Birth to 3-Year-Olds

FIRST TEACHER:

A Parent's Guide to Growing and Learning



DIVISION OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

First Teacher: A Parent's Guide to Growing and Learning is a guide to your child's development and has activities for you to support your child's learning during daily routines and play. These activities will help your child's development from birth to 3 years of age and provide the building blocks for their success in school and life. How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts and moves offers clues about your child's development. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age.

This booklet addresses key areas of your child's growth and development and is sequenced as a guide for the knowledge and skills your child will learn and follows the eight domains of development in the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards, implemented in the state's early learning programs.

1. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
General health and development of physical skills involving large and small muscles.

2. APPROACHES TO LEARNING
Attitudes, behaviors and learning styles.

3. SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
The ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with others.

4. LANGUAGE & LITERACY
The ability to understand language, learn to talk and learn about books and reading.

5. MATHEMATICAL THINKING
The ability to think about relationships between objects, numbers, shapes, sizes, weights and other concepts.

6. SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY
The ability to explore the environment using the five senses, connecting what is observed to science concepts and asking questions.

7. SOCIAL STUDIES
The ability to learn about people and the community.

8. CREATIVE EXPRESSION THROUGH THE ARTS
The ability to engage in dance, song, music, dramatic play and art to express ideas and feelings.

The information in this booklet will help you make the most of the time you spend with your child. The positive relationship you have with your child and the time you spend together will help your child's development.

This booklet offers easy to follow daily activities and strategies for you to use as you watch your child grow and develop their personality. The easy-to-follow activities offer family engagement opportunities to strengthen your child's learning and future success. All families are different. Remember to include stories, activities and languages from your own family.

You are your child's first teacher.

Physical Development

Birth to 8 Months

Infants rely on their parents and caregivers to meet their basic needs, such as eating, sleeping, soothing and comfort. Self-care skills develop slowly, but soon you will notice that your baby will begin to play a part in their own care. Your infant will begin to coordinate their sucking and swallowing and will reach out to hold their bottle if they are bottle-fed. Infants can also show self-help skills by being aware of daily care routines as they make sounds when you talk to them during diaper changing and splashing during baths.

As your baby grows

As your infant grows and develops, they will:

- Be alert and awake more often.
- Roll from back to front and front to back.
- Turn their head, hold their head up, kick their feet, reach and grasp.
- Hold developmentally appropriate toys, bottles and a soft spout sippy cup between 6 to 9 months of age, once your infant is sitting up without support and eating solid baby food.
- Push with legs and feet as though trying to stand.
- Sit up on their own and clap their hands.

Playing and learning

Help your infant's development by trying these activities:

- Give your infant a toy to hold. This gives them practice holding objects.
- Put toys just out of your infant's reach. This helps them learn to reach and grasp.
- Whisper your infant's name and watch them turn towards you.

Taking care of your infant

Even though your infant may not like it at first, tummy time is an important activity to help develop head and neck strength. For short periods of time, place your infant on their stomach on the floor, on top of a blanket or infant playmat. Do not leave your infant unattended during this activity, this is a wonderful time to sit on the blanket or floor close to your baby. Put toys in front of them to look at and try to reach. Talk to your infant during tummy time and use words to describe how they are playing.

Your infant will begin to move more and will be ready to explore! Physical health is important to your infant's growth and development. Make sure they are getting good nutrition and are up to date on all doctors appointments. Your infant will thrive with healthy food, time to play and interaction with you every day.

8 Months to 18 Months

Your baby's muscles are developing, which will help them to move and explore the space around them. Soon they will begin pulling up to a standing position and taking their first steps. Give your baby chances to safely explore their surroundings now that they can move on their own. Place developmentally appropriate toys and books a little out of your baby's reach so they can use their fine and gross motor skills to move toward them.

Now is the best time to make sure the house is "baby proofed" and safe for them to explore. Soon after walking, the running starts! To avoid "boo boos," remove or put away objects around your house and yard that could hurt your baby. Babyproof sharp edges on tables and furniture to help keep your baby safe. Create open space for crawling, running and jumping.

As your baby grows

As your baby grows and develops they will:

- See and point to things that attract their attention.
- Crawl on their hands and knees.
- Hold small objects with their thumb and forefinger.
- Walk without help.
- Eat solid foods.
- Repeat words and sounds.

Playing and learning

Help your baby's development by trying these activities:

- Provide different types of toys and play spaces to help your child develop muscle control. Let them play with blocks, balls and toy animals to develop fine motor skills (small muscles) and walk, run, climb and jump to build gross motor control (large muscles).
- Under supervision, give them finger food to hold in their hands when they are ready. Let your baby practice using a spoon and a sippy cup during meals.
- Give them a big toy, sturdy box or wagon to push or pull around to help practice walking and balance.
- Scatter blocks on the floor and give your baby a small basket. Play a game of pick up the blocks.

Taking care of your baby

Once your baby becomes an expert at walking, let them practice carrying things such as their toys when it's clean up time. With new skills, your baby will begin climbing and reaching for objects that may not be safe. Look at your house from your baby's eye level when babyproofing. You will be able to see what is dangerous to a baby. At this age, babies put almost everything in their mouths when they are learning about new objects. Keep small objects out of their reach as you babyproof your home.

18 Months to 24 Months

Your baby is now a toddler and they are becoming more independent. You may notice them saying "me do it" or "no" more often. Be patient and allow your toddler to develop and express their need to do things on their own. One-word phrases begin to turn into two-, three- and four-word sentences.

Physical development refers to your toddler's general health and development of physical skills involving large and small muscles. They become more balanced as they move on their own. At this age, they should be able to walk alone, begin to jump and climb on play equipment with adult supervision. Your toddler falls less and begins running, if they haven't already!

Their hand-eye coordination also improves. They begin learning to unzip a zipper and use a spoon. Cover electrical plugs and make sure cords and cabinet doors are secured. If there is any furniture that may tip over easily, secure it to the wall if possible or block access to it when your child is in the room. Outside, look for and remove any broken toys, glass, debris and rocks or tree limbs that may cause injuries to your child.

As your toddler grows

As your toddler grows and develops they will:

- Express interest in crayons, markers, finger paint, water play, sand boxes and play dough.
- Imitate hand motions to finger plays and songs.
- Push and pull large objects and kick a ball.
- Hold a board book firmly with two hands and turn the pages.
- String large beads on a piece of yarn.
- Stand on tiptoes, walk up and down stairs holding on.

Playing and learning

Help your toddler's development by trying these activities:

- Blow bubbles and let them chase and pop them.
- Push and toss a large rubber ball back and forth.
- Let them practice drinking water out of a small cup without a lid.
- Give them jumbo or large crayons and a large sheet of paper to scribble or draw lines and circles.

Taking care of your toddler

Provide a safe place for your toddler to explore, run, climb and kick balls. Look for safety hazards in these spaces and find ways to eliminate them. Use safety gates to keep your child out of rooms or away from stairs and pools that are dangerous without supervision. Good nutrition is important in helping your toddler grow and learn. Provide them with a variety of foods of different tastes, textures and colors to experience. Continue to introduce foods in different ways (e.g., raw apples, baked apples, apple juice, applesauce or apple chips).

2-Year-Olds

At this age, you can help support their physical growth as they develop muscle skills. Encourage them to walk backwards and on their tiptoes by showing them how you walk backwards and on your toes.

Your 2-year-old will be able to take a more active role in their personal care because they have better coordination. With your help, they can begin to brush their teeth and wash their hands.

Eating healthy means selecting foods from each food group with the least amount of sugar or fat content. With your encouragement and support, your child will begin to demonstrate an increasing interest in nutritious food choices and healthy eating habits.

As your child grows

As your 2-year-old grows and develops, they will:

- Feed themselves, drink from a cup and dress themselves with help.
- Hear and respond to instructions and use one hand to turn the pages of a book.
- Jump off steps.
- Participate in sleep routines such as arranging their bedtime toys.

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying these activities:

- Play music and dance with them. Sing songs that have movements such as "I'm a Little Teapot" or "Itsy Bitsy Spider." These are great ways to help them develop both their small and large muscle skills.
- Take your child to the park to climb, slide and swing.
- Take them on walks and try different movements like walking, jogging, running or marching.
- Help them learn to string large beads, stack blocks or nesting cubes.
- Give them play dough and help them roll it into basic shapes.

Taking care of your child

Your child should almost have a full set of teeth by now. It's never too early to introduce them to the habit of brushing their teeth morning and night. Make brushing teeth a fun experience. Let your child pick out their toothbrush and cup. Take them to a dental clinic to get their first dental check-up. It is very important to take care of their teeth and gums to prevent cavities.

3-Year-Olds

Your child is now a preschooler with a stronger sense of independence, which includes not only self-help skills but also a better sense of their

own identity. They have their own likes, dislikes, ideas and thoughts. This also means that they may sometimes be "bossy" or defiant to show their individuality. Offering choices, being consistent, firm, and kind with rules and routines will help your preschooler learn expectations for behavior while boosting their self-esteem.

As a 3-year-old, they become more aware of their surroundings and try to understand how the world works. You need to answer many questions that may not have simple answers. With your support and encouragement of their curiosity, your child can not only learn about the world but also to love learning!

Your 3-year-old is entering a phase of steady growth, unlike the fast growth of the infant and toddler years. They have better coordination and balance, more awareness of their body in space and more stamina in active play.

Your child's new physical skills may cause them to overestimate their abilities. You need to supervise them closely. Your child has better control of their hands and fingers and can use utensils, art materials and writing tools more effectively. All this progress leads to a more confident, capable and independent child. They can pedal wheeled toys such as tricycles and other riding toys. Make sure they have a safe place to ride and a helmet and teach them safety rules to follow when riding.

Teach them how to wash their hands and brush their teeth. With your help, they can do these self-care tasks by themselves. You can let them make some choices about what to wear. Select two or three outfits and let them choose.

They enjoy games or activities that require running, jumping or hopping. Play "Simon Says" or "Tag" with them. After they learn how to play the game, let them be the leader and you follow their directions.

As your child grows

Your 3-year-old is learning to:

- Pedal a tricycle.
- Catch a large ball.
- Balance and hop on one foot.
- Jump in place.
- Begin to use blunt-tip safety scissors with a cover for young children.

- Manipulate buttons, zippers and writing tools more easily.
- Draw with more control.
- Complete self-care routines independently such as brushing hair.

Playing and learning

Support your child's physical development by:

- Playing movement games such as "Duck, Duck, Goose" or "Follow the Leader."
- Giving adequate time and materials for free play outdoors.
- Providing crayons and paper for drawing.
- Allowing them to use safe kitchen tools during supervised meal preparation.
- Giving time and opportunity for them to dress themselves.
- Talking to your child about the importance of routines such as hand washing and brushing teeth; for example, "Brushing your teeth keeps them clean."

Taking care of your child

Because all learning depends on your child's good health, proper nutrition, exercise and sleep are very important. Preschoolers can understand the concept of healthy food and safety practices such as wearing a seat belt in the car or a helmet when riding a tricycle. Modeling healthy habits yourself is the best way to help your child learn to take care of their health.

2. Approaches to Learning

Birth to 8 Months

Your infant is unique. They have their own personality and temperament. They react to you and others based on the way they feel and relate to experiences. Some infants are quiet and easygoing while others react to the slightest sound or change in the environment by crying. How you react to their temperament is important to the way they will bond with you and show attachment.

Try different ways to calm your infant when they are upset to determine which way works best for them. Plan routines that consider the times of the day when they are most relaxed and engage in activities during those times. Be flexible when your infant is tired or is not yet ready for a nap. You may need to let your baby nap and play later or let them play longer and nap later in the day.

Your infant was born with an interest in exploring and learning. This natural curiosity plays a role in how your infant reacts to objects, sounds, people and new feelings. You will enjoy watching your baby explore and try new things while playing and learning.

As your infant grows

Your infant shows how they learn as they:

- React to different sounds, objects or voices by using body language and facial expressions.
- Explore objects using all their senses by rubbing, smelling, tasting and watching.
- Cry to get attention.
- Roll from back to stomach to reach a toy.

Playing and learning

Help your infant's development by trying these activities:

- Give your infant blankets with different patterns and textures to look at and feel.
- Make different sounds. Shake a rattle or make a funny noise and see how your infant reacts to the new noise. Infants have sensitive ears so avoid making loud noises.
- Introduce and repeat sounds and play with toys to encourage interest and creativity.

Taking care of your infant

You can use everyday activities to bond with your infant. Bathing, feeding, changing diapers and even shopping are chances to build a strong relationship as you take care of your infant.

During your infant's feeding time, talk to them about the color, texture and flavor of the food they are eating. Put different pictures of your family by your diaper area. Talk to your infant about what they see. When shopping for food, point out different objects and talk to your infant about them.

8 Months to 18 Months

Older infants are curious and actively start exploring. Respond in a positive way to your child's curiosity to explore and learn about the world around

them. You are their "safety net" as they explore and try new activities. Always stay within arm's reach of your baby. Support them when they try to stand, give encouragement as they try to walk or attempt to stack blocks. Your words of encouragement and facial expressions help them know that they are safe as they try new tasks.

As your baby grows

Your baby shows how they learn as they:

- Move or react to music.
- Imitate familiar activities, such as putting a pretend telephone to their ear, or playing peek-a-boo.
- Attempt to repeat new skills such as putting the correct shape into a shape sorter.
- Uncover an object that has been shown and then covered.

Playing and learning

Help your baby's development by trying these activities:

- Use words to describe exactly what they are doing as they try new activities. "Look at how you are pushing the square block through the matching square hole. You are turning the block until each corner of the shapes fits inside the other shapes. I noticed you put forth so much effort. What hole matches the triangle block? Can you push the triangle block through the triangle-shaped hole?"
- Mix sand with washable, non-toxic finger paints. Let your child paint and talk about the texture.
- Place a pillow or blanket between your baby and a toy they want, observe how your baby works to get the toy. This is called object permanence.
- Introduce different toys, games and sounds, such as snapping your fingers or clapping your hands to a special beat to encourage curiosity and creativity.

Taking care of your baby

Everyday activities can provide great ways to bond with your baby. Bath time is one activity to help your baby learn and build your relationship. If your baby can sit up or has a sturdy bath seat, use a straw in the tub and lightly blow bubbles around your baby's tummy and feet. Watch your baby's reaction and allow them to try catching the bubbles.

18 Months to 24 Months

Your toddler is like a little scientist. They learn from trying new things and begin to show more interest in objects and desire to control these objects. They look at, feel and probably taste the object. They may even bang the object on a hard surface. Your little scientist is using curiosity and creativity to discover different ways things can be used. For example, they may discover they can use a hairbrush as a hammer and see what happens when they bang it on the floor.

Your toddler may be curious and inquisitive or more passive and content to watch and listen to others as they try new activities. They may be quite active and explore their environment without your help or they may need you to be at their side as they meet new people or try new activities. Look for signs that they need your help as they try to brush their teeth, get out of a chair or put on their shoes.

Encourage them to start the new task and help them only if they need your help to complete the task.

As your toddler grows

Your toddler shows how they learn as they:

- Try new materials that feel different to touch, such as playdough or finger paints.
- Ask to have the same book read repeatedly.
- Role play everyday activities like pretending to be a mommy, daddy or baby.

Playing and learning

Help your toddler's development by trying these activities:

- Hand your toddler an unpeeled banana and watch how they use it. Do they try to peel it? Do they become easily frustrated? Show them how to peel it and encourage them to try.
- Let your toddler hold a box or bag of frozen vegetables while grocery shopping. See how they handle the box and what they do with it. Tell them about what they are holding. Talk about how cold it feels.

Taking care of your toddler

Give your toddler plenty of toys or objects that make new and exciting sounds. Watch how they react to these sounds and learn how to

create them. Place your toddler in front of a variety of empty pots, plastic containers, boxes or empty coffee cans. Give them a wooden spoon and show them how to make their own music.

2-Year-Olds

Have you ever noticed that your child asks you to read the same book again and again until you both know every word? This is a good example of them showing their ability to concentrate. They enjoy hearing you sing the same songs and begin saying “more” or “again” when you finish. Have a conversation with your child by asking different questions about their favorite activity or book. They are learning and building confidence from repeating your words and actions.

As your child grows

Your child will show how they learn as they:

- Help you with simple chores around the house like sweeping or picking up toys.
- Show interest in patterns and sorting objects by shape or color.
- Repeat activities or games over and over, such as building a block tower, taking it apart and building it again.
- Find solutions to simple problems, such as how to go around a toy when riding their tricycle.
- Use objects in ways other than their intended use, such as pretending a shoebox is a car.

Playing and learning

Help your child’s development by trying these activities:

- Looking at insects, leaves or other items from nature and continuing to watch them move or grow.
- Encouraging them to explore new toys to see how they work.
- Asking them to help you with setting the table or folding the clothes.
- Providing colored pegs they can sort into single-color piles, or buttons they can sort by size or color.
- Filling several clear plastic cups with water colored with food coloring. Take them to an area outside or somewhere they can spill water. Let them have fun dumping and mixing the different colors.

- Giving your child a bag or bucket and taking them for a walk in the yard or in a park. Help them pick up things they find on your walk such as pine cones, rocks, sticks, leaves and feathers and put them in their bag. When you finish your walk, talk with them about the things in their bag. How are they alike or different?

Taking care of your child

At this age, your child learns through their senses. They explore everything around them. Provide them safe places to explore and encourage their curiosity. Describe to them what they are doing as they stack blocks or pour water from one container to another.

3-Year-Olds

Let your child make simple choices, such as what they want for lunch or which shirt they want to wear. Three-year-olds like to try to finish new things. Give them a little support when they need it, but don't take over the task.

Encourage your child to be creative. Teach them to ask questions, use different types of materials in different ways and offer them many new experiences. At this age, they will need lots of time to really get involved in activities. Allow them to spend as much time as they need to be involved in an activity or let them return to the activity later.

Praise their efforts and talk to them about how much fun it is to learn about new things and to try to solve problems. Encourage their love of learning by exposing them to many different places, reading to them about many different topics and providing a variety of activities and places for them to explore.

As your child grows

They show their approach to learning when they:

- Frequently ask "why?" They have reached a new stage in which the simple explanations you gave them as a toddler are no longer enough; they want more information to satisfy their curiosity.
- Persist at a task or activity for longer periods. They have a slightly longer attention span and do not become as easily frustrated as when they were a toddler.

- Spend more time in pretend play. They create roles to act out, make up stories during conversations with adults and may even have an imaginary friend.
- Make plans for playing and talk about what they did or learned afterwards.

Playing and learning

Support your child's approach to learning by:

- Making your child's need to know "why" an opportunity to investigate the answers to their questions by looking for library books related to their interests or doing safe experiments.
- Allowing your child to persist at a challenging activity while providing encouragement by saying, "You can do it," or "I wonder what would happen if you tried…."
- Embracing their creativity and taking a role in their pretend play, allowing them to direct you.

Taking care of your child

Each child is different in their approach to play, people and experiences. Observing and respecting your child's pace at trying new things and interacting with others is key to helping them become a confident learner.

3. Social & Emotional Development

Birth to 8 Months

Your infant is beginning to develop and recognize feelings and relationships. They will become comfortable with important caregivers and begin responding positively when they interact with them. They will soon greet you with a smile after you have been away from each other.

The first months of your infant's life are important to their future development. Infants need to feel cared for and loved. The most important thing you can do is build a bond with your infant through everyday activities. Spending time with your infant will let them know that you care. When you respond to your infant's cries, coos, movements and cues, you are setting the stage for learning.

As your baby grows

During the first eight months of your infant's life, they will show development in forming relationships as they:

- Respond to facial expressions.
- Respond to touch.
- Cry to let you know they are hungry, uncomfortable or unhappy.
- Raise their arms to be picked up and comforted.
- Smile at others.
- Respond to caregivers and parents by smiling and kicking feet.
- Use a blanket, pacifier or teddy bear to calm themself when upset.

Playing and learning

Help your infant's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Respond to your infant's cries in a consistent and positive manner.
- Talk and sing to your infant often in a soft, soothing voice.
- Spend time holding or swaddling your infant to make them feel safe.
- Set the same schedule every day for your infant but be flexible to meet their sleeping, eating and other care needs.

Taking care of your infant

Caring for your infant takes a lot of time, energy and patience. When you and other caregivers use daily routines to interact with your child, they will develop strong relationships with each of you. It is important for each of you to share what works for your infant. This helps babies build trust and security. Building these relationships establishes the foundation for your infant's development.

8 Months to 18 Months

Secure relationships play an important role in your baby's ability to develop their sense of self and feel safe while exploring their surroundings. Show your love and affection by giving hugs throughout the day. Babies who have secure feelings of attachment to their parents feel more comfortable and develop self-confidence. Be patient with your baby as they can easily become frustrated when trying to communicate their wants and needs. Establish routines and talk to your child consistently about what you both are doing while you are helping them learn new activities. When they know what to expect each day, you prevent power struggles and help your child develop self-control. Create daily routines such as feeding your baby, changing their diaper and then going for a walk every morning. This may be repeated at lunch and dinner.

Complete their day with bath time and a story before giving them their last feeding or bottle. Singing the same songs, playing the same music or reading the same story before bedtime will help them learn that it is time for bed. This will help them relax and may help them fall asleep faster.

As your baby grows

Your baby shows development in forming relationships as they:

- Show and receive affection such as hugs and kisses.
- Become upset when someone unfamiliar comes between them and a loved one.
- Smile and clap when they see their favorite toy.
- Make different sounds such as crying, grunting or whining to get attention.
- Point to a toy that they want.

Playing and learning

Help your baby's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Plan enough time to say good-bye to your baby as you leave them to go to work.
- Make a photo album for your baby and include group and individual pictures of family members.
- Set a daily schedule for your baby's sleeping and eating but be flexible to meet their needs.

Taking care of your baby

Your baby may soon start going through separation anxiety. It is common for babies this age to cry when left with a caregiver. But this is a good sign! It means they are well attached to you and can remember you when you are gone. Their brain and emotions are developing. This can be a hard stage, but you can help your baby get through it. Leave with an upbeat attitude. Your baby will grow out of this stage, and goodbyes will not always be so difficult.

They begin to show empathy or understanding if another child is hurt or crying or if you are upset. They may also begin to use their own emotions to communicate with you. They may do things like smile, cry or pout to tell you they want something.

At this age, it is normal for children to have temper tantrums, and tantrums may happen for a variety of reasons. When this happens, it is important to

allow your toddler time to calm down. Acknowledge and name their feelings, remind them of how they should act and respond to them the same way each time. As they continue to grow and become more independent, they often look to you for encouragement and support.

As your toddler grows

Your toddler shows development in forming relationships as they:

- Show concern for others who are sad or hurt.
- Express emotions through behaviors such as whining, pouting and crying.
- Greet parents and caregivers with an excited, "Hi!"
- Say "mine" to a child who takes their toy.
- Show interest in a certain book.
- Pretend to care for a baby doll.

Playing and learning

Help your toddler's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Ask them to do a task you know they can do, and cheer or praise them when they complete it.
- Encourage the use of "please" and "thank you."
- Rotate different toys and foods for your toddler to try to help you both discover their likes and dislikes.
- Talk to them about their feelings; for example, "I see you are sad," or "That's a happy face."

Taking care of your toddler

Young children respond well when parents talk with them about their good behavior. When your toddler is being good, be sure to describe their actions and give a positive comment. For example, when they pick up their toys say, "You put your toys away. Good for you!"

2-Year-Olds

Your 2-year-old is developing their sense of self. Two-year-olds want to show their independence, even though they still need you. They are also looking for your approval and praise of their new independence. You may begin to hear your child say, "Me do it!"

Give your child several chances to do things by themselves. Getting dressed is a great example. Allow your child to attempt to put on their pants, shirt and socks. Give them plenty of time to try and try again. Help

them when they need it and tell them what a good job they've done. Your child is learning and growing confident as they try to do these things on their own.

Two-year-olds are learning to play with others and may have conflicts when they both want the same toy or to sit in the same chair. You can use dolls or stuffed animals to act out these situations with your child. Act out situations where one stuffed animal grabs a toy away from another stuffed animal. Talk about how the animals feel. Then, show how the animals could share the toy. Let your child make up another situation to show how the animals could play and share toys.

You are a role model for your child's social development. They watch your interactions with others as you go about your day. Are you pleasant and kind to others? Are you able to maintain a calm manner even when you are angry? Remember they are watching and learning from your interactions with others.

As your child grows

Your 2-year-old shows their development in forming relationships in the following ways:

- Say "hello" to a new neighbor or friend.
- Begins to understand and use words about their feelings, such as "I mad" or "I want" to get their needs met.
- Approaches a new person after their parents or caregivers have talked to the person for a while.
- Asks for help from parents or caregivers during a conflict with another child.

Playing and learning

Support your child's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Let your child help you with small tasks around the house like giving everyone a napkin at dinner. Tell them what a great job they have done and that they are a good helper.
- Tell them their favorite story or a story about family members if you are stuck in traffic. This will give them an opportunity to listen to the story and imagine the characters or family members as they listen.
- Allow them to do things on their own, like climbing the ladder to the slide.

- Let them entertain themselves for short periods of time. Pack a bag with a book, a couple of toys and a snack and take this bag when you need to run errands with them.

Taking care of your toddler

If your child is in child care, take a few minutes once a week to discuss your child's progress with their teacher. Having these talks will let you know how your child is doing while they're away from you and if the early learning program meets your family's needs.

3-Year-Olds

Three-year-olds are an interesting mix of independence, playfulness and fearfulness. They need familiar adults nearby for security as they explore and play. As your child develops more independence, they begin to have real friendships with other children. When conflicts arise with peers, they typically seek help from an adult. They are learning to recognize the causes of feelings and give simple help, such as a hug, to those who are upset. They can manage their emotions better but may still struggle to do so under stress.

Point out the things your child is doing that shows they are trying to solve a problem, such as "You are working so hard to put on your jacket by yourself." Then offer your help if they need it. Help them put their feelings into words when they get frustrated or upset. "You were really angry when your sister took your toy from you." Talk to them about your own feelings when you are sad, angry or happy; for example: "I was frustrated when I couldn't find the keys for the car, I paused, took three deep breaths, then I thought about the last place I remember having my keys." And when you are pleased, you might say: "I am so happy that you picked up your blocks!"

As your child grows

As a 3-year-old, your child may:

- Play more cooperatively with children.
- Comfort and show concern for others without prompting.
- Take turns while playing (with prompting and encouragement).
- Play "real life" with toys like pots, bowls, spoons and play kitchens.
- Find simple ways to solve arguments and disagreements.
- Show and name a variety of feelings beyond happy, sad and mad, such as frustrated or excited.

- Ask to play with others rather than joining without asking.

Playing and learning

Support your child's social development by:

- Reading books about feelings and how book characters managed their feelings. Describe in detail a time when you or they may have felt the same way.
- Giving them a few responsibilities they can do themselves, such as picking up toys or helping set the table. Praise their efforts by saying, "You did it!"
- Showing them your expectations for appropriate behavior; for example, how to greet someone, share a toy during play or how to comfort someone.
- Guiding them to notice the feelings of others; for example: "Do you see that child crying? How do you think they feel at this moment? How do you think we could help them feel better?"

Taking care of your child

One of the easiest ways to help children develop their communication skills is by the simple act of playing. Joining in their play builds relationships in a fun way and puts you in a great position to teach skills like sharing and cooperation. Use these opportunities to introduce concepts like winning and losing. Playing with friends also gives your child a chance to learn about more subtle communication cues, like body language and vocal intonations.

4. Language & Literacy

Birth to 8 Months

The most common way that your infant communicates with you is by crying. When they cry, they are telling you they have a need. Your infant likely will have unique cries for hunger, attention and wanting to be held – just to name a few. Paying attention to and learning your infant's cries and body language will help build trust. This will help you gradually reduce the stress of wondering what your baby wants and help you know what they need more consistently.

Your infant's cries won't be their only form of communication forever. Your infant is beginning to develop language skills and will start to express themselves by looking at you when they hear your voice and smiling when they hear their name. It is a heartwarming moment when your

infant begins to coo and smile back at you.

Infants need to hear lots of loving words every day. Use encouraging words to get them to try new activities or focus their attention on objects or people. Avoid using negative words or an angry tone of voice. Encourage family members to talk, sing or read with your baby daily.

As your infant grows

Your infant shows their beginning language skills as they:

- Move their arms and legs when they hear a familiar voice.
- Turn and smile when they hear their own name.
- Coo, babble and make different sounds.
- Reach for books.
- Point at objects, animals or people.
- Clap and wave.
- Repeat sounds.

Playing and learning

Help your infant's development by trying these activities:

- Talk to your infant when you are dressing them in the morning. "Let's put on your shirt and pants. Here are your socks. Socks go on your feet." Hearing words helps them learn their meanings.
- Sing simple songs while you are changing diapers like, "The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round. The wheels on the bus go round and round all through the town!" Copy your infant's sounds and wait for them to respond.

Taking care of your infant

Help support your infant's language by talking to them — even if it feels one-sided. Your infant will learn new words and sounds by hearing you talk. They will watch your face and body for cues on what words mean.

8 Months to 18 Months

Hearing your baby's first word is amazing! It's a word you may never forget. Your baby will begin repeating sounds and connect meanings to the sounds they hear. For example, when you give them a glass of milk say, "Here is your milk. Milk tastes good." Soon they will associate the word milk with what they like to drink.

Your baby is beginning to use sounds and words to tell you a need or

a want. These words may be hard to understand at first but encourage them to keep talking. Your baby's language will expand quickly, and you will both enjoy the communication. Your baby's request for "muk" will begin to sound like what they are trying to say, which is "milk." Soon, you will be able to understand their words.

Read to them daily to expose them to new words and concepts. The more words they hear, the easier it will be for them to understand and begin to speak words. Have books that are safe for babies to hold, touch and explore. They may put books in their mouth as they explore the book.

Find board books or books with cloth or plastic pages for your child. These books are designed for children this age and made to be cleaned after each use.

As your baby grows

Your baby shows their early language skills as they:

- Lift arms when they want to be picked up.
- Use gestures such as waving and shaking their head no.
- Pick out their favorite book.
- Use sounds to name people, such as "mama" and "dada."
- Use one-word phrases such as "mine" and "no."
- Hold an easy-grip jumbo crayon and make a mark on paper.

Playing and learning

Support your child's social development by:

- Help your baby put into words what they want. If they are reaching for a stuffed frog, ask them, "Do you want to hold the stuffed frog? Here is your Froggy."
- Sing songs again and again with them. Songs such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" use repeated phrases that they can practice saying.
- As you ride in the car or on a bus, talk about what they are seeing, such as signs, people and dogs. Tell them where you are going and what you will do: "We are going to the grocery store to buy apples and grapes. You like to eat apples and grapes for snack and lunch."

Taking care of your baby

Help your baby develop a love of books and make it a part of their daily routine. Reading before bedtime can help them "wind down" and get ready for sleep. Reading two or three short books a night is one of the best ways

to help their speaking and listening skills grow. Even at this young age, exposure to children's books and stories lays the foundation for later reading success. Always have a book or two in your baby's bag to read.

18 Months to 24 Months

Your toddler's language skills can improve each day. The more words your child hears, the more words they learn. They begin to show their new vocabulary by naming objects in books, such as dog or ball. They begin to use two-word sentences such as "all done" and "hold me."

Books are an important tool in your child's language development. They listen as you read a children's book and ask questions about the stories. Point to the pictures and talk about what you see. Ask them questions about the stories. This helps toddlers to use language as a tool. Books for toddlers include board books, cloth books and picture books. These books are designed for children this age and are safe for them to put in their mouths.

As your toddler grows

Your toddler will show their beginning language skills as they:

- Point to and name pictures in a book.
- Use two-word sentences, such as "more juice" and "go bye-bye."
- Point to body parts when asked questions like, "Where is your belly button?"
- Make marks on paper with a pencil, marker or crayon and tell you what it says.
- Find their shoes when it is time to get dressed.

Playing and learning

Help your infant's development by trying these activities:

- Read children's books every night at bedtime. This may help your toddler wind down while learning.
- Ask your toddler specific questions about their day on the car ride home from child care or a family trip to the park. Talk about what they did on the playground or what they had for lunch and ask questions to help them think of things to tell you about their day.

Taking care of your toddler

Take time to sit with your toddler each night to look at and read books.

Children love simple picture books. You can use picture books to teach your toddler new words. When reading books to your toddler, point to the words as you read. This helps your toddler begin to understand that words tell the story about the pictures in the books. Allow them to choose their favorite book to keep them engaged during story time.

2-Years-Old

At this age, your child's ability to understand words and listen, read and write has expanded. A 2-year-old's vocabulary has gone from babbles and coos to words you can understand. Your child can use three-word sentences such as, "Pick me up." Although they are learning a lot of new words, they may still struggle to tell you what they need and want. For example, they may become upset when you give them a blue shirt to wear because they wanted the green one. Your 2-year-old may not yet be able to point out colors or find the right words to tell you what they want to wear. This can cause frustration. Try to be patient and offer other choices if possible. It is easy to forget how hard they work to tell us their wants and needs.

It is important to talk to your child as often as possible. Every day they need to hear new and familiar words. Talking to them as you go about your daily routines and describing things they see or what you are doing is a natural way to help them build their vocabulary.

Respond to their questions and expand their sentences when they talk to you. When they ask, "What's that?" and point to a bird, respond with a detailed description, "That is a red bird with wings, legs and a beak. It can use its wings to fly up to the sky." If they say, "Me want ball," you can say, "Do you want the yellow ball? Here is the big, yellow ball that can bounce and roll."

As your child grows

Your child shows beginning language skills as they:

- Listen to books for longer periods of time.
- Repeat songs and rhymes.
- Use words to describe things such as "pretty flower."
- Recognize the first letter in their first name.
- Pretend to write letters and numbers.
- Respond to questions when asked.

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying these activities:

- Have a conversation with them by asking questions that require more than two words to answer like "What are the names of the boys in your class at school?" or "What colors do you see in this picture?"
- When you help them get dressed, talk about the clothes and the process. For example: "First, you put your legs through the holes in your pants and what do you do next." Talk about the colors of their clothes and what each piece of clothing is called, such as pants, shorts, shirt, dress or pajamas.
- Ask your child to name items in a picture book such as a cat, a car or a flower.

Taking care of your child

Talk, sing and read to your child daily. Visit the local library to find books for toddlers. Attend "story time" at the library or local bookstore. Start a home library for your child. Buy books to read to them and suggest that family members buy them books as gifts. Encourage family members to have conversations with them. Ask them questions about their toys, books, clothes and foods they like.

By the end of this age, your child should speak more than 50 words. If it is difficult for you to understand your child when they talk to you, ask the pediatrician about their speech development. You want to make sure that their hearing and speech are developing as they should.

3-Year-Olds

Language is the way we communicate, a tool for problem-solving and building memory. Language is a way to share thoughts, beliefs and culture. As your 3-year-old expands their use of language, they use words to get their needs met; talk about their thoughts, feelings and experiences; and socialize with others.

Remember that your child is listening to you and others talk and is learning words at an amazing rate. You can understand their speech, and they can have a conversation with you. You might be surprised by the words that come out of their mouth!

Early literacy skills are also developing. They love listening to stories, are

starting to understand that the words on the page have meaning and will "read" their favorite books from memory.

They are interested in letter sounds and new words. They are beginning to use "real" writing with special interest in writing their own name. Your child may write letter-like forms, rather than scribbling, and say, "This is my name," or ask you to write their name at the top of their picture.

Becoming a reader and writer starts with your support, such as reading to them daily, talking about the things they see and describing them. Give them paper and crayons or pencils and have them "write" notes to you or help them write their name.

As your child grows

Your child is beginning to:

- Make comments on what they observe.
- Follow some two-step directions.
- Use longer and more complex sentences and questions.
- Connect stories to real-life experiences.
- Ask what words mean.
- Recognize and name some letters.
- Retell or reenact stories.
- Begin to make letter-like shapes on paper.

Playing and learning

You can support your child's language and literacy development by:

- Starting conversations with your child by asking questions such as, "What songs did you sing at school today?" or "Which friends did you play with?"
- Asking your child to read their favorite stories to you.
- Singing rhyming songs and reading poems and nursery rhymes.
- Making yourself an example of reading and writing at home, such as using recipes, writing grocery lists, etc.
- Asking your child to predict what a book is about or what will happen on the next page.

Taking care of your child

The more words children hear, the better readers they become. If your home language is not English, it is important that you continue to use your child's first language at home. Success at learning a second language is

based on successfully learning one's first language. It also maintains strong communication between you and your child, other family members and your community.

5. Thinking Mathematical

Birth to 8 Months

Mathematics is everywhere and it helps children make sense of their world. Children learn by observing and interacting with their environment and are naturally curious about number and mathematical concepts. Children's development of mathematical understanding begins in the very first months of life and continues to grow and expand as they interact with others and with the world around them. For young children, math is about number knowledge, patterns, size, shape awareness, and the relationship between objects and space.

Your infant is also very interested in objects and how they move. Give them opportunities to explore objects such as providing mobiles on their crib, an infant "gym" with hanging objects that they can bat and kick and hand toys that have movement. Toys with different colors, shapes and textures catch their attention.

By 4 and 5 months, your infant begins to develop an understanding of the space around them. They begin to roll over and sit up. Soon, they begin to pull up to stand. They are now able to explore their world in a new way.

Toys can be spaced to encourage exploration and mobility. As they begin to move their body, they learn about how their body fits in the space around them. This awareness will grow into understanding how other objects move through space, such as a ball rolling, how blocks fit together or the way various shapes can slide inside of a shape sorter.

As your infant grows

You can see how much your infant is growing during these first months when they:

- Reach for more than one object during play.
- Listen to and observe songs and finger plays that involve numbers and quantity.
- Explore objects with their hands and mouth. Explores objects with different pattern characteristics.

- Notice and enjoy the feel of different shapes, sizes, and textures in their home and learning environment.
- Begins to notice shapes in the environment with preferences for certain shaped items during tummy time by crawling or scooting towards the preferred shaped item.

Playing and learning

You can help your infant's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Interact with your infant while diapering and cuddling. Place a toy nearby for them to see and reach for.
- Sing songs such as the alphabet song or ones that rhyme, repeat or have numbers in them.
- Provide toys with different shapes and textures. Place them on the floor in front of your baby during tummy time.
- Use words to describe the shapes and textures around them. "The round circle on the soft textured block is smooth."

Taking care of your infant

Your infant learns about their world through interactions with you. Talk with them as you change their diaper, bathe them and get them dressed. Use words like up and down, big and little, long and short. "Your arms are long and your toes are short." "Put your leg up to put on your pants and put your leg down to put on your shoe." These are early math concepts.

8 Months to 18 Months

Children are born with an ability to recognize quantities and love to collect their favorite things. Very early in a child's growth and development, they notice when something has changed or is missing, especially when it is their favorite toy. Your baby will learn about patterns by experiencing routines and exploring objects with different shapes, colors, textures and sizes.

As your baby explores their environment, they will notice the shapes of objects before they can identify them. They will understand more of what people say than what they can express in words. This is why it is important to talk to your baby often and describe what you see.

They are learning about their surroundings and where things are located. This is called spatial awareness. When you use words like up, down, in, out,

around and under, you are helping them learn about spatial relationships.

As your baby grows

You see how much your baby grows during these next months as they:

- Ask for more food or show their food is all gone by using hand gestures.
- Look for a specific toy when they notice one is missing.
- Match objects that have the same shape or color.
- Explore toys or objects that may differ in size or shape.

Playing and learning

Help your baby's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Count their toys as you put them away together.
- Compare your hands. Hold them up together. Talk about how your hands are bigger and their hands are smaller.
- Point out the shape of their snacks. "You have round crackers, but your cheese is square."
- Show them spatial relationships with objects by playing "Do as I Do" or the "I See": "I see a book. Where is it? The book is under the table…" etc.
- When brushing your baby's teeth, tell them how many teeth they have. Then, show them how many teeth you have. Compare the size and number of your teeth to their teeth.

Taking care of your baby

Your child is beginning to eat solid foods. Fresh fruits and raw vegetables cut into small pieces are healthy finger foods for snacks. Show your child how to put all the pieces that are the same color together and count aloud the pieces he eats.

18 Months to 24 Months

Children are born with an ability to recognize quantity without knowing math in the way we think of it. They can tell the difference between two and three objects even without counting. You can help your child associate number words to items by counting with them up to five. "You have one, two, three crackers on your plate."

Toddlers also learn early that adding more objects will make the pile bigger or when they have finished a snack, they may say "more." You can help

your toddler understand the concept of addition. For example, when playing with blocks, you may ask, "Do you need to add more blocks to make your tower taller?" Your toddler can also learn about patterns.

They know the pattern in their daily routine, that playtime comes after nap time, for example. As they learn to recognize patterns, they can sort objects by color. For example, place a group of red and yellow blocks (up to five) on a table. Ask your toddler to give you the red blocks. Be sure that the blocks are the same size, and the only difference is the color. Once you get started, it will be easy to find other things to sort—forks and spoons, big socks and little socks, or triangles and circles. Keep the number of items to sort small and be patient as they learn this new skill.

As your toddler grows

You can see how much your toddler grows during these next months. They will:

- Use number words or sign language to count small amounts of items (e.g., two cookies, three blocks, one book).
- Begin to recognize patterns in their environment.
- Begin to match basic shapes or sort familiar objects into two groups based on size.
- Use direction words like up, down, in, out, over.
- Use age-appropriate words or gestures (small, big) to describe their toys.

Playing and learning

Help your toddler's development by trying some of the following activities such as:

- While sorting laundry, ask your toddler to match socks by size. Mix them up again and have them match by color. Talk about what they are doing and patiently help them.
- Helping them find patterns or repeated phrases in story books. They can also see the pattern in a song when parts are repeated. Point those patterns out or ask them to try to guess what comes next.
- Counting steps or stepping stones. When walking together, hold their hand and count the stairs as you go up. Count and hop on pavers.

Taking care of your toddler

Matching and patterning are good ways to help build their memory and allow them to practice new skills. Manipulating objects by flipping, sliding and rotating them to fit is a key aspect of fine motor skills and spatial awareness in children. These developmental milestones are crucial for young children as they build foundational skills in math, spatial awareness and language.

2-Year-Olds

Two-year-olds are becoming more active, alert and aware. Your toddler is beginning to understand concepts such as big and small and notices when someone has more of something than they do. Point out other comparisons during daily routines, such as when helping them get dressed say, "Your shoes are small and my shoes are big." When having dinner show them two spoons and say, "This spoon is small and that one is big."

Use spatial direction words when you play with your child, such as, "Climb up to the top of the slide and slide down." "The toy is on top of the table; the shoe is under the bed."

As your child grows

As your child learns and grows, they show their thinking and reasoning skills as they:

- Talk about and finds objects of different shapes and sizes, such as a "big box" or "little circle."
- Show spatial positions with their body during songs or finger plays.
- Take things apart, stack and sort objects.
- Complete simple three or four-piece puzzles.

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Talk to your child about the different kinds of signs they see as you ride in the car. Talk about differences such as, "This sign is round and the other sign looks like a triangle."
- Have blocks and puzzles that you and your toddler play with together. Help them build things with the blocks and show them how to put simple puzzles together. Then, encourage them to build with the blocks and put the puzzles together by themselves.

- Your child is aware of numbers and likes to have you count things. You can find things to count with them throughout the day. Count the pieces of banana on their plate at lunch, the number of buttons on their jacket or shirt, toys they have on the floor or count the number of people at the table during dinner.
- Use their toys and help them find toys that are the same size or same shape.
- Count their toes and fingers when you give them a bath, wash their hands or put on their socks.
- Give them various sizes of plastic containers to fill and dump when they take a bath. Ask them which ones are empty and which ones are full.

Taking care of your child

When your child is trying to complete a simple puzzle, they may need your support in finding a solution. Take the time to encourage them to work through the challenge. This teaches them to be patient and to think things through. This will help them find the solution on their own the next time.

3-Year-Olds

Your 3-year-old has been learning about math since birth; the infant and toddler experiences of playing with shape sorters, reading books with numbers, and asking for and getting "more" of something lays the foundation for future math learning.

It can be entertaining to listen to your child talk about math concepts. They are concrete thinkers and have limited experience; their understanding is quite different from an adult. For example, they may say their race car traveled at "35 six 800 miles an hour," or they may become fixated on a particular number when asked a question about "How many?" These incorrect but normal responses show that your child is already starting to apply math concepts to their world.

Counting is what we most commonly think of in preschool math, but your 3-year-old is also developing concepts about shapes, patterns and measurements. Keep asking them questions such as: "How many blocks are red?" "What numbers are on the clock?" "Which toy is the heaviest?" "Who is taller, you or your brother?" and "How many circles can you find in this room?"

As your child grows

Your 3-year-old is learning to:

- Recognize the number of items in a small group without counting.
- Notice and copy patterns.
- Recognize, name and match shapes.
- Understand position and direction words (e.g., under, beside, across, over, etc.).
- Compare and group things by size, weight, length, etc.
- Correctly count the number of items in a group.

Playing and learning

Try these activities to support your child's growing math skills:

- Count during everyday activities – "How many plates do we need to set the table for dinner?" or "There are one, two, three boats in the bathtub with you." When counting items, touch each one.
- Ask them to find shapes and patterns in the house.
- Use words that describe objects – "Please bring me the large bowl," "Your lunchbox is heavy when it is full."
- Play games about position and direction – "Put the ball behind you/next to you/over your head," or play "Hokey Pokey."
- Read books about counting and comparing or shapes and sizes.

Taking care of your child

The best way to support your child's interest in math concepts is with their own toys and everyday objects of different shapes, sizes and colors. As they play with these items, ask questions and make comments such as, "How many cars are in your garage?" "How far did the ball go?" or "I see you made circles on the paper with your crayons." This type of play forms the foundation for understanding more advanced math concepts in elementary school years.

6. Scientific Inquiry

Birth to 8 Months

Your child is learning about science, even as an infant. They are naturally curious about their world and how things work. They can use simple tools to help them understand movement and how objects are different, e.g., smooth, rough, round, pointy. By giving your infant lots of opportunities to

explore their world, they begin to make connections between real objects and pictures of them in books. Each month you will notice your infant is increasingly interested in objects and people around them.

As your infant grows

Your infant is growing every day. You should begin to see them:

- Learn through their senses by touching, mouthing, shaking and dropping toys around them.
- Respond to your voice or other sounds and objects around them.
- Be curious about their hands and feet.
- Notice how objects move, like a mobile, or try to see what makes the noise when they shake their rattle.
- Like different textures and shapes and reach to touch them or put them in their mouth.

Playing and learning

You can help your infant grow and learn by trying some of the following activities:

- Give them different textures to explore like a clean wet sponge or washcloth, a toy with ridges or a rattle that has the noise part visible so they can see how it works.
- Play simple cause-and-effect games with their child (e.g., peek-a-boo).
- Sing and talk to your baby often.
- Take them outside to feel the fresh air, notice the sky and feel the grass or sand with their toes.

Taking care of your infant

Your infant is naturally curious about their world. They respond to sounds and lights around them. They love the sound of your voice and will turn their head when they hear it. If you notice your infant does not respond to sights and sounds, it may be helpful to talk with their pediatrician about your concerns.

8 Months to 18 Months

Your baby is moving by crawling, pulling up and walking! They use their new movement to discover new things in their environment. Trucks and cars are pushed and pulled across the room. Blocks and cups are stacked, balanced

and knocked down. They experience new things, learn how to problem-solve and make things happen. They see something they want, move towards it, grab it and try to find out what makes it work. All these things help them understand their world. The outside world is just as exciting as it is inside. Pointing out all these new things and talking about what you see will help your baby learn.

As your baby grows

Your baby is growing every day. You should begin to see them doing the following activities:

- Trying to touch everything, putting things in their mouth, shaking and dropping toys.
- Watching things happen, such as splashing in the tub or dropping food to watch the dog eat it.
- Exploring water in the bathtub and sand, dirt or mud in the yard.
- Watching birds fly, squirrels jump and bugs crawl.

Playing and learning

You can help your baby grow and learn by trying some of the following activities:

- Take them for a walk to look at the different kinds of plants, trees, flowers and grass. Talk about what you see. "That tree is tall." "The flowers smell sweet." "The leaves are yellow and green."

18 Months to 24 Months

Your toddler begins to explore their body and the environment through experimentation when they play. Daily routines help them make connections between their body and the functions of each part. They also learn how the world around them works. They take risks and try new things. Sometimes the new idea works and sometimes it does not. They may try to brush their hair with the paintbrush or put a glove on their foot. Enjoy these moments—laugh with them when their "experiment" doesn't quite work out and cheer when it does. These trials and errors help them learn to problem-solve and encourage their natural curiosity.

As your toddler grows

You should begin to see them:

- Use their senses and know that they use their nose to smell, eyes to see, ears to hear, fingers to touch and mouth to taste.
- Explore materials, foods and objects with different smells, feels, tastes and sounds.
- Explore, interact with and identify some plants and animals.
- Push and pull objects.
- Play with objects to gain knowledge about them (moving, stacking, pushing and pulling).

Playing and learning

You can help your child grow and learn by trying some of the following activities:

- When you take them for walks, point out and compare the details in leaves on bushes and trees and give them a magnifying glass to look at bugs, plants and rocks more closely.
- Play games that use their senses, like "I Spy." Have them smell items and give them the words to describe them, such as, "The orange smells sweet."
- Provide lots of sensory experiences with feathers, large shells or pinecones and items that have different colors or lights. Point out sounds you hear when walking, like the sound of the wind in the trees, the meows of a cat, rain falling into a puddle or a bird singing.
- Encourage them to imitate animals you see—crawl like a bug, hop like a cricket, jump like a squirrel or run like a dog. Describe the way the animal moves, "Let's crawl slowly like a turtle."
- Watch animals—what they look like, how they move and what they eat. Talk about what you see and give them words to describe their experiences.

Taking care of your toddler

One of the wonderful ways in which your toddler grows is their ability to learn from their actions. At this stage, they begin to discover that they can influence their environment. They may drop a ball from the chair and then drop a toy truck. They are interested in seeing how the objects fall and hearing the sounds they make. Make sure your toddler has safe toys and spaces for their explorations.

2-Year-Olds

Your 2-year-old is curious about objects, animals and people. They use their senses to gather information about the world around them. They notice how their actions affect objects around them. They know that they can push their food off the table and it falls on the floor. They touch food or water to find out if it is hot or cold. During their bath, they discover which toys can float and which toys sink. They taste food to see if it is sweet or sour. They can identify some smells as good or bad. These are the basics of scientific inquiry. Encouraging their explorations and observations supports their development of science concepts.

As your child grows

During the third year of your child's life, your child shows their problem-solving and observational skills as they:

- Turn their cup upside down and the juice spills on the floor.
- Put different toys into the bath water and find that some float and some sink.
- Roll toy cars on flat surfaces and on inclines and see how fast they go.
- Plant a seed and watch it grow into a plant.
- Put toys in a wagon and pull them to a new location.

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Give them a magnifying glass and take them outside to look at leaves, bugs, rocks and other items. Ask how things look when they look at them with and without the magnifying glass.
- Ask them to look at and feel the food that you give them for lunch. Ask them if the crackers are smooth or rough, if the bread is soft or hard and if the soup is hot or cold.
- Point out the way they move by running, walking, jumping, rolling or crawling. Ask them to move like an animal such as a cat, dog or kangaroo.
- Take them on walks and have outside play time often so they can see different kinds of plants and animals. Talk about the colors of trees, leaves, flowers, grass, dirt and sand. Let them touch, smell and talk about the way these things feel and smell. Watch

different animals such as cats, dogs and birds and talk about the ways they move and what they eat.
- Give them toys that they can move by pushing, pulling or rolling them. Say, "When you push the car, it moves," or "You can roll the ball across the floor."

Taking care of your child

When you go about your daily routines such as doing laundry, preparing meals and giving your child a bath, talk about the things you are doing.

Let them touch and taste different foods. Talk about the differences in the way things feel and smell. Explain that to be safe, they may only taste the things you give them.

3-Year-Olds

Your 3-year-old's need to know "why" is the driving force behind the development of their thinking and reasoning skills. These skills include asking questions, making predictions, testing ideas and reflecting on what happened. These thinking and reasoning skills are the foundation for lifelong learning.

As your child grows

Your 3-year-old is learning to:

- Identify the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch and how to use them to explore.
- Use simple tools for investigating (sticks, magnifying glasses).
- Observe and ask questions about the weather.
- Explore the similarities and differences between living things.
- Try to solve problems using tools.
- Build structures and simple machines in play.

Playing and learning

Support your child's scientific knowledge and inquiry skills by:

- Reading fiction and non-fiction books about topics that excite them.
- Talking about the properties of natural materials they play with such as rocks, sand, water, etc. (e.g., "The sand sticks together when it gets wet.").
- Asking questions to stimulate your child's thinking, such as "Why do you think your building fell down?" or "Where do you think the

birds go when it rains?"

- Allowing your child time to play outdoors and encouraging their exploration of nature.
- As you go about your daily routines, ask your child questions that require them to use their senses to answer, such as, "How does the water feel?" "What sounds does the clock make?" or "Do the big ball and the little ball bounce the same?"
- Let them help you cook dinner and talk about the way the food looks and smells before and after you cook it. Ask your child to taste different kinds of fruit and tell you which ones are sweet and which ones are sour.

Taking care of your child

Encourage your child to use all of their senses, to see the difference of a ball bouncing on tile compared to bouncing on a rug, smell the difference between the apple and the orange, taste a graham cracker and talk about how it differs from a saltine cracker, etc. By providing many opportunities for your child to explore their environment, you are giving them the experiences and language needed to better understand the world around them.

7. Social Studies

Birth to 8 Months

From birth, your infant begins to connect with you. When you respond consistently and warmly to their cries for food, comfort and sleep, they learn to feel safe and secure. They begin to learn and connect with you from your language, the songs you sing, the books you share with them and the foods you eat. They are learning about their environment and their culture through you.

Your infant is able to learn routines and begins to notice changes in events. They understand the transition to sleep when the lights are dimmed or they hear soft music and you rock or gently hold them. They know when it is time to play by bright lights, toys being available and the upbeat rhythm of your voice. A predictable schedule and routine teach them to feel safe in their environment.

As your infant grows

Your infant can do many things, such as:

- Recognize voices of mom, dad and family caregivers with responding with a smile to loved ones.
- Begin to develop an understanding of sequencing of events and schedules such as crying out if lunch is late or during drop off or pick up time.
- Enjoy social play and become more active in getting attention.
- Look at you to see how you respond to them and other objects or noises.

Playing and learning

You can help your infant grow and learn by trying some of the following activities:

- Sing special songs during routines or tell stories as you feed them.
- Begin to establish predictable routines for diapering, bath time, bedtime, etc. Routines and rituals provide a sense of safety that is the foundation for later exploration.
- Use names and labels when speaking to them. “Daddy loves you.” “Your brother, Abe, wants to sing to you.”
- Have fun making silly faces and describing them.
- Give them simple tools for toys, such as wooden spoons and plastic bowls to bang.

Taking care of your infant

Sharing family traditions like music, language and celebrations teaches your infant they are a part of a family and community. Your family rituals may include special foods. It is important to share these things with your baby but be careful when you introduce new foods. It is good to expose your baby to lots of new foods but be mindful of food allergies and only introduce them to one new food at a time. Watch for any negative reactions. If your infant develops a rash, seems itchy, has swollen lips or tongue or has trouble breathing after eating a new food, seek emergency medical attention immediately.

8 Months to 18 Months

Older infants and young toddlers learn a lot about social studies. When

you share stories about family members, eat special foods, celebrate family traditions and sing songs important to you, you are teaching your baby that they are part of a family and a community.

While learning about family, they are also learning about themselves. As they grow, they begin to see that they are independent of you. They can point to parts of their body like their hands, legs and mouth and smile at themselves in a mirror. Once they start moving around, they are ready to be a little more independent and find things in their world to explore. They also want to feed themselves, put on their own socks or brush their own hair. Giving them a small variety of toys, books and snacks allows them to make choices and decisions for themselves.

As your baby grows

Your baby can do many things such as:

- Participate in family traditions and celebrations.
- Recognize parts of their body, such as eyes, nose and mouth and point to parts of the body upon request.
- Recognize and call out for family members.
- Respond to their schedule and know when it is time to eat, play or sleep.
- Offer toys or objects to others, but then want them back, and hand you a toy when asked.
- Understand and follow simple, one-step directions. Ask, "Who do you see in the mirror?"
- Provide predictable routines for diapering, bath time, bedtime, etc. Routines and rituals provide a sense of safety that is the foundation for later exploration.

Establish routines appropriate for their age. The schedule you set up when they were eight months old may not work as well at 15 months when they are learning they are part of a family that shares traditions, customs and languages. If you speak a language other than English, teach it to your baby. Their brain is specially wired to learn languages. When you speak to them in your language, you build a strong relationship with your child and provide them with skills they will use later in life.

18 Months to 24 Months

Your toddler begins to understand they are their own person, separate

from you. They also begin to learn they are part of a family and other groups. They share in family traditions and celebrations. They can sing special songs, ask about family routines around holidays and "help" prepare favorite meals. Like their family at home, they learn they are part of a group at school too. They know the names of their friends and like to interact by playing simple games, trying out unfamiliar words and exploring their home and school.

Routines are important. Your toddler knows there is a difference between home and school routines and can begin to anticipate what comes next. They understand it is bedtime after they have their warm bath, you read them a book and they have cuddle time with you.

As your toddler grows

Your toddler can do many things such as:

- Participate in family traditions, celebrations and songs.
- Begin to respond to the needs of others, like family or friends by providing comfort to peers and others who may show distress or help others they see who may need their help.
- Begins to identify their personal space such as their nap mat or a cubby.

Playing and learning

You can help your toddler grow and learn by trying some of the following activities:

- Share family celebrations. Talk with your child about what is happening.
- If your family speaks a language other than English, talk to your child, read stories and sing songs in that language.
- Show them pictures with their family.
- Arrange for them to play with friends at a park and model ways to invite friends to play games.
- Maintain family routines to help them feel confident in what to expect next.
- Help them learn to do things for themselves, such as feeding or putting on their shirt.

Taking care of your toddler

Routines are important so your toddler feels safe, secure and confident

about what will happen next. For example, you can remind your toddler that they can get ready for naptime by choosing two books to read. By establishing a daily routine, you provide continuity and security for your child. By giving them ways to help prepare for the next activity, you help them begin to develop independence.

2-Year-Olds

Your 2-year-old is learning to interact with the people in their environment and recognizes that some people are like them or their family members and some are different. They are learning how to respond to others and how to ask questions. They are learning to follow rules and routines and are dependent upon you and your family to be models for interacting with others.

As your child grows

During this time in your child's life, they begin to show you that they know the difference between themselves and others as they:

- Recognize family members, close friends, and know their names.
- Follow familiar routines such as bedtime and bath time.
- Recognize community members such as police officers and firefighters.
- Know their own personal space.
- Respond to the needs of others such as giving a friend a toy.

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying some of the following activities:

- In the grocery store tell them about the roles of the people who work there. Take them to a library and tell them what the librarian does as you check out books. In the doctor's office, tell them what the doctor does and what the nurses do and how they help you when you are sick.
- They are beginning to recognize places in your community and the roles of community members. Point out community helpers such as police officers or firefighters and talk about their uniforms. Tell them about the ways firefighters and police officers help to keep the community safe.
- Talk to them about the food that your family likes to eat and how it is part of your family's culture.

- As you walk or drive through the neighborhood, point out places in the community such as schools, stores, parks, bus stations, police stations or hospitals. Talk about the people who work in or visit these places. At home, pretend to visit some of these places.

Taking care of your child

Talk about the differences in people in your community and explain that every community member helps to support your community. Read books with stories about people from different communities. Discuss what a community member's role is and why it is important. For example, "A school crossing guard helps children cross the street safely to school each day" or "The nurse helps the doctor during your wellness-check visit."

3-Year-Olds

Your child is becoming more observant of their social world. They are beginning to recognize themself as a member of a community and culture. They are beginning to understand family roles. By observing the people around them, your 3-year-old is recognizing characteristics of their own self and the similarities and differences of others.

The pretend play they now engage in is also helping them learn about the roles they have seen others play in their life (mother, father, doctor, etc.) and how to get along with others. Through this play, they are also developing the vocabulary that will help them understand their world.

As your child grows

Your 3-year-old is learning to:

- Participate in family responsibilities.
- Attempt to solve conflicts.
- Follow rules and routines.
- Respond with empathy to others.
- Identify what they want.
- Use words to describe space and location.

Playing and learning

Help your child's development of social concepts by:

- Drawing a simple map of the family's house. Ask children where they might find an object or place where the family does things together. Create and follow a pathway through the house to get there.

- Share family stories and traditions with your child and show them pictures of family members, past and present. Let them help you prepare meals that are special for your family. Discuss holidays and other celebrations that reflect your family's culture and teach them songs or special ways your family celebrates these occasions.
- Helping your child understand the roles of "community helpers" such as firefighters, police officers, doctors, etc., by reading books and acting out the roles during pretend play.
- Walking around the neighborhood and playing "I Spy" for street signs and discussing what they mean and why they are important.
- Playing games that have simple rules, such as taking turns and passing items to others.

Taking care of your child

As your child notices similarities and differences in people, read books that focus on children from other communities, pointing out the similarities and differences in families and customs. Your child will begin to follow rules more regularly but may need help with consistency. Point out signs and other symbols of rules around them to help them understand there are rules for the community just like rules for the house and classroom.

8. Creative Expression Through the Arts

Birth to 8 Months

Infants enjoy touching, feeling and looking at materials that come in different textures and colors. They like things that are soft, bumpy, crinkly or squishy. Newborns have weak vision and only see black and white at first. After a few weeks, your infant will begin to see red and green. When you give your infant interesting patterns to look at, use ones that are black, white, red and green. By 5 months, their vision will be developed enough for them to have good color vision and will enjoy looking at patterns, bright colors and sparkling objects as well as pictures and art.

As early as two months, they can give their fixed attention to musical sounds from your singing or from instruments. They like to hear you sing rhymes, finger plays and children's songs. When you move their arms and legs to the beat of the song, they learn about rhythm and get exercise.

Through these experiences, they are learning language skills, building

memory and growing strong muscles. Play lots of music, dance with your baby during play time and rock your infant to a lullaby before bed. They love to sing, dance and cuddle with you.

As your infant grows

Your infant is learning new things like:

- Responding to music by listening intently, moving head toward the music, or moving arms and legs.
- Having increasingly controlled body movements.
- Being aware of their environment.
- Imitating experiences they know well, like the hand movements to a favorite song.
- Responding to various kinds of art in their surroundings.

Playing and learning

You can help your infant learn by:

- Providing opportunities to feel lots of different textures.
- Playing music in the car or at home to give them opportunities to listen and move to the music.
- Giving items they can use to make "music," including oatmeal containers, spoons, pan lids, etc.
- Singing songs to them as you change their diaper or bathe them.

Taking care of your infant

Your infant is creative and was born to listen, even though their listening ability is not fully developed. They love to listen to music, dance and play with toys that have different textures. Play music with different tempos and beats. Dance with them. If the music is slow and soft, move gently and sway. When the music is upbeat and full of energy, move rhythmically and lift your voice as you sing or hum so that they can feel the difference between the kinds of music.

Birth to 8 Months

Your baby enjoys touching, feeling and looking for materials that come in different textures and colors. They also like to look at things that are brightly colored or sparkling. Exploring basic art materials strengthens their fine motor muscles and helps them build new skills. Give them lots of opportunities to see, feel and hear different materials around them.

As your baby gets older, they gain more mobility and grow stronger. This gives them new options for solving problems and expressing themselves creatively. They are discovering all the things their body can do. They are learning to walk, bend, stretch, sway, stomp, clap, shake and wiggle parts of their body. Enjoy creating memories while playing music, dancing and moving your body with theirs.

As your baby grows

Your baby is learning new things. They:

- Explore and choose different materials to play with, such as feathers, scarves, blocks, boxes and cups.
- Begin to discover and engage in various kinds of music and dance.
- Use gestures to tell you how they feel or communicate an idea.
- Start moving their body when they hear music or funny sounds.
- Imitate familiar finger plays and songs when they hear them.

Playing and learning

You can help your baby grow and learn by trying some of the following activities:

- Freeze water colored with food dye into cubes and let them play with them outside, watching them melt.
- Sing songs with them before meals or at bedtime.
- Play a variety of various kinds of music and encourage them to move their body to the beat.
- Show them how to pull a scarf through a toilet paper roll and see if they can do it, too.

Taking care of your baby

Your baby loves discovering new things, and they do it through their senses by tasting, touching, hearing, seeing and smelling. Giving them many opportunities to experience new sensations will help them learn about their world and apply what they learn to solving problems. When you cook, talk about the different smells in the kitchen and draw their attention to the smells. As you prepare dinner, give them items that have textures, such as a bumpy lemon, a smooth apple or a ribbed piece of celery. Enjoy watching your baby experiment with the food you give them and talk about the item to help them learn the difference between their favorite foods.

8 Months to 18 Months

Toddlers who are given opportunities to develop their imagination and creativity through different forms of art learn to express their individuality. Creative expression helps to develop problem-solving skills and teaches your toddler to better understand the world around them. They enjoy talking about the art they create and begin to identify favorite pictures and music. Your toddler learns from viewing the art of others. They can see a different point of view and how others express themselves through art.

As your toddler grows and gains new skills, they can experiment in many ways with art materials. Make sure the materials and supplies used are safe for them. They enjoy using simple materials to build and create new art. Talk about what you see in their artwork—the shapes, the colors, the textures. Toddlers this age love to move their bodies and pretend. Playing music with different rhythms, beats and instruments helps your toddler hear the differences between the styles of music. Dance together to the different types of music and talk about the way the music makes you feel. This increases their understanding of music.

As your toddler grows

Your toddler learns new things. They:

- Combine a variety of art materials to create new images and pictures.
- Respond and move in creative ways while listening to music, stories and/or verbal cues.
- Engage in imaginative and creative play by using a variety of objects in the environment.
- Begin to show preferences for various art forms.

Playing and learning

You can help your toddler grow and learn by trying some of the following activities:

- Collect items around the house that can be used for creating art, such as plastic cookie cutters, a small rolling pin, scrap paper, paints, chubby washable markers or watercolors.
- Make musical instruments from simple supplies around the house like spoons and plastic bowls, combs and wax paper, or rice in a paper towel roll covered at the ends.

- Play various kinds of music with various tempos, instruments and voices.
- Provide your toddler with lots of dress up clothes, props and real-life materials for creative play.

Taking care of your toddler

Your toddler enjoys art, music and creative play. The best part is the process, not the outcome. Provide lots of different kinds of materials for painting, drawing or dramatic play, but do not expect a finished product or outcome. Your toddler enjoys the process of watching the marks fill the paper, the clay forms new shapes and the feel of their body moving to the music. Encourage your toddler by commenting on the colors you see in their art, the expressions you notice in their play, or the way they stomp their feet to musical beats.

2-Year-Olds

Your 2-year-old enjoys expressing themself in various ways. Singing, dancing, coloring, painting and creating things with play dough, paper or cardboard, provides them with various ways to express their thoughts. Allow messy activities in appropriate places like outside or on a plastic tablecloth. Encourage them by praising the process, "You are putting a lot of colors on your paper." Give a variety of materials and show how to use them. Join them as they dance and sing or take part in their creative play. Creative play allows them to problem solve and try out new ideas.

Provide various opportunities for creative play to allow them to express their personality. Dress-up clothes and grown-up props such as toy phones, children's doctor's kit or plastic dishes and food encourage them to explore roles such as a doctor, nurse, teacher or any other role models in their community. Having different types of dolls and stuffed animals encourages pretending or creative play. Provide books that they can pretend to read to their dolls and stuffed animals just as you read to them.

As your child grows

As a 2-year-old, your child begins to use their imagination and creativity to express themselves as they:

- Engage in creative play.
- Learn to use crayons, paint and pencils to mark or draw on paper.

- Sing, move and dance to music.
- Use common objects to "make music."
- Listen to music and repeat simple songs they hear.

Playing and learning

Help your child's creative development by trying some of the following activities:

- Create a space where they can use crayons, washable paints, glue and different kinds of paper to explore the process of drawing or making things.
- Play different types of music and move or clap to the music.
- Find simple children's songs for you to sing together.
- Give them kitchen utensils, pots, pans or buckets and show them how to use them to "make music."

Taking care of your child

At home or while riding in the car, listen to music with your child and talk about the sounds they hear. Is the music fast or slow, loud or soft, happy or sad? Find children's songs that they like and play them throughout the day. Supervise them closely as they learn to use different types of art supplies. Make sure you have products that are safe for children. Make a place where they can "make a mess" as they create, using washable paints, crayons, markers on paper and other types of surfaces.

3-Year-Olds

In other sections of this book, you learned that your 3-year-old has a stronger sense of self and is beginning to identify as part of a family and culture. These new discoveries create a need for self-expression. They use their imagination and creativity to express themselves using a variety of activities like singing, dancing, coloring, painting and creating things from clay, paper or cardboard. Pretend play is also a creative outlet for your 3-year-old, as they act out their experiences to solve problems and try out new ideas, and to express thoughts, feelings and knowledge.

Provide art materials, such as crayons, playdough and safe scissors to support development of fine motor skills. Encourage activities such as mixing paint colors, building things with paper towel tubes and role-playing to support thinking and reasoning skills.

As your child grows

Your 3-year-old is beginning to:

- Participate in musical games.
- Use musical instruments appropriately.
- Talk about the colors and shapes in artwork.
- Use a variety of tools and art media to express individual creativity.
- Describe similarities and differences between their artwork and that of others.
- Engage in real-life and fantasy scenarios in pretend play, both alone and with other children.

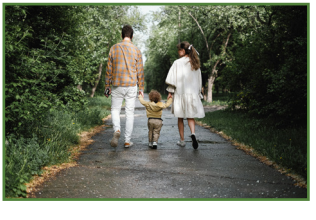
Playing and learning

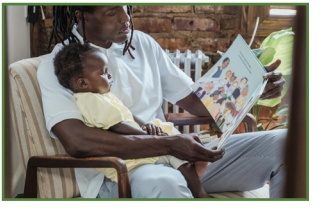
Support your child's creative expression by:

- Providing crayons, markers, pencils or watercolors with blank paper.
- Encouraging the creative process by making comments, such as, "You have been working for a long time on this," or "Tell me about your picture."
- Providing props for pretend play, such as old clothing, shoes and accessories, safe kitchen items, toys or child-sized vehicles and dolls.
- Listening together to different types of music and dancing or singing along.
- Joining your child in pretend play

Taking care of your child

Your 3-year-old needs many opportunities for creative play to express their uniqueness and personality. In the preschool years, the most important part of art is the process of creating, rather than the product that is created. Three-year-olds do not yet have the understanding or hand control to copy an adult model of a drawing or color within the lines in coloring books. Encourage their creative process and join in whenever possible.





The Importance of Family

Learning starts at home with you as your child's first teacher. Infants, toddlers and preschoolers learn by observing and listening to family members as they go about their daily routines. Families shape a child's development of morals, values, learning and social skills. Your child is watching everything you do and listening to everything you say.

Learning occurs naturally for children through play. Children are happiest when they play and playing is one of the best tools for learning new skills. Join in your child's play by role-playing what occurs at doctor visits, trips to the library and the grocery store. Get down on the floor or talk to them at eye level to encourage imagination, let them know that what they share is important and that you hear them.

Use objects around your house for pretend play such as an empty paper towel tube as a horn or a telescope. A plastic spoon and a pot for cooking can become a drum. Play enhances imagination, physical development, social skills and more. Playing outside is very important as it encourages curiosity, creativity, exploration and critical thinking. As a child grows, running, jumping and climbing will help build muscles and coordination. Take pictures of activities and capture time spent together.

Your child will enjoy these moments and so will you as you show pictures of how they looked as they aged and the masterpieces that they created! Housework is a never-ending cycle. Allow your little one to help with the work. It teaches them responsibility and how to work with others to complete tasks. Just remember that it's the effort that counts! Below are easy chores for you to introduce to your child:

- Help set the table.
- Help fold and put away laundry.
- Make their bed with a little help.
- Pick up toys and put them away.
- Feed and fill the water bowl for pets.
- Help with yard work.

All these activities encourage your child to learn new skills and to be a contributing member of your family. Feeling part of a family develops self-confidence, nurtures a feeling of safety and belonging, offers emotional support and cognitive development.

Remember, you are your child's first teacher. All children develop differently and at different times. If you have questions or concerns about your child's development or behavior, it is important to act early. Developmental screenings can help identify areas of your child's development that might need some extra help. Talk to a doctor, your child's teacher or your local early learning coalition about concerns and requests for information on child screenings. If the screening indicates any area that needs extra help, your child may qualify for early intervention services. The pediatrician or your early learning coalition can help connect you to those services.

You are your child's greatest advocate!



Notes, Goals and Training Successes







Contact Us

For more information, please contact your local early learning coalition. The CCR&R State Network can help connect you with your coalition.

CCR&R

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