enjoy older children but not play with them.
- Have a security toy or blanket.

### How You Can Help Emotional Development

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- Continue to breastfeed.
- Comfort him, especially when he is upset, sick, or hurt.
- Set reasonable limits and consequences.
- Provide many chances for happy moments, such as family meals and bedtime routines.
- Give him many chances to feel successful.
- Provide chances for him to play on his own.
- Talk about emotions: “You seem to be really happy!”
- Read stories and look at pictures that focus on emotions.
- Talk about changes in routines.

# 12-18 months

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## Cognitive Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Realize things still exist even when he cannot see them.
- Find things in pictures when asked.
- Learn about the world by touching and moving things. He may fit things into holes, mix and dump sand, or stack items and knock them down.
- Expect events to follow in routines and be predictable.
- Follow simple directions, such as “Come and show me the ball.”

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Group similar things, such as socks, shoes, or blocks.
- Use imagination in play. For example, he may move toy trucks around on the floor.
- Handle playdough, crayons, and paints.
- Show understanding of some colours and shapes.
- Show increased memory skills by asking for something you took away earlier.

### How You Can Help Cognitive Development

- Keep adding to the range of things that you give him to play with.
- Talk about events and people that he remembers.
- Count things together in books and find the same things in your home.
- Point out colours and shapes when you talk to your toddler.
- Give him simple directions: “Put your truck and doll in the toy box, please.”
- Make special books with him and read or enjoy them together.
- Read toddler books with him and encourage him to talk about and point to the pictures.
- Encourage him to make music and dance with shakers, pots, and pans.

# 12-18 months

## Family Stories

### Hugs and Kisses

We used to have a goodbye routine whenever one of us left for the day. We called it our "group hug," or as our toddler Taylor called it, our "dup ugh." We would all hug and say, "Let's kiss Daddy," "Let's kiss Mommy," and then, "Let's kiss Taylor." It was fun, took a minute, and made leaving easier for everyone.

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## Language Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Point to show you something.
- Understand far more words than he can speak. For example, he can point when asked, "Where's your belly button?"
- Use a vocabulary of five or more words to make short expressions such as "all gone."
- Use "no" correctly, often with a shake of his head.
- Form questions by making the voice rise at the end of the sentence: "Daddy go?"
- Try to sing songs.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Begin to understand basic sentences.
- Name pictures in a book.
- Use one word to name things he sees or say what he wants. For example, he may say "More" for "I want more."
- Copy animal sounds.
- Use his own name to refer to himself.
- Follow simple directions.
- Look at what you are talking about.
- Start combining words to form two-word sentences. For example, "Mommy ball!" for "Mommy, I want the ball."

### How You Can Help Language Development

- Expand on his language: If he says "Doggie," you say "Yes, that is a dog."
- Read to him as often as you can.
- Complete his sentences. For example, if your toddler says, "Daddy going . . .," say, "Daddy is going to the car."
- Read and sing nursery rhymes.
- Give him books to look at.
- Encourage him to point out things in picture books.
- Use different voices and lots of expression when reading to him.
- Monitor your use of "no," and use it only when needed for safety.
- Keep a diary of the words he says. It may surprise you how quickly he learns language.

# 18–24 months

## Key Points

### Early Language

During her first 18 months, your child will babble and babble. Babbling is her way of learning language. In time, the talking and reading you share with her will help her speak actual words. By the time your toddler is 24 months, she will be learning about nine words per day.

## From 18 – 24 Months

### Physical Development

#### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Ride on a small-wheeled toy.
- Carry a large toy while walking.
- Kick a ball.
- Squat while playing.
- Walk backwards or sideways while pulling a toy.
- Back into a chair to sit down.
- Remove lids from containers.
- Nest cups and boxes inside each other.
- Take off her shoes, hat, and socks.
- String large beads with two hands.
- Raise and drink from a cup, then put it back on the table.

#### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Walk on tiptoes.
- Throw and go get objects.
- Jump in place with both feet.
- Catch a large ball.
- Open doors by turning knobs.
- Copy straight or circular strokes with a crayon.
- Snip with child-sized scissors.
- Fold paper in half.

#### How You Can Help Physical Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Spend lots of time playing outdoors in safe places, like a toddler playground. Try running and kicking balls.
- Look for child-sized versions of adult things, such as furniture, a soccer ball, a plastic baseball and bat, or garden tools.
- Try toys that allow pushing and pedalling with feet.
- Play with her by pretending to be an animal: “hop like a frog, fly like a bird, jump like a rabbit.”
- Say her movements and actions as she does them. If she climbs the stairs, say, “You’re climbing the stairs.”
- Play different kinds of music for her to dance to, such as marches, rock ‘n’ roll, and waltzes.
- Encourage her to dress and undress on her own. Only help when needed.
- Provide lots of containers during bath time.
- Offer activities that require the sorting of shapes.
- Offer things like finger paints, paints and easels, ride-on toys, and push-pull toys.

# 18–24 months

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## Social Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Enjoy playing alone for short periods of time.
- Act like she owns certain objects.
- Like to do things without help.
- Help with simple household chores.
- Have trouble sharing. Say “no” and “mine.”  
May hit, push, and grab to keep toys.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- See herself as a separate person. She may say, “No me do it.”
- Put on simple clothing without help.

### How You Can Help Social Development

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- Use everyday routines such as walks and mealtimes to talk about family and friends.
- Talk to her ahead of time about new routines and events: “At playgroup, we will sing songs and listen to stories.”
- Introduce her to a playmate.
- Watch her while she is playing with other children. At this age she will be better at playing beside rather than with another child.
- Talk about the play of other children: “Look, Kim is building a block tower.”
- Let her help with chores, such as cleaning up spills, putting clothes in drawers, or putting away toys.
- Model good manners: use “please” and “thank you.”

# 18-24 months

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## Emotional Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Show concern for others.
- Show fear, but she can be settled down.
- Change between doing things on her own and wanting help or comfort.
- Be watchful around adults she doesn't know.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Have mood swings and tantrums.
- Show aggressive behaviours such as biting and hitting.
- Say "no" a lot, especially if she hears "no" a lot.
- Sometimes share food, toys, and other items.
- Become familiar with routines.
- Be unhappy about any changes in routines.
- Develop new fears.
- Have a security toy or blanket.

### How You Can Help Emotional Development

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- Continue to breastfeed.
- Have fun with her. Laughing together builds good feelings.
- Talk about her emotions: "Your tears tell me you are feeling sad."
- Suggest ways to deal with feelings: "When you feel angry, come and get a grown-up for help."
- Sing simple songs about emotions, such as *If You're Happy and You Know It*.
- Read stories that explore emotions, and talk about them.
- Offer her choices to help her cope with her feelings: "You're feeling sad, do you want to cuddle or be alone?"
- Talk about how others feel: "John is sad because you took his truck."
- If she hurts another child, explain: "You cannot hurt others." Redirect her activity.



# 18–24 months

## *Family Stories*

### **Learning All the Time**

While I watched the evening news, my 18-month-old daughter, Aimee, jumped up from playing on the floor. She grabbed a magazine from the coffee table across the room and brought it to me. This was just after the reporter spoke about the picture on the cover of that same magazine. I was amazed. I suddenly realized that although Aimee was barely able to talk, she understood so much more than I thought she did!

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## Cognitive Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Use things the way they are supposed to be used. She may put a telephone to her ear or use a comb for her hair.
- Understand the passing of time and the meaning of phrases like “not now” or “when we go home.”
- Recognize and name familiar people in photos.
- Show increased memory for details and routines.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Explore the concept of counting.
- Understand the idea of “more than one.”
- Show great interest in checking any new person, thing, or sound.
- Understand two-part requests, such as, “Please go to the shelf and bring back the blocks.”

### How You Can Help Cognitive Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Praise her successes.
- Watch her to learn what toys she needs. She will outgrow toys that are too simple. She might also ignore toys that are too hard for her to use. Notice what toys she used to like but is no longer interested in.
- Keep adding to the range of things that you are providing for her.
- Offer art supplies, such as crayons and markers for use on paper.
- Offer simple puzzles with two to four pieces.
- Point out familiar sounds, such as car horns, dogs barking, or fire truck sirens when walking or playing outside.
- Help challenge her skill levels, when she’s ready. If she can stack three blocks almost every time, give her a fourth to try.
- Talk about numbers: “There are two blocks in the pail.”
- Talk about time: “We are going over to Grandma’s tomorrow.”
- Talk about colours: “Here is your red ball.”
- Read toddler books with her and encourage interaction with pictures.

# 18–24 months

## Family Stories

### Talk, Talk, Talk

I always talked to my daughter, Chloe, about anything and everything we were doing. Even when she was just under a year, we'd be crossing the street and I would say, "Is it safe to cross? Let's look for cars. Look, there are no cars, it's safe. Let's go." Or when we were getting groceries, I'd talk about the fruit: "This one is not ripe enough," or "This apple is nice and red. Let's buy this one." I wasn't surprised when Chloe talked at an early age. I think all the talking really helped her learn words.

## Language Development

### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Use two- to three-word sentences: "More milk please."
- Use about 200 words.
- Ask for help using words or actions.
- Talk in a run-on flow of words while talking to stuffed animals or herself. The words may not make sense.
- Name some pictures in a book.
- Copy new words and phrases you say: "Go bye-bye." "Grandpa's car."

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Sing simple songs with words and actions.
- Begin to be understood by others outside the family.
- Start to use plurals.
- Use the past tense.
- Copy or request new words.

### How You Can Help Language Development

- Ask simple questions starting with "what" or "where."
- Read to her as often as you can.
- Build upon what she says. For instance, if she says, "cat," respond with "Yes! That's a black cat."
- Listen carefully to her and try to find the meaning in what she says by asking her questions.
- Point out the names of things around your home and outside.
- Take her to the library to get books and stories on tapes or CDs.

## To Do

### Read, Sing, Rhyme, and Tell Stories

Nursery rhymes help toddlers learn language patterns. Tell stories to spark your toddler's imagination. Try *Itsy Bitsy Spider*.

### Physical Development

#### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Walk backwards and sideways.
- Walk upstairs and downstairs alone, placing both feet on one step.
- Run without falling.
- Jump in place, lifting both feet off the floor.
- Climb on a riding toy and make it move using both feet at the same time.
- Scribble, holding a crayon in his whole hand.
- Copy drawing up-and-down and side-to-side and horizontal lines.
- Build a tower of five or more blocks.
- String beads, picking them up with his thumb and index finger.
- Remove lids by turning his wrist.

#### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Walk on a narrow balance beam.
- Walk upstairs and downstairs using one foot and then the other, holding the handrail.
- Run without bumping into things.
- Jump forward.
- Pedal a simple tricycle.
- Begin to use thumb and fingertips when holding a crayon.
- Copy drawing a cross or a circle.
- Fold paper.
- Use small safety scissors to snip paper.
- Remove unbuttoned clothes and zip up zippers.
- Begin to show an interest in using the toilet.

#### How You Can Help Physical Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Play different music and dance with him.
- Spend lots of time playing outdoors in safe places, like toddler playgrounds. Try running and kicking balls.
- Encourage him to try new movements, such as jumping, rolling, stretching, marching, and walking.
- Set up some plastic bottles for bowling pins so he can knock them down with a ball.
- Play simple movement games where he can stop and go, change directions, and move quickly or slowly.
- Sing songs like *If You're Happy and You Know It*, name body parts, and do different actions.
- Praise his drawing efforts and describe the markings you see.
- Provide him with chances to practise dressing skills, helping him with buttons and zippers only when he needs help.
- Make playdough with him and create different shapes together.
- Supply him with costumes for pretend-play, including hats, shoes, coats, and pants.
- Offer art materials, such as markers, crayons, finger paints, paints and an easel.
- Offer ride-on toys and push-pull toys.
- Provide puzzles of different sizes, colours, and number of pieces.
- Invite him to help with simple cooking jobs, such as adding vegetables to a salad or stirring with a spoon.

# 24–30 months

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## Social Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Try to do more independently. For example, he may say, “No! Me do it!”
- Enjoy playing near other children (parallel play). However, he is probably not yet able to play with other children (co-operative play). (See p. 45 for more information on types of play.)
- Have trouble sharing. Say “no” and “mine.” May hit, push, and grab to keep toys.
- Become aware of the difference between boys and girls.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Act shy around strangers.
- Pull hair, hit, or bite other children when upset.
- Willingly help put things away.
- Accept new people, if you have talked to them.
- Begin to start playing with others.
- Show patience.

### How You Can Help Social Development

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- Provide chances to play with other children, but keep it on a one-to-one basis.
- Teach him to practise sharing by using toys as examples: “Dolly’s sharing her blocks with Teddy.”
- Explain how conflicts make other people feel sad, angry, or frustrated.
- Share quiet times together by reading, telling stories, or cuddling.
- Give lots of praise for positive behaviours: “I think you’re doing a great job putting your toys in the toy box.”
- Provide chances for him to do things without help.

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## Emotional Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Move back and forth between doing things by himself and wanting help.
- Demand his own way much of the time.
- Want routines.
- Connect feelings to language and pretend-play. For example, he may roar like an angry lion.
- Have many strong feelings that he has trouble expressing.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Show clear likes or dislikes for certain people, objects, or places.
- Be more sensitive to other children and cry if they cry.
- React to other people's emotions.
- Have a security toy or blanket.
- Have tantrums.

### How You Can Help Emotional Development

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- Continue to breastfeed.
- Encourage him to show his emotions and talk about them: "It's OK to cry. Can you tell me what's making you sad?"
- Move him to a quieter place when he is having difficulty coping with his emotions.
- Provide chances for pretend-play with dolls and stuffed animals to help practise emotional responses.
- Give him chances to do things by himself, such as getting dressed and helping with chores.
- Read books that show how children or animals experience a range of emotions, such as jealousy, anger, and affection.
- Talk about how his behaviour may affect others: "You took away Tommy's toy, and now he has no toy to play with. I think this has made Tommy feel sad."
- Let him know ahead of time when you will be interrupting his play: "In five minutes it will be time to be put on our coats and pick up your sister from school."

# 24–30 months

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## Cognitive Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Pretend-play with others.
- Begin to match and sort shapes, pictures, and some colours.
- Understand that things are different shapes and sizes.
- Become aware of the sequence of numbers, when spoken.
- Show an increased attention span.
- Begin to solve problems by trial and error.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Sort groups of objects into sets.
- Complete simple puzzles.
- Combine toys and games in more complex ways, such as using playdough in dramatic play.
- Understand the concept of future time (soon, tomorrow) but not past time (yesterday).
- Begin to understand one-to-one actions, such as setting one plate per person.
- Recall past experiences.

### How You Can Help Cognitive Development

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- Continue to breastfeed.
- Praise his successes.
- Keep adding to the range of objects and toys that you are providing.
- Give him a broader range of art supplies and ask him to talk about the drawings and colours.
- Allow time for him to solve a problem; don't rush to help.
- Include shapes and colours in daily routines.
- Keep counting: "Let's count the blocks you used in your tower."
- Let him fill in the blanks while singing a song or reading a book.
- Play matching games. For example, match jars and lids together, or sort a mix of puzzle pieces and crayons back into their separate boxes.
- Read toddler books with him and encourage interaction with the pictures.
- Play singing and actions games with music.

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## Language Development

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### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Use personal pronouns such as “I,” “me,” and “you.”
- Put together simple two-word sentences.
- Say his first and last names.
- Answer simple questions, such as, “What’s your name?”
- Enjoy looking at books and talking about the pictures.
- Sing parts of songs.
- Ask many questions.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Use words that describe, such as “big,” “dirty,” “wet,” or “hot.”
- Talk more in interactions and during stories.
- Know and say details about himself, such as his name and age.
- Understand two-step directions: “Please go into the kitchen and bring me the big spoon.”
- Recite a few simple nursery rhymes.
- Use plurals in a general way. He will likely say “foots” instead of “feet.”

### How You Can Help Language Development

- Talk and read to him whenever you can.
- Listen to audiotapes and CDs of nursery rhymes together.
- Use correct pronouns in sentences. For example, instead of saying, “Mommy is going out,” say, “I am going out.”
- Show him that you are interested in what he says by repeating what he says.
- Look at family pictures with him and use simple sentences to describe what is happening: “This was Sarah’s birthday party.”
- Play language games, such as “Where Is Your Ear?”
- Be prepared to answer a lot of questions.

# 24–30 months

## Key Points

### Encouraging Different Languages

If your family members speak more than one language, consider passing on this gift to your toddler. Here are some strategies:

- Use two languages from the start. For example, one parent or caregiver can use one language while the other parent or caregiver uses another language.
- Or, use only one language at home, and your toddler can learn the second language in the community, at daycare, or at playschool.



# 30–36 months

## From 30 –36 Months

### Physical Development

#### What Your Toddler is Likely to Do

- Take part in group activities that include running, galloping, crawling, rolling over, and twirling around.
- Walk on a narrow beam, putting one foot in front of the other for a few steps.
- Run without bumping into things.
- Climb the ladder of a slide or other play equipment.
- Pedal a tricycle.
- Hold a pencil as if to print.
- Copy drawing a cross, circles, dots, small lines, and swirls.
- Cut paper with small safety scissors. However, she may not be able to cut along a line.
- Turn pages of a book one at a time.
- Turn handles and doorknobs.

#### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Walk forward and backward on a narrow beam.
- Ride a tricycle, steering well and using the pedals.
- Kick a ball so it sometimes goes where she wants.
- Throw a ball overhand with fairly good aim.
- Take part in circle games with many players, such as musical chairs, hokey-pokey, or *The Farmer in the Dell*.
- Scribble with pencils, crayons, and markers.
- Draw squiggles and say that's her name.
- Join in songs and finger plays.
- Play with different manipulative toys (toys that she can hold and move), such as connecting straws, snap blocks, or folding paper.
- Put on and take off clothes.

#### How You Can Help Physical Development

- Continue to breastfeed.
- Cheer her on when she tries new physical challenges, making sure of safety.
- Set up a big target for her to aim at when throwing or kicking a ball.
- Be physically active with her by playing tag or rolling down a hill.
- Play music and provide colourful scarves to move and dance with.
- Show her movements like galloping and twirling by playing “follow the leader.”
- Show her pictures of different animals and ask her to move like them: “Show me how you move like a fish!”
- Create a simple obstacle course with blocks and hoops.
- Praise her skill at drawing, dancing, climbing, and other activities.
- Let her turn the pages of the book while you are reading to her.
- Provide writing and art supplies, such as pencils, markers, crayons, or chalk. Supervise the activity and only give a few supplies at a time.
- Help her cut out small pieces of paper to use as tickets for a puppet show.
- Provide different kinds of dress-up clothes with snaps, buttons, and zippers.
- Talk about safety rules and explain how to use playground equipment carefully.

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## Social Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Show affection openly, for example, by hugging and kissing.
- Use social language, such as “please,” “thank you,” and “bye-bye.”
- Play with others and take turns more easily.
- Play make-believe games and create imaginary characters.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Copy adult behaviours, such as shopping, banking, parenting, breastfeeding, or cooking.
- Create an imaginary friend to talk to.
- Be more comfortable around new adults.
- Help other children to do things.
- Develop skills such as taking turns, sharing, and using words instead of fighting.

### How You Can Help Social Development

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- Introduce her to familiar neighbours and community workers.
- Show affection with hugs and loving words.
- Praise good behaviour. Instead of saying “good girl,” say, “Sharing your teddy with Kim was very kind.”
- Provide chances to play with other children.
- Encourage her to wash, dress, and feed plastic dolls to teach caring for others.
- Encourage imaginary play. Join in with questions: “Is the tea ready?”
- Make sure you are nearby to help her solve problems when playing with other children.
- Make sure a trusted adult is close by when children are playing.

# 30–36 months

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## Emotional Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Be upset with major changes in routines.
- Know and respond to other people’s feelings.
- Become more comfortable with new people.
- Want to do things by herself, but she may fear new experiences.
- Want approval and need praise.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Explain her feelings when asked about them.
- Understand the feelings of other children and talk about them.
- Stamp her feet when frustrated.
- Ask you to tell certain stories to help deal with her fears.

### How You Can Help Emotional Development

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- Continue to breastfeed.
- Praise her new skills and when she does something without help.
- Accept her feelings and talk about them.
- Give and use words for feelings: “disappointed,” “hurt,” “thrilled,” “excited.”
- Talk very simply about your own feelings as examples.
- Listen to and understand her fears.
- Sing songs and read stories about emotions. Talk about the feelings of a story’s characters and why the characters might feel that way.

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## Cognitive Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Compare sizes of things and use words like “bigger,” “smaller,” and “really little.”
- Try to play-act her thoughts and ideas. For example, she may pretend to be a dinosaur.
- Count three objects.
- Match and sort similar pictures and objects.
- Enjoy creative movement.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Make a plan before taking action. For example, she may search for needed felt-board pieces before playing.
- Notice changes in nature, such as a seed that she planted growing a sprout.
- Use words related to time, such as “sleep time.”

### How You Can Help Cognitive Development

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- Continue to breastfeed.
- Praise her successes.
- Keep adding to the range of things that you give her.
- Provide dress-up clothes and props.
- Give her a broader range of art supplies. Try sticks, cotton balls, paper, and cones.
- Use laundry time as a chance to talk and sort clothing.
- Introduce the concept of first, second, third in simple games. Ask: “Who is first? Who comes second?”
- Provide more complex puzzles with three to six pieces.
- Cook with her and explore different foods. Always remember to be safe in the kitchen!
- Continue to talk about time, shape, and colour concepts.
- Encourage her to tell stories.
- Encourage creative moves to music.
- Teach and play singing games like *Ring-Around-the-Rosie* and *London Bridge*.

# 30–36 months

## Family Stories

### The “Why” Game

Some days I would get tired of hearing my toddler ask “why” for what seemed like the hundredth time. I started answering, “Well, why do you think the sky is blue?” or “What do you think?” It seemed to make him stop and think for himself for a minute. He still asks why, but I can get him to participate more with different answers that make him think, too.

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## Language Development

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### What Your Toddler Is Likely to Do

- Ask a lot of questions.
- Tell stories, sing nursery rhymes, and do finger plays.
- Repeat five-word sentences.
- Talk to adults and other toddlers and be understood.
- Talk to herself about recent events and make-believe characters.
- Use social words: “please,” “thank you,” “hello.”
- Name most body parts.

### Other Things Your Toddler May Do

- Use and understand direction and position words, such as “around,” “backwards,” “forward,” “inside,” and “underneath.”
- Comment on pictures in books.
- Show an understanding of story plots and act them out using puppets or dolls.
- Answer complex questions, such as “What is this?” or “How did you do that?”
- Respond to requests: “Go find your coat, please,” or “Please get a paper towel.”

### How You Can Help Language Development

- Take time to talk to her and ask about the things that interest her.
- Sing number songs and rhymes like *Five Little Monkeys*.
- Ask open-ended questions: “What did you see on your walk?”
- Be prepared to answer lots of questions.
- Instead of always answering her questions, occasionally ask: “What do you think?”
- Make up silly rhymes.
- Invent songs.
- Read to her often.

## Independence



Developing a sense of independence is an important step for toddlers. Independence is when your child does something by herself. This usually starts to happen between 12 and 36 months of age. Your toddler is starting to learn that she can control herself, her body, and sometimes those around her. She will love learning new skills and enjoy doing things by herself, including making choices.

When your toddler is learning to be independent, you will notice an increase in her willpower and self-control. You may feel frustrated when she wants to do things “her way” and not yours. However, you can also see it as a sign of her healthy development.

To help your toddler learn to be independent:

- Encourage her to do things by herself even if she fails or it takes extra time.
- Let her do whatever she can on her own, from dressing to washing, and praise her for it.
- Give her simple choices, such as choosing which cup to drink from.
- Encourage new activities that she has a good chance of doing well at.
- Let her be successful and build her confidence. Give her time to repeat each skill she learns so that she feels successful. For example, give her two blocks and let her stack them successfully before you give her a third block to add to the stack.
- Avoid shame and ridicule.

## Empathy

Empathy is understanding and caring about how others feel. Teaching your toddler how to feel and show empathy is an important part of helping him develop into a responsible and caring person.

You can help your toddler develop empathy for others by:

- Responding to his needs and those of others in a caring, kind, and fair way. You are the most important role model of empathy.
- Using positive discipline with the goal to teach. (See p. 126 for more on disciplining your toddler.)
- Reasoning with him to help him understand how his actions can affect others. If he has hurt or upset someone, teach him why this is hurtful and what he can do to make it better: “When you hit your sister, it hurt her and made her sad. Please say you’re sorry, give her a hug, and don’t hit her again.”
- Teaching him to share and be kind to others. “Look how happy Jessica is because you gave her a toy. That is so nice of you.”
- Encouraging him to talk with you about his feelings.

## Play

Play is the work of toddlers. It is one of the most important ways your toddler learns and develops. She discovers and learns to understand the world around her through play. It also helps her see how everything and everybody relates to each other. As a parent, you can provide the safe environment for play.

Experts recommend that parents support toddlers to:

- Play actively. Toddlers need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day to help build strong bones, muscles, heart, and lungs. (See p. 91 for more on physical activity.) Try dancing, jumping, running, rolling, and skipping.
- Play with other children, when possible, to help them learn social skills like co-operating and sharing.
- Play in ways that help them to learn about the world around them.
- Play in ways that foster creativity and self-expression.



## Types of Play

Children can learn through different kinds of play. You'll probably see your toddler play in the following ways:

- **Solitary Play:** This is when she plays by herself. All children like solitary play at times.
- **Parallel Play:** This is when she plays beside another child without interacting. She will, however, observe the other child and often imitate what they do. Toddlers enjoy parallel play.
- **Imitative Play:** This is when she copies another child and they copy her. One toddler starts to jump and soon they are all jumping. Or you are folding clothes and she tries to do the same.
- **Social Bids:** This is the first step toward having fun with others. Well before the age of 24 months, she will offer toys, looks, or words to other children. It's her way of communicating.
- **Co-operative Play:** As she gets older, she will start to play with other children. She might help to build a block village or take their stuffed animals to the doctor. Many children are not ready for this kind of play until they are 36 months of age or older.



## Skills Learned Through Play

By encouraging your toddler to play, you are helping her physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and language skills to develop.

Area of Development	Examples
Physical skills	how to crawl, climb, walk, run how to make small fingers work how to see how to hear
Social skills	how to co-operate how to share how to be a leader how to say please and thank you
Emotional skills	how to identify her feelings how to tell others about feelings how to deal with feelings
Cognitive skills	how to solve problems how to make things work how things feel and look how things affect each other how shapes, colours, and numbers differ how close or far things are how to imagine how to explore how to paint and draw
Language skills	the names for things the words for some big ideas like love and share how to say a sentence how to tell a story how to listen how things sound

## Play by Age

Each toddler is unique and will develop at his own pace. However, the following are general guidelines of what you will notice at different ages.

### 6 to 12 Months: Explorers

During this time, your toddler will use his body to make discoveries. He will begin to sit up, crawl, pull up, and grab for everything within reach. He will start to understand cause and effect. He will also search for things that have become hidden—that may include you, as you go into another room. You will find yourself talking to him more and more as you begin to hear his first words. He will be busy dumping, stacking, and pouring. This is a good time to give him balls, sturdy toys on wheels, blocks, nesting toys, rattles, and bowls of different sizes.



### 12 to 24 Months: Movers and Shakers

Between 12 and 24 months, your toddler will go through big changes. Once she can walk and talk, her play will become more complex. She will be able to handle smaller toys as her coordination improves. You will see her imagination develop, as she copies the things she hears and sees. You will also see her personality by the type of play she chooses. Does she prefer quiet play or active play? Does she tend to focus for quite a while on a single task, or does she do many tasks at the same time?

At this age, she will still not be able to play with other children (co-operative play). However, she will be able to play beside other children (parallel play). This is a good time to give her balls to chase and later to kick and throw. It's also a good time for toys to push, such as pop-up toys, or sit-and-ride toys.

### 24 to 36 Months: Social Butterflies

Between 24 to 36 months, your toddler will become sociable and want playmates. Gradually, he will develop the skills to play with another child. Make sure you are nearby to help him solve possible problems when playing with other children.

Your toddler will also show much more imagination. Encourage imaginary play; join in and expand the play with questions. This is also a good time to supply dress-up clothes and props.



## Family Stories

### Toys for Development

When my kids were little, their aunt came to visit every month. Every time she came to visit she brought two things, a new book and a new toy. Since I was not able to take my very active toddlers to the library or to second-hand stores, this really helped. She seemed to know exactly what toy or activity was good for their next stage of development. She went to second-hand stores and bought low-cost puzzles and educational toys. Was I grateful!

### Blocks

If I were to advise parents on the one best toy to buy that will last for years, I would say to buy blocks. Old-fashioned wooden blocks are great. My school-aged kids still use their blocks.

## Encouraging Your Toddler to Play

You toddler will learn best when she can choose what she wants to do from a couple of options. Here are some ways you can encourage her to play:

- Let play be directed by her.
- Be playful. If you like to sing or dance or do puzzles, do these things with her.
- Use your imaginations in play. For example, pretend to be animals. Move and make noises like the animals.
- Follow the cues she gives you, such as “Roll ball, Mommy.”
- Provide a variety of toys appropriate for her age.
- Set aside time to play with her each day. If you are rushed, play singing, word, and guessing games while you are doing other things.
- When you put toys out, put others away, instead of having them all out at once. She may find it too much to handle if there are too many toys to choose from.
- Encourage a mix of both active and quiet play.
- Read to her every day.
- Take her outside and watch her crawl over logs, inspect insects, pick grass or stones, and explore nature.

- Let her help wash dishes, tear lettuce, dig in the garden, make beds, or whatever else interests her. What looks like work to you may seem like play to her.
- Encourage her to do artwork, using her own ideas. This may be gluing clippings of colourful paper onto a board or smearing paint with her hands. She may need your help to get started and to understand what she can do with the materials. Then, let her be creative.
- Show her that you value her play by giving her lots of praise. Tell others how good she is at climbing, painting, or building with blocks, and proudly show her work.
- Gently stop playing if she looks away or cries. She is probably tired, hungry, or overstimulated.

## Toys

Many household items are perfect toys for children. Your toddler does not need fancy and expensive toys. He can use things like plastic bowls for filling and dumping, pillows for climbing or making a cave, and old clothing to play dress-up. Provide the old classics, like blocks, dump trucks, stuffed animals, toy hammers, play kitchens, garages, and farms. These toys great are for developing imagination. (See the following page for information on toy safety.)

“Natural” toys are free, fun, and easy to find, too. Children love getting down and dirty with earth and clay, water, sand, and stones. Playdough can substitute for clay. The bath is great for water play. (See pp. 173 and 174 for more information on bathing and water safety.)



## To Do

### Play at Child Care

If your toddler is in child care, she will be involved in lots of play. Spend some time observing this play when you have a spare moment. You might be able to pick up ideas for play at home. You can also see whether or not you think she is getting enough variety of play experiences. If you have concerns, talk with your child-care provider.

## Toy Safety

Check the size of toys. Any toy that fits completely into your toddler’s mouth is too small and can cause choking. Check that he cannot squash a larger toy, such as a sponge, into a smaller size and put it into his mouth. A good rule of thumb is that anything that can pass down the middle of a toilet paper roll is too small for a toddler. Toys should be at least 3.5 cm (1.4 in.) wide and 6 cm (2.4 in.) long.

- Make sure any paint on toys is non-toxic and cannot peel.
- To prevent choking, don’t offer your toddler toys with strings, cords, or ribbons that are longer than 15 cm (6 in.). Longer ties can get wrapped around his neck and cut off breathing. Cut these cords off before giving the toy to him. Be careful about other things that can act like cords, such as audiotapes, pull toys, or skipping ropes.
- Avoid using polystyrene or Styrofoam material (egg cartons, packing materials, food containers) as toys. They can break into pieces and cause choking if your toddler puts them in his mouth.
- Check toys often for broken, sharp, or loose pieces. Fix or throw out broken toys right away.
- Watch when your toddler plays with battery-operated toys. Make sure he does not put batteries into his mouth. When the toy is not in use, store it and the batteries out of reach.

## Family Stories

### Keeping Toys for Older Kids Away From Your Toddler

When our daughter, Julia, was a toddler, we were worried about how we could keep her away from the small toys that our seven-year-old, Lucas, played with. We asked Lucas to take on the job of being the big boy in the house by helping keep his little sister safe. He said he would play with the smallest toys in his own room. This worked until we found Julia always crying outside the door. Lucas came up with the suggestion of putting a gate on the door so that she didn’t feel so shut out.

We helped out during the play times, too—while our son was playing, we spent time with her. We also did a daily sweep of the house to make sure no small parts of toys were lying around.

## FACTS & STATS

### Choking

One-half of all toy-related deaths among children are caused by choking. Many of these choking deaths happen when children try to swallow marbles, small balls, small or broken parts of toys, or objects that are not meant to be toys.

- Be very careful with balloons. They can cause choking for children of all ages. Always blow up balloons for children. Never allow your toddler to chew on any unused balloons or those that have popped. Throw away balloons that have gone flat, and do not let your toddler suck or chew on inflated balloons.
- Put toys not being used into a toy box to prevent falls. Also, storing unused toys helps ensure that your toddler will not use toys unsupervised. The toy box should have a lid that will not trap him inside or slam down on fingers or head.
- Make sure that any toy (or toy box) that is large enough for your toddler to climb into and has a lid or door also has a source of air such as air holes or cut-outs.
- Buy washable toys and wash them often to prevent the spread of germs. Most stuffed toys can be put in a pillowcase with a knotted top and washed and dried with good results.
- When possible, give your toddler well-made toys. These last longer and are generally safer.
- Always read the safety information on a toy's warning label. Choose toys that are recommended for your toddler's age.
- To prevent suffocation, immediately throw away or recycle the packaging from new toys.
- Do not let noise from toys damage your toddler's hearing. If you have to raise your voice to be heard above the noise level of a toy, the toy is too noisy.

## TV and Computer Games

It may be helpful to ask yourself if TV or computer games help your toddler grow and develop. Research and child development experts suggest that toddlers do not gain much from watching TV because only two senses are used: sight and hearing. Even TV shows created for young children often move too fast and are too much for your toddler to follow. Too much colour, movement, and sound all at once does not support your toddler's health and development. We know that childhood obesity is linked to watching TV. Researchers are also looking at how the large-screen TVs and "surround sound" affect children.

Choosing not to watch TV or play computer games gives you and your toddler quality time to do things that can help her be more creative, improve problem-solving skills, and get more physical activity. Limiting or cutting out TV watching also lowers how much she will see advertising for unhealthy food choices, violent images, and male and female roles that are stereotyped. Research shows that children who watch a lot of TV are more aggressive—in both words and actions.



The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends that preschoolers be limited to one hour or less of TV watching per day. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no TV for children under the age of 24 months (two years) and no more than one to two hours of quality TV and videos a day for older children.

If you choose to let your toddler watch TV, here are some tips:

- Limit her viewing to programs on children’s channels or channels without commercials.
- Rent, borrow (from the library or friends), or buy children’s videos. Ask other parents or caregivers to give you names of suitable videos for toddlers.
- If you allow her to watch or play with other media, set a limit on total screen time (that is, the time she watches TV or videos, plays video and computer games, and watches or uses a computer). Use a timer: when the timer goes off, her screen time is over—do not allow your mind to be changed.
- Discuss your decisions about TV watching with those who care for her, like grandparents or child-care providers.
- Monitor violence on TV or video games that others may be watching or playing while she is nearby. This includes television and radio news reports, which can be very violent and frightening. Television shows can be recorded and watched when she is not nearby.

## Reading to Your Toddler

Reading aloud to your toddler can help his learning in many ways. Research shows that reading helps him learn new words as well as develop skills in listening, language, and math. Reading also helps him develop imagination and creativity.



## FACTS & STATS

### TV Violence

It is likely that by the age of 18 the average child has seen more than 200,000 acts of violence on television alone.

## Family Stories

### It's Never Too Soon to Read!

I began reading to my daughter, Ava, when she was seven months old. I started with picture books that showed objects that I'd name for her. Soon she was repeating the names after me. Then, I'd point to the pictures and she'd say the names on her own. Later, we moved to very short picture books with a lot of repetition. Once again, I'd start leaving out words and she'd fill them in. By the time she started school, she could read many of these simple books by herself.

## Key Points

### Influences on Children's Sexuality

Parents and caregivers have wide-ranging beliefs regarding sexuality. Normally, children will absorb these beliefs. You may want to examine your own beliefs and ask yourself whether or not you want your toddler to copy them.

Your toddler is likely to be exposed to sexual images on TV. Monitor the amount and type of TV she watches. (See p. 50 for more information on TV and toddlers.)

## Sexual Development

The way you touch and talk about your toddler's body sends him important messages, even at an early age. When you give him a bath and clean his private parts in a matter-of-fact way, you are telling him that genitals are simply another part of the body.

Your toddler is curious about his own body, including his genitals. Here are some examples of typical behaviours you may see:

### Sexual Development by Age

#### Birth to 24 Months

- May enjoy being naked.
- May like to touch and explore his own body, including genitals.
- May have an erection if a boy (or lubrication if a girl) for no reason.

#### 24 Months to 36 Months

- May touch his genitals or masturbate for relaxation or soothing.
- Can identify whether someone is a girl or a boy.
- May explore bodies with a same-age playmate in a playful, curious manner (e.g., playing doctor).
- May want to watch you go to the bathroom.

### Masturbation

Although children as young as seven months will explore their genitals, it is more common in toddlers 24 to 36 months old. This kind of investigation is just

natural curiosity. It is as normal for your toddler to touch his genitals as to explore his toes and fingers. Once they make this discovery, most children realize quickly that this touching feels good. The way you react to your toddler's masturbation may affect his attitude toward sexuality. He may feel confused or guilty if he feels punished or ashamed about masturbation. The best approach is to ignore the activity. Teach him that sexuality isn't a secret.

Some parents feel uncomfortable if their toddler touches his genitals in public. If he is touching his genitals in public and is old enough to understand, provide him with limits. Tell him what he can do in public and what he can do at home: "Some things are private. You can do that at home in your room—how about playing with this toy for now?"

### Exploring Body Parts With Other Children

You may find your toddler exploring his genitals with another child of similar age (usually 36 months and older). If this happens, try to be calm. Simply comment on what the children are doing: "I see you two are looking at each other's penises." You can let both children know that their genitals are private and should not be touched by other people. Then distract the children by directing them to other activities.

An older child should not be exploring genitals with a younger child. The younger child usually sees the older child as more powerful. Calmly talk with him about what happened in order to get the facts. Explain that no one should touch or look at his genitals without his permission. Talk to your doctor



or public health nurse if you have concerns about your child being touched inappropriately by another child.

## If You Have Concerns About Your Toddler's Development

There may be times when you worry that your toddler's development is not following the usual path. You may find that the milestones set out in the previous pages are very different from what is happening with your toddler.

Your toddler also may have already been diagnosed as having a special health, developmental, or behavioural need. As a result, it may be difficult to see how the usual developmental milestones relate to her. Children with special health-care needs do follow pathways of development in the same five areas of development. However, your toddler may reach milestones at a different pace.

Your toddler may also have been born early (preterm birth) or faced special health problems early in life; you may find that her health and development seem different from those of other children born at the same time. It is important to remember that a child born early or with health problems may develop differently during infancy and early childhood than other children the same age. These differences will become smaller as a child gets older.

Parents of children who had a serious illness at birth or were born very preterm are encouraged to follow

their growth and development closely. Try to understand the developmental milestones to support and guide your toddler. Find members of the community who can provide you with help and support. Look to these resources, such as public health nurses, family physicians, parent and child groups, neighbourhood resource centres, infant development programs, the BC NurseLine, or child-care programs.

If you are concerned about your toddler's development, talk to a doctor, public health nurse or child development professional in your community. It is important for health-care professionals to hear your concerns about your toddler's development. They should follow up on your concerns. Follow-up might include watching your toddler playing, filling out a child development screening questionnaire with you, or referring you to another child development or health professional in your community.

### To Do

#### Do you need more information?

For more information on government support for children with special needs, visit the Ministry of Children and Family Development's Special Needs Supports and Services web page. (See "Special Needs" in the Resources chapter for the web address.)

