

Your Role

You play a large role in your child's development! You are their first and most important teacher. You give them the exciting experiences they need. However, your role is also to keep them safe. Your days will be filled with chasing after them, cleaning up messes, rescuing them from unsafe situations, setting limits, and lovingly enforcing them. While your role is difficult, it is very important.

Milestones 101

Milestones are the progressive skills your child learns as they grow. Researchers have created age ranges for when children should achieve these skills, and the combination of the skills and the age range is known as a milestone. Child development experts recognize that children are unique individuals, and that there are many factors that determine how quickly a child masters a skill. Your awareness of milestones will help you to track your child's progress. But don't focus too much on them, or you might miss out on the enjoyment of watching your sweet toddler grow! It's important to attend all of your baby's well-baby visits in order to keep track of their development. As your child grows and develops, the skills they learn fall within the following four categories: Cognitive Development, Language and Speech Development, Social and Emotional Development, Motor Development.

Temperament and Personality

Temperament and personality play a big role in your child's development. *Temperament* is defined as an individual's consistent reactions across similar situations. It's important to understand temperament because it impacts the way your child naturally engages with and responds to things. It's helpful to know your child's temperament so that you'll know how to adapt your expectations to their personality. If your child is extremely shy or slow to warm up to strangers, forcing them into social situations could be upsetting to them. Expecting a child to respond differently from their natural temperament can lead to stress for your child. Working within your child's temperament helps them feel loved, seen, understood, and supported.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has outlined nine characteristics that make up temperament:

- **Activity level**—how active, restless, or fidgety they are
- **Rhythmicity or Regularity**—the presence or absence of regular patterns for things like appetite, sleep, and bowel movements
- **Approach or Withdrawal**—how your child responds to new things, people, situations, places, or food
- **Adaptability**—how your child responds to change
- **Intensity**—the degree to which your child responds to a situation
- **Mood**—the mood or degree of pleasantness or unfriendliness in your child's words and behaviors
- **Attention Span**—your child's ability to concentrate or stay on a task
- **Distractibility**—how easily your child can be distracted from a task
- **Sensory Threshold**—how sensitive your child is to the things going on around them

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development refers to how your child sees, thinks, and gains understanding of their world. Children develop this through play and experiences. Create a safe environment that will allow your child to explore, touch, and taste their world. Talk to your child about everything they see. Give names to objects and tell them what their purpose is, including things such as the toothbrush, the hairbrush, and the phone, to name a few. They will love to play with objects in a kitchen drawer that you fill with safe things, items like containers they can nest or bang together, wooden spoons, egg cartons, or any other safe object they can play with. And always supervise your child at all times.

Language and Speech Development

Your child will learn language and speech by watching and listening to others speak. They'll learn words and over time will learn how to put them together into sentences. And they'll learn to use expressions specific to their culture and generation. They'll learn to use language for different purposes, such as greeting, informing, demanding, promising, and requesting. It's amazing what happens when our children use their first simple words, like "mama" and "dada," especially when we can tell that they understand what they're saying. You can encourage these skills by talking to your child and making them a part of your conversations, and by reading to them.

Social and Emotional Development

Social milestones are the skills we learn in order to interact with other people. Your child will learn to smile, make eye contact, and use gestures when you speak to them. Babies quickly learn that moving their arms, kicking their legs, or making noises will encourage you to continue playing with them. Emotional milestones are the skills your child learns to express their feelings and emotions. As your toddler grows through their second year, you'll know without a doubt when they are frustrated or angry with you! You can encourage this development by putting words to their emotions, like "I know you're sad that Grandma had to go home," or "I know you're frustrated at how hard this puzzle is."

Motor or Movement Development

Movement milestones involve the coordinated use of muscles. They are broken down into two categories. Big body movements refer to the larger muscle groups used for rolling over, sitting up, crawling, walking, and eventually running. Fine movements refer to the smaller muscle groups that control the fingers and hands for picking up and holding on to things, turning pages, holding crayons, and drawing, to name a few. These skills are learned by simply allowing your child to move around freely and to explore.

Resources:

1. <http://www.familyconnect.org/info/browse-by-age/infants-and-toddlers/growth-and-development-iandt/developmental-milestones/1235>
2. <http://www.preventiveoz.org/faqwhat.html>
3. <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/temperament/synthesis>
4. <http://www.healthofchildren.com/C/Cognitive-Development.html>
5. http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/language_speech/
6. <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Pragmatics/>
7. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Emotional-and-Social-Development-8-12-Months.aspx>
8. <http://www.pbs.org/wholechild/abc/social.html>
9. LoFrumento, Mary Ann, *Understanding Your Toddler*, 2003,
10. <http://www.simplyparenting.com/time-outs-and-ins/>