

## Developmental Milestones

This handout lists the skills children develop at different ages as part of typical child development. Each skill is a developmental milestone. For each milestone, there is a typical age range when most children master that skill. For example, a child will typically begin walking between the ages of 9 and 15 months. *Please remember, however, every child is an individual and may develop a skill before or after the typical age range.*

Each of the following tables reviews developmental milestones in different areas of development such as motor skills and communication skills. For example, running and jumping are motor skills, and pointing and using words are communication skills. These areas of development are called developmental domains. Each table lists five developmental domains: motor skills, communication, cognitive skills, social and emotional development, and adaptive skills. There are tables for six age ranges or developmental stages: infants, toddlers, pre-school age children, school-age children, early adolescents and late adolescents.\*

### Infant Developmental Stage (ages birth to 1 year)

Domain	
<b>Motor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops head control, rolls, sits independently, crawls on all fours, pulls to stand and then walks by 1 year of age.</li> <li>• Reaches out and grasps a toy with either hand, begins to pick up small objects with the thumb and first finger, puts toys in and takes out of containers, begins to build a stack of blocks by 1 year.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes to-and-fro vocalizations, imitates non-speech sounds, babbles da-da and ma-ma, says a few words by 1 year.</li> <li>• Imitates simple gestures, reaches to be picked up, plays pat-a-cake and begins to point to indicate wants.</li> <li>• Responds to familiar voices, turns head when name is called, understands simple commands, looks to find a toy when asked.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shakes and bangs toys in play, bangs 2 toys together, tries to find a toy that is hidden.</li> </ul>
<b>Social and Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has warm joyful expressions, follows parent's gaze, plays peek-a-boo, waves bye-bye, shows stranger anxiety.</li> <li>• Is able to accept soothing from attachment figures.</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptive Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds a bottle, finger feeds, drinks from a cup, lifts legs to help with dressing.</li> </ul>

## Toddler Developmental Stage (ages 1 to 3 years)

Domain	
<b>Motor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walks, runs, walks up stairs, kicks a ball, does a broad jump, rides a tricycle.</li> <li>• Stacks blocks, uses a spoon and fork, holds a crayon with fingers, begins to use scissors.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Points to indicate wants, uses a variety of gestures, does hand gestures for familiar songs.</li> <li>• Uses single words by 1 year and phrases by 2 years, speaks clearly in sentences by 3 years.</li> <li>• Points to body parts, understands short directions, fills in words in songs.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has developed object permanency, finds a hidden toy.</li> <li>• Copies simple shapes, such as a circle and a cross.</li> <li>• Imitates care giving, pretend and imaginative play.</li> </ul>
<b>Social and Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has developed trust and secure attachment to his/her caregiver(s).</li> <li>• Is interested in other children, engages in parallel play, and then learns to take turns in play.</li> <li>• Shows independence, tries to control the environment.</li> <li>• May have difficulty regulating emotions when frustrated.</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptive Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeds self with spoon, fork and cup without spilling.</li> <li>• Puts on a hat, takes off all clothes.</li> <li>• Uses the toilet independently.</li> </ul>

## Pre-School Developmental Stage (ages 3 to 5 years)

Domain	
<b>Motor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begins to participate in sports.</li> <li>• Throws a ball overhand, catches a bounced ball.</li> <li>• Does a broad jump, stands on one foot and learns to hop.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaks clearly in complex sentences, tells stories.</li> <li>• Gives age, full name and address.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Names colors, understands counting, and can count 10 or more objects.</li> <li>• Recognizes letters, understands concepts like same and different.</li> <li>• By 5 years, begins to understand another person's perspective.</li> </ul>
<b>Social and Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages in magical thinking and fantasy play.</li> <li>• Increasingly independent, expands social relationships outside the family.</li> <li>• Talks about friends and begins to be part of a peer group.</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptive Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeds self with a spoon and fork and learns to spread with a knife.</li> <li>• Dresses self independently except for shoe laces.</li> </ul>

## School-Age Developmental Stage (ages 5 to 11 years)

Domain	
<b>Motor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masters complex gross and fine motor skills and perceptual-motor skills.</li> <li>• Participates in organized sports, plays a musical instrument.</li> <li>• Drawings are much more sophisticated.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving use of grammar and syntax.</li> <li>• Describes experiences in detail.</li> <li>• Talks about thoughts and feelings.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops more logical and rational thinking.</li> <li>• Develops the ability to understand another's perspective.</li> <li>• Sustains attention to finish a task.</li> <li>• Is able to plan and organize school work.</li> </ul>
<b>Social and Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens relationships outside the family.</li> <li>• Increased importance of friends, often same sex peers.</li> <li>• Participates in peer groups, adopts age-appropriate social roles.</li> <li>• Is confident and goal-directed, has special interests.</li> <li>• Self-esteem is based on child's view of his own abilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptive Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the function of money.</li> <li>• Uses a phone and develops computer skills.</li> </ul>

## Early Adolescent Developmental Stage (ages 11 to 14 years)

Domain	
<b>Motor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly developed gross and fine motor skills.</li> <li>• Special talents with specific sports or musical instruments emerge.</li> <li>• Adept with computer keyboard.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talks about experiences in detail.</li> <li>• Uses the proper tense of verbs.</li> <li>• Tells basic parts of the plot of story, movie, or TV show.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains ideas in more than one way, greater ability for complex thought.</li> <li>• Describes a short-term goal and what he or she needs to do to reach it.</li> <li>• Writes reports or essays at least 1 page long.</li> <li>• The early adolescent begins to question authority and society standards.</li> <li>• Strong sense of right and wrong.</li> <li>• Recognizes the likes and dislikes of others.</li> </ul>
<b>Social and Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerned about body image, looks, and the clothes she or he wears.</li> <li>• Acceptance by peers is critical to his or her self-esteem.</li> <li>• Periods of moodiness, may feel sad.</li> <li>• Anxiety related to challenging schoolwork.</li> <li>• Increasing modesty and desire for privacy.</li> <li>• May argue with parents.</li> <li>• Beginning to experiment with different adult roles and identities</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptive Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent in self-care.</li> <li>• Has basic cooking skills.</li> <li>• Goes to the store, selects and purchases items, and gets correct change.</li> </ul>

## Middle and Late Adolescent Developmental Stages (14 to 18 years and 18 to 21 years)

Domain	
<b>Motor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically mature.</li> <li>• Participates in sports, musical groups, leisure activities based on individual choice.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives complex directions, e.g., to a location, for a recipe.</li> <li>• Has detailed conversations on a variety of topics.</li> <li>• Sets a long-term goal, plans and completes the work to achieve it.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continues to develop own identity, considers different possibilities.</li> <li>• Thinks about global concepts such as justice, politics, and government.</li> <li>• Is idealistic, may be intolerant of opposing views.</li> <li>• Starts to think about career decisions, adult roles.</li> </ul>
<b>Social and Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands subtle social cues in a conversation.</li> <li>• Cooperates with peers in planning and participating in a project.</li> <li>• Talks with others in detail about shared interests.</li> <li>• Goes out with friends without adult supervision.</li> <li>• Shares concerns individually with health care provider.</li> <li>• Goes out on dates.</li> <li>• Develops sexual identity and orientation.</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptive Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decides menu and prepares the main meal of the day.</li> <li>• Uses the computer for complex tasks including research on the Internet, word processing.</li> <li>• Earns money at a part-time or full-time job.</li> <li>• Tries to improve work performance after receiving constructive criticism.</li> </ul>

\* The information provided in these tables was adapted in part from the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales Second Edition Bright Futures for Families ([www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org](http://www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org)), How Kids Develop, and the website of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disability ([www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones)).