

15-Month-Old Developmental Milestones

Milestones matter! How your baby plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about their development. Below is a list of milestones that most babies will have achieved by 15 months of age.

Social and emotional milestones

- Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does
- Shows you an object they like
- Claps when they're excited
- Hugs stuffed doll or another toy
- Shows you affection (hugs, cuddles, kisses)

Language and communication milestones

- Tries to say 1 or 2 other words than “mama” or “dada,” like “ba” for ball or “da” for dog
- Looks at a familiar object when you name it
- Follows directions given with both a gesture and words. For example, they give you a toy when you hold out your hand and say, “Give me the toy”

Cognitive milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Tries to use things the right way, like a phone, cup, or book
- Stacks at least 2 small objects, like blocks

Movement and physical development milestones

- Takes a few steps on their own
- Uses their fingers to feed themselves some food

Other things to share with your baby's doctor at their 15-month visit:

- What are some things you and your baby do together?
- What are some things your baby likes to do?
- Is there anything your baby does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your baby lost any skills they once had?

You know your baby best. Don't wait. If your baby is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills they once had, or if you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your baby's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening.

If your doctor is concerned about your baby's development, they may refer your baby to a specialist or to Early On, which is the early intervention program in the State of Michigan (1-800-EARLYON or 1800EarlyOn.org). You can also contact Early On at any point on your own to request an evaluation.

You can help your baby grow and learn!

As your baby's first teacher, you can help their learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your baby's doctor if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your baby's development.

- Help your baby learn to speak. A baby's early words are not complete. Repeat and add to what they say. They may say "ba" for ball, and you can say, "Ball, yes, that's a ball."
- Tell your baby the names of objects when they point to them, and wait a few seconds to see if they make any sounds before handing it to them. If

they do make a sound, acknowledge them, and repeat the name of the object (“Yes! Cup.”).

- Find ways to let your baby help with everyday activities. Let them get their shoes to go outside, put snacks in the bag for the park, or put the socks in the laundry basket.
- Have routines for sleeping and feeding. Create a calm, quiet bedtime for your baby. Put on their pajamas, brush their teeth, and read 1 or 2 books to them. Children between 1-2 years of age need 11- 14 hours of sleep a day (including naps). Having consistent sleep times makes this easier!
- Show your baby different things, such as a hat. Ask them, “What do you do with a hat? You put it on your head.” Put it on your head and then give it to them to see if they copy you. Do this with other objects, such as a book or a cup.
- Sing songs with gestures, such as “Wheels on the Bus.” See if your baby tries to do some of the actions.
- Say what you think your baby is feeling (for example: sad, mad, frustrated, happy). Use your words, facial expressions, and voice to show what you think they are feeling. For example, say, “You are frustrated because we can’t go outside, but you can’t hit other people. Let’s go look for an indoor game.”
- Expect tantrums. They are normal at this age and are more likely if your baby is tired or hungry. Tantrums should become shorter and happen less as they get older. You can try a distraction, but it is okay to let them have the tantrum without doing anything. Give them some time to calm down and move on.
- Teach your baby “wanted behaviors.” Show them what to do and use positive words or give them hugs and kisses when they do it. For example, if they pull your pet’s tail, teach them how to pet gently. Give them a hug when they do it.

- Limit your baby’s screen time (looking at TV, tablets, phones, etc.) to video calling with loved ones. Screen time is not recommended for children younger than 2 years of age. Babies learn best by talking, playing, and interacting with others.
- Encourage your baby to play with blocks. You can stack the blocks and they can knock them down.
- Let your baby use a cup without a lid for drinking, and practice eating with a spoon. Learning to eat and drink is messy but fun!
- Give your baby water, breast milk, or plain milk. You don’t need to give your baby juice. Do not give your baby other sugary beverages, such as fruit drinks, soda, sports drinks, or flavored milks.
- Give your baby safe places to explore. Baby-proof your home. For example, move sharp or breakable things out of reach. Lock away medications, chemicals, and cleaning products. Save the Poison Help Line number, (800) 222-1222, in all of your phones.
- Continue to talk, read, sing, and tell your baby the names of things throughout the day. They will try to say and learn many new words, which can help them read when they’re older.
- Make a book with pictures of people and pets in your baby’s life. Name them as you look through the book together. Include a picture of your baby.
- Sing or play children’s songs and songs your family enjoys. Dance with your baby.
- Read a new book after a favorite one to explore and try new books. Children like to do favorite things again and again. You can use the things they like to do to introduce new things.
- Play simple games, such as hide and seek. Let your baby watch you hide behind a chair and then wait for them to come “find” you.

- Make up a simple “cleanup song” and sing it while you teach your baby to help clean up. Have them help put toys in a basket or hand you things to put away.
- You can teach simple gestures and sign language (for example, pointing and waving) to help your baby “talk” to you and show you what they want.
- “Talk” to your baby with a stuffed animal. See if your baby tries to copy you or if they use another stuffed animal to “talk” with the one you are holding.
- Blow bubbles and let your baby pop them. Say things as they pop them, such as “Pop, pop!”

To see more tips and activities, download CDC’s Milestone Tracker app.

Important note: this milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

This handout is adapted from www.cdc.gov/ActEarly

Scan the QR code for more information:



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