

18-Month-Old Developmental Milestones

Milestones matter! How your child 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 18 months of age.

Social and emotional milestones

- Moves away from you, but looks to make sure you are close by
- Points to show you something interesting
- Puts hands out for you to wash them
- Looks at a few pages in a book with you
- Helps put their clothes on by pushing arm through sleeve or lifting up foot

Language and communication milestones

- Tries to say 3 or more words besides “mama” or “dada”
- Follows 1-step directions without any gestures (like giving you the toy when you say “Give it to me”)

Cognitive milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom
- Plays with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car

Movement and physical development milestones

- Walks without holding on to anyone or anything
- Scribbles
- Drinks from a cup without a lid, but may spill sometimes
- Feeds self with fingers

- Tries to use a spoon
- Climbs on and off a couch or a chair without help

Other things to share with your child’s doctor at their 18-month visit:

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

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

If your doctor is concerned about your child’s development, they may refer your child 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 child grow and learn!

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

- Ask simple questions to help your child think about what’s around them. For example, ask them, “What is that?”
- Let your child use a cup without a lid for drinking and practice eating with a spoon. Learning to eat and drink is messy but fun!

- Let them make simple decisions. Let your child choose between two things. For example, when dressing, ask them if they want to wear the red or blue shirt.
- Have steady routines for sleeping and eating. For example, sit at the table with your child when they're eating meals and snacks. This helps set mealtime routines for your family.
- Limit screen time to video calling with loved ones. Screen time is not recommended for children younger than 2 years of age. Children learn by talking, playing, and interacting with others. Limit your own screen time when you are with your child so you are able to respond to their words and actions.
- Ask your child's doctor and/or teachers if your child is ready for toilet training. Most children are not successful at toilet training until 2 to 3 years old. If they are not ready, it can cause stress and setbacks, which can cause training to take longer.
- Expect tantrums. They are normal at this age and should become shorter and happen less often as your child gets older. You can try distractions, but it's ok to ignore the tantrum. Give them some time to calm down and move on.
- Talk with your child by facing them and getting down to their eye level when possible. This helps your child "see" what you're saying through your eyes and face, not just your words.
- Start to teach your child the names for body parts by pointing them out and saying things like "Here's your nose, here's my nose" while pointing to their nose and your own.
- Try to respond to your child's behavior in a safe and loving way. Stay consistent as much as possible.
- Teach your child more words by adding to the words they say. For example, if they say "Dog" say, "Yes, that's a dog. Dogs say, "woof, woof."

- Play with your child by rolling balls back and forth, pushing toy cars, and putting blocks or other items in and out of containers.
- Read books and talk about the pictures using simple words.
- Play simple games where both of you have a part to play. Blow bubbles and let your child pop them. Say things as they pop them such as “Pop, pop.”
- Create a spot in your home for your child to go to when they’re upset. Stay nearby so your child knows they are safe and can come to you for help calming as needed.
- Give toys that your child can push or pull safely.
- Give toys and things to your child that encourage “pretend” play such as a doll and baby blanket.

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