

Developmental Milestones

Early Childhood Developmental Milestones (Birth to Age 5) (Bison Bridge Behavioral Insights Parent Resource)

Birth–12 Months Developmental Milestones

Cognitive Development

- Explores objects by mouthing, shaking, and banging them.
- Looks for hidden toys (object permanence starting to develop around 6–9 months).
- Anticipates familiar routines (shows excitement when seeing a bottle or blanket).
- Watches faces closely and recognizes familiar people at a distance.

Early Learning and Pre-Academic Skills

- Enjoys looking at bright, simple books or pictures.
- Shows a preference for familiar toys or songs.
- Begins patting or pointing to pictures in books by the end of the first year.
- Notices differences in facial expressions and voices (early social awareness).

Language Development

- Babbles long strings of sounds like “ba-ba-ba” or “da-da-da.”
- Responds to own name by turning or smiling around 6–9 months.
- Understands simple words like “no” or “bye-bye.”
- Uses gestures like waving or reaching to communicate needs.

Social-Emotional Development

- Smiles and laughs during interactions with familiar people.
- Expresses a wide range of emotions (joy, frustration, fear).
- Shows preference for caregivers and may experience stranger anxiety between 6–9 months.
- Imitates facial expressions and simple actions like clapping hands.

Motor Development

- Rolls over from tummy to back and back again.
- Sits without support between 6–8 months.
- Crawls, scoots, or moves around by the end of the first year.
- Picks up small objects using a thumb-and-finger (pincer) grasp, improving self-feeding skills.

 **Word Picture:** *"Imagine your baby as an architect of their own learning — every smile, babble, crawl, and curious reach lays down a strong foundation for the bridges they'll build later in life."*

🌟 12–24 Months Developmental Milestones

🧠 Cognitive Development

- Begins pretend play (feeds a doll, stirs a toy pot).
- Searches for hidden objects, even after watching them disappear.
- Experiments to solve simple problems, such as figuring out how to get a toy that's out of reach.
- Understands and follows simple directions with one step ("Give me the ball").

📖 Early Learning and Pre-Academic Skills

- Points to pictures in books when named.
- Sorts objects by shape or color.
- Begins to scribble spontaneously with crayons or markers.
- Shows curiosity by trying to fit shapes into matching holes.

💬 Language Development

- Says several single words clearly by 18 months ("Mama," "Ball," "Doggy").
- Uses simple two-word phrases like "more juice" or "go car" by 24 months.
- Understands far more words than they can say.
- Points to body parts or objects when named by others.

👑 Social-Emotional Development

- Shows strong attachment to caregivers but begins asserting independence ("me do it!").
- Engages in parallel play (playing alongside other children but not yet together).
- Displays frustration when needs are not met (tantrums are developmentally normal).
- Copies behavior of adults and older children.

🏃 Motor Development

- Walks independently and begins to run.
- Climbs onto and down from furniture without help.
- Kicks a ball forward and attempts to throw a ball overhead.
- Stacks small blocks (4–6 high by 24 months).
- Uses a spoon with some accuracy when eating.

🖼️ **Word Picture:** *"Think of your toddler as a little engineer — experimenting, climbing, talking, and testing out how the world works, one brave step (and one big tumble) at a time."*

🌟 2–3 Years Developmental Milestones

🧠 Cognitive Development

- Completes simple puzzles with 2–4 pieces.
- Begins sorting objects by shape, size, or color.
- Engages in pretend play (feeding dolls, pretending to cook).
- Understands cause and effect ("If I push the button, the toy lights up.").

📖 Early Learning and Pre-Academic Skills

- Names basic colors and some shapes.
- Begins to understand the idea of "same" and "different."
- Recognizes familiar logos, signs, or symbols in the environment.

- Counts two or three objects.

 **Language Development**

- Speaks in short phrases or sentences with 3–4 words.
- Asks questions starting with “what,” “where,” or “who.”
- Understands and follows two-step directions.
- Vocabulary grows rapidly; most children have around 200–500 words by age 3.

 **Social-Emotional Development**

- Imitates adults and playmates more often.
- Shows a range of emotions (affection, jealousy, pride).
- Shows concern for crying friends.
- Begins playing more interactively with other children.

 **Motor Development**

- Runs easily and steers around obstacles.
- Climbs well.
- Walks up and down stairs holding onto railings.
- Kicks, throws, and begins catching larger balls.
- Draws circles and straight lines.

 **Word Picture:** *“Imagine your child as a builder now — stacking blocks of language, play, and movement into towers that help them see higher, dream bigger, and understand more every day.”*

 **3–4 Years Developmental Milestones**

 **Cognitive Development**

- Understands the idea of “same” and “different.”
- Plays simple board or memory games with help.
- Solves puzzles with 3–6 pieces independently.
- Begins to understand simple time concepts.

 **Early Learning and Pre-Academic Skills**

- Identifies several colors and shapes.
- Counts to 5 or higher.
- Recognizes their own name in print.
- Pretends to read books.

 **Language Development**

- Speaks in full sentences of 4–5 words or more.
- Asks lots of “why” and “how” questions.
- Understands most common verbs and adjectives.
- Tells simple stories from pictures or real events.

 **Social-Emotional Development**

- Cooperates more easily with peers.
- Shows greater independence.
- Expresses emotions clearly and labels feelings.
- Shows pride in accomplishments.

 **Motor Development**

- Climbs well and runs smoothly.
- Pedals a tricycle.
- Walks upstairs alternating feet.
- Draws a person with 2–4 body parts.
- Cuts along a straight line with scissors.

 **Word Picture:** *"Imagine your child now as a storyteller — weaving words, movements, and emotions together to create colorful adventures in everything they touch, say, and play."*

4–5 Years Developmental Milestones

Cognitive Development

- Understands the concept of counting and numbers.
- Remembers parts of a story and can retell it.
- Understands the difference between real and make-believe.
- Starts to grasp time concepts like "yesterday," "today," and "tomorrow."

Early Learning and Pre-Academic Skills

- Counts to at least 10.
- Recognizes most letters of the alphabet.
- Writes some letters and numbers.
- Draws more detailed people with body parts and clothes.

Language Development

- Speaks clearly enough for strangers to understand most of the time.
- Uses future tense when talking ("Grandma will come tomorrow.")
- Tells longer stories with a beginning, middle, and end.
- Understands and uses increasingly complex sentences.

Social-Emotional Development

- Wants to please friends and be like peers.
- Understands taking turns and following rules.
- Shows more awareness of others' feelings.
- Separates easily from parents in familiar settings.

Motor Development

- Hops and stands on one foot for 10 seconds or longer.
- Skips, gallops, and climbs skillfully.
- Catches a bounced ball most of the time.
- Dresses and undresses without much help.

 **Word Picture:** *"Picture your child at this stage as a bridge builder — connecting words, friendships, and new skills to form strong pathways to kindergarten and beyond."*

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). *Learn the Signs. Act Early*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>
- American Academy of Pediatrics. (2022). *Developmental Milestone Changes: Clinical Report*. Pediatrics, 149(3). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-054805>

- Kansas State Department of Education. (2013). *Kansas Early Learning Standards*.
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 **Important Reminder**

This handout reflects Kansas-specific early childhood and special education guidance. Always check with your local district, early intervention program, or the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) for the most current information.