

2-Year-Old Developmental Milestones

How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about their development. Developmental milestones are things that most children (75% or more) can do by a certain age. Below is a list of milestones that most children will have achieved by 2 years of age.

Social and emotional milestones

- Notices when others are hurt or upset
- Will pause or look sad when someone is crying
- Looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation

Language and communication milestones

- Points to things in a book when you ask
- Says at least 2 words together, like “more milk”
- Points to at least 2 body parts when you ask them to show you
- Uses more gestures than waving and pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding “yes”

Cognitive milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Holds something in one hand while using their other hand (for example, holding a container and taking off the lid)
- Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy
- Plays with more than one toy at the same time (for example, will put toy food on a toy plate)

Movement and physical development milestones

- Kicks a ball
- Runs
- Walks (not climbs) up a few stairs with or without help
- Eats with a spoon

Other things to share with your child’s doctor at their 2-year 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.

- Help your child learn how words sound, even if they can’t say them clearly yet. For example, if your child says, “or nana,” say, “You want more banana.”

- Watch your child closely during playdates. Children this age play next to each other, but they do not know how to share and solve problems. Show your child how to deal with conflicts by helping them share, take turns, and use words when possible.
- Have your child help you get ready for mealtime by letting them carry things to the table, such as plastic cups or napkins. Thank your child for helping.
- Give your child balls to kick, roll, and throw.
- Give toys that teach your child how to make things work and how to solve problems. For example, give them toys where they can push a button and something happens.
- Let your child play dress-up with grown-up clothes, such as shoes, hats, and shirts. This helps them start to pretend play.
- Allow your child to eat as much or as little as they want at each meal. Toddlers don't always eat the same amount or type of food each day. Your job is to offer them healthy foods, and it's your child's job to decide if and how much they need to eat.
- Have routines for sleeping and feeding. Create a calm, quiet bedtime for your child. Put on their pajamas, brush their teeth, and read 1 or 2 books to them. Children this age need 11-14 hours of sleep a day (including naps). Having consistent sleep times makes this easier.
- Ask your child's doctor or teachers about toilet training to know if your child is ready to start. Most children are not able to toilet train until 2-3 years old. Starting too early can cause stress and setbacks, which can cause training to take longer.
- Use positive words when your child is being a good helper. Let them help with simple chores, such as putting toys or laundry in a basket.
- Play with your child outside, by playing "Ready, set, go." For example, pull your child back in a swing. Say, "Ready, set....," then wait and say "Go" when you push the swing.

- Let your child create simple art projects with you. Give your child crayons or put some finger paint on paper, and let them explore by spreading it around and making dots. Hang it on the wall or refrigerator so your child can see it.
- Use positive words and give more attention to behaviors you want to see (“wanted behaviors”) than to those you don’t want to see. For example, say, “Look how well you’re eating with your spoon.”
- Let your child play with sand toys or plastic containers, spoons, or a funnel in the tub or in a sandbox.
- Help your child do simple puzzles with shapes, colors, or animals. Name each piece when your child puts it in place.
- Encourage your child’s curiosity and help them learn and explore new things. Take them to the park, take walks with them, or go on a bus ride.
- Sing songs, such as “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” to teach them the names of body parts. After singing it a few times, see if your child sings some of the words when you touch a body part and wait.
- Limit your child’s screen time (looking at TV, tablets, phones, etc.) to no more than 1 hour a day of a children’s program with an adult present. Children learn best by talking, playing, and interacting with others.
- Encourage your child to play with blocks. Take turns building towers and knocking them down.
- Ask your child to help you open the drawer when you put away clothes or to open the door when you go outside.

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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