

From the Florida Department of Education

Welcome to the World: An Overview of Your Growing Child



Grow to 5

Revised 2018

Welcome to the World, Young Children

May the sun shine on you with ...

consistent caregivers who gently and appropriately interact
with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers ...

time to learn new skills and develop creativity ...

stimulation through music, books, activities, and outings ...

special help for special needs ...

May the rain shower you with ...

a loving family ...

a safe, secure, nurturing environment that puts children first ...

nutritious food ...

rest, play, and fresh air ...

adequate health care ...

freedom from stress and violence ...

positive, gentle, loving touch ...

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Table of Contents

Welcome to Grow to 5	1
More to Read or View	3
Birth to 3 Months	4
3 to 6 Months.....	6
6 to 9 Months.....	8
9 to 12 Months.....	10
12 to 18 Months.....	12
18 to 24 Months.....	14
24 to 36 Months.....	16
36 to 48 Months.....	18
48 to 60 Months.....	20

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Welcome to Grow to 5

This booklet is designed to help you as you live and work with children ages birth to five years. It recognizes and salutes your commitment to the care and nurture of young children. Grow to 5 embraces both the fundamental simplicity and the exquisite complexity inherent in the blossoming of a young life.

* * *

Our shared goal is to provide for all our children a childcare environment that offers the most fertile ground for their growth and development. Research on infant brain development supports what parents and early childhood educators have long known: children who are raised in a nurturing, gently stimulating, stable environment learn faster and more than children who are neglected or children who are over-stimulated in a violent, negative manner.

By providing a nurturing environment, families encourage children to develop certain characteristics that will help them succeed in school and grow into caring, productive adults. The characteristics children need in order to be ready for school have been summarized in a booklet called *Heart Start: The Emotional Foundations of School Readiness (Zero to Three, 1992)*. These characteristics are:

- confidence in one's ability and that of adults in the environment so the child is free to learn and to seek new challenges
- curiosity and an eagerness to learn new things
- intentionality, or the will to perform
- self-control and the ability to regulate one's own behavior
- relatedness—a sense of belonging to others in the environment
- capacity to communicate and share thoughts and ideas
- cooperativeness and the ability to work and play successfully with others

Families and educators foster these important characteristics in young children by nourishing them with:

- a loving family
- a safe, secure, nurturing environment that puts children first
- nutritious food and proper amounts of rest, play, and fresh air
- adequate health care
- consistent caregivers who gently and appropriately interact with and listen to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- adequate time to learn new skills and to develop abilities and creativity
- freedom from stress and violence
- positive, gentle, loving touch
- appropriate stimulation through music, books, activities, and outings
- attention to special needs

Providing such a rich environment doesn't mean buying expensive toys, signing up for special lessons, or teaching your child to read before kindergarten. Mostly it requires love and listening, patience and interest. It can, however, be helpful to have a basic understanding of the sequence of early childhood development and some information about activities that support children at particular stages in their development. That's what this booklet, *Welcome to the World: An Overview of Your Growing Child*, is designed to offer.

Welcome to the World provides a glimpse of typical child development from birth to 60 months (five years) of age. Each section of the booklet gives examples of behaviors typically seen in children at a particular developmental level (for example, birth to three months). The behaviors are grouped into four categories: personal and social skills, language and understanding skills, small muscle skills, and large muscle skills.

Each section also suggests activities that are appropriate for adults to do with a child at that developmental level. When a caregiver knows what a child might be interested in and may be able to do next, the caregiver can better interact and play with the child. Likewise, knowing what things a child is **not** yet ready to do will keep the caregiver from expecting the child to play and respond in ways that are not yet possible for the child.

It is important to remember that although all children follow the same general pattern of growth, they do not all develop at the same rate. They differ in the way they learn, their interests, and the way they feel about things. Also, a child's development may not be steady. The child may develop new large muscle skills, such as standing and walking, but not seem to develop new fine motor skills for a few months. Then, the child's large motor skill development may slow down while the child's language skills seem to develop very quickly. Because children are unique and develop and grow at different rates, this booklet should be used only as a general guideline.

For questions or concerns about a child's development, call or email one of the contacts listed below.

For children ages birth through 36 months

Contact your local Early Steps. They can arrange for a child who may not be developing typically to be seen free of charge by appropriate professionals. For contact information regarding the Early Steps nearest you, please visit their website at http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/early_steps_directory/index.html.

For children ages three through five years

Contact your local Child Find Specialist. Child Find is associated with the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services and the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS). The Child Find Specialist can arrange for a child who may not be developing typically to be seen free of charge by appropriate professionals. Call your local public school, your local FDLRS center, or the Florida Department of Education **850-245-0475** for the number of the Child Find Specialist nearest you, or visit their website at <http://www.fdlrs.org/>.

More to Read or View

The materials listed below provide information about child development. Many of them are available in libraries, bookstores, and online. For more information on how to obtain these resources, call the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) Resource and Information Center at 850-245-0477 or call 850-245-0475 for the number of a FDLRS center near you.

- Allen, K. E. & Schwartz, I. S. (2011). *The Exceptional Child: Inclusion in Early Childhood Education* (7th ed.). Albany, NY: Delmar.
- Amazing Me, It's Busy Being Three!
<http://www.cdc.gov/NCBDDD/actearly/amazingme.html/>.
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<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx/>.
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- Baker, M. & Jurie, C. (2008). *Partners in Care: Supporting Fussy Babies in Child Care*. Chicago: Erikson Institute.
- Brazelton, T. B. & Sparrow, J. D. (2006). *Touchpoints: Birth-3 Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development*. MA: Da Capo Press.
- Early Milestones. (2011). <http://www.earlymilestones.com/>.
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- Eisenberg, A., Murkoff, H. E., & Hathaway, S. E. (2011). *What to Expect: The Toddler Year*. New York: Workman.
- Florida 211 Association. <http://www.my211florida.org/>.
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- Florida's Transition Project. (2008). <http://www.floridatransitionproject.ucf.edu/>
- Learn the Signs, Act Early. (2008). <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>.
- Lentini, R., Vaughn, B.J., & Fox, L. (2005). *Teaching Tools for Young Children with Challenging Behavior*. University of South Florida.
- Phelps, P. (2006). *Beyond Centers and Circle Time: Scaffolding and Assessing the Play of Young Children*. North Carolina: Kaplan.
- Schwartz, S. (2004). *The New Language of Toys: Teaching Communication Skills to Children with Special Needs*. Maryland: Woodbine House, Inc.
- Teaching Tools for Young Children with Challenging Behavior. (2011).
<http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/>.
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Birth to 3 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Nurses or sucks from a bottle
- Comforts to soothing, gentle sounds
- Smiles in response to adult's smile
- Looks at face when spoken to
- Distinguishes primary caregiver from other adults
- Startles or cries at sudden loud noises

Activities

- Provide a safe, peaceful environment, now and always
- Nurse baby or hold baby close while bottle feeding
- Hold baby often; cuddle and caress baby
- Respond quickly to baby's cries by meeting baby's needs
- Smile at baby; make eye contact
- Hang a crib mobile (remove it before baby learns to sit alone)
- Softly sing lullabies to baby and play soothing music
- Speak in a calm, soothing voice

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Expresses hunger or desire to suck with cues such as making eager sounds, sticking out tongue, pursing lips, or other mouth movement
- Shows excitement before feeding and other familiar routines
- Expresses demands with cries or other sounds
- Gurgles and coos
- Responds to sound of rattle

Activities

- Talk or sing to baby during feeding, changing, and bathing and throughout the day
- Provide many different sounds for baby (soft music, rattle, birds singing, radio, bell)
- Imitate sounds baby makes
- When you talk or sing to baby, allow time for baby to respond
- Listen to and watch baby to get to know baby's cues
- Respond to baby's cues

SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Follows bright objects with eyes
- Looks at object held in own hand
- Attempts to grasp adult's finger
- Holds objects for a few seconds
- Sucks well

Activities

- Gently dangle and move objects in front of baby for baby to watch and then reach for
- Provide various textures for baby to feel
- Place objects in baby's hand to stimulate grasp

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Lifts head while lying on stomach
- Holds head up when held in sitting position
- Begins to reach toward object
- Automatically turns head to one side while lying down
- Moves arms and legs

Activities

- While baby is on stomach, dangle black and white or brightly colored objects in front of baby to encourage baby to lift head
- Do not place baby on stomach to sleep; back sleeping is safest, even for naps
- Hold baby in a sitting position with head and neck supported as needed, so baby begins to hold head steady
- To encourage sitting, briefly prop baby in corner of couch (supervised)
- Help baby splash and move arms and legs during bath time

Birth to 3 Months

3 to 6 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Smiles spontaneously
- Reaches for familiar people
- Begins choosing toys
- Begins to comfort self by sucking or by fingering a favorite blanket or other object

Activities

- Gently shake rattle beside baby's head to encourage baby to turn head toward sound
- Continue to talk to baby during daily routines
- Listen for baby's sounds and imitate them; wait for baby to respond to your sounds
- With baby on your lap, read picture books out loud; point to and name objects in the pictures
- Point to and name objects in baby's room and other places

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Squeals and laughs
- Babbles, combines vowel and consonant sounds (goo-ga)
- Explores objects by putting them in mouth
- Experiments by making nonsense sounds (goo-ah)
- Begins to respond to own name by startling or looking
- Begins to show likes and dislikes by reaching or turning away

Activities

- Provide a safe, peaceful environment
- Allow for quiet time
- Continue to respond quickly to baby's cries by meeting baby's needs
- Massage baby's arms, back, and legs from top to bottom
- Make eye contact with baby
- Play Peek-a-Boo with baby
- Let baby look at self in mirror
- Sing simple songs for baby and help baby do motions with hands to the music
- Respond joyfully to baby's smiles and gurgles
- Imitate baby's facial expressions
- Give baby opportunities to interact with siblings or other children



SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Picks up and holds rattle
- Chews on hands, toys, and almost everything
- Holds and plays with a toy using both hands at the same time
- Starts to transfer objects from one hand to the other
- Holds objects with fingers against palm of hand (palmar grasp)

Activities

- Put object (rattle, your finger) in baby's hand and gently pull it to encourage baby to hold on to object
- Help baby hold a safe toy with both hands to encourage baby to move toy from one hand to the other
- Help baby pick up safe objects (one-inch blocks, assorted shapes)

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Reaches for objects
- Brings objects to mouth
- Turns from back to side
- Rolls from stomach to back and then back to stomach
- Pushes up on arms when on stomach
- Holds head upright and steady without support
- Kicks at objects

Activities

- Put baby on stomach on safe surface (carpet, blanket) and dangle brightly colored toys in front of baby for baby to reach for or roll to (do not put baby to sleep on baby's stomach)
- Fasten soft mobile on crib for baby to kick; move baby's legs to demonstrate (remove mobile before baby can sit up)
- With your hands under baby's arms, hold baby upright and help baby support weight on baby's feet (never hold a young baby up using baby's arms or hands)
- Put baby's favorite object just out of reach on floor to encourage baby to roll over

3 to 6 Months

6 to 9 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Smiles at self in mirror
- Enjoys Peek-a-Boo and Pat-a-Cake
- Becomes attached to a particular toy or object
- Begins to fear strangers

Activities

- Provide a safe, peaceful environment
- Avoid violent, angry sounds
- Hug and cuddle baby often
- Smile at and talk with baby
- Play Peek-a-Boo, Pat-a-Cake
- Let baby play in front of large, secured mirror
- When you introduce new people to baby, allow time for baby to get used to the new person while you are still there
- Play with baby during routine activities (diapering, bathing, dressing)

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Starts imitating sounds
- Uncovers toy that is hidden by cloth
- Responds to own name (by looking, smiling, turning head, reaching)
- Vocalizes to self when alone
- Jabbers
- Recognizes one or two specific names for people (mama, dada)

Activities

- Look at picture books with baby
- Sing songs to baby
- Play Hide-n-Seek with toys under cloth
- Use different tones when expressing approval, disapproval, happiness, and other emotions
- Imitate baby's jabbering
- Identify people by name

SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Holds and feeds age-appropriate safe food
- Rakes or scoops small objects
- Grasps objects with thumb and two fingers (inferior pincer grasp)

Activities

- Give baby the opportunity to pick up safe foods (dry cereal, crackers) and feed self
- Let baby play with simple books made of cloth, cardboard, or vinyl
- Provide small toys and other objects for baby to pick up, but make sure they are too big for baby to swallow

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Sits unaided for a short time
- May creep or crawl
- Gets into a standing position by pulling up on furniture or an adult's hands
- Maintains a standing position by holding on to furniture or an adult's hands
- Rocks back and forth when on hands and knees
- Plays with feet while lying on back

Activities

- Encourage baby to pull up to a standing position by talking to baby and holding a favorite toy for baby to reach for
- Place a toy out of reach and encourage baby to try to get the toy by crawling to it
- Allow baby to stand holding on to furniture
- Allow lots of room and safe places for baby to crawl and explore (supervised)
- Child-proof your home, putting dangerous items out of baby's reach

6 to 9 Months

9 to 12 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Is aware of strangers
- Tugs at or reaches for adults to get their attention
- Begins drinking from a cup
- Demonstrates affection
- Begins to smile at own accomplishments

Activities

- Make puppet from sock and pretend the puppet is talking to baby
- Read nursery rhymes and sing songs to baby
- Help baby look at family photos and scrapbooks
- Point to and name objects
- Listen and respond to communication from baby
- Talk about activities as you do them with or near baby
- Ask baby simple questions ("want a bottle?")
- Say "no-no" to baby only when you mean it and do not change your mind

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Waves bye-bye
- Responds to "no-no"
- Starts responding to simple questions ("want more juice?") with gestures, facial expressions, and reaching
- Shakes head "no"
- Recognizes familiar words (mommy, daddy, ball, cookie)
- Looks at pictures in book
- Enjoys nursery rhymes and songs

Activities

- Avoid violence and anger at home, on television, and in videos
- Speak in a calm, soothing manner to make baby feel safe
- Have baby sit with the family during meals
- Play Pat-a-Cake with baby
- Let baby hold and try drinking from a cup containing a small amount of liquid (a cup with a spout in the lid makes it easier)
- Hug and kiss baby often
- Respond with a hug or by talking when baby reaches for you
- Smile and hug baby when baby seems proud of an accomplishment

SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Holds own bottle or cup with a spout
- Picks up small objects using thumb and finger
- Uses two hands together with coordination (picks up cup, bangs two blocks together)
- Claps hands
- Drops objects on purpose
- Feeds self finger foods (dry cereal, crackers, small pieces of fruit)

Activities

- Show baby how to stack blocks, boxes, or engage in empty/fill activities
- Let baby play with safe, unbreakable pots, pans, and utensils
- Help baby put objects into a container
- Give baby empty boxes of various sizes to play with
- Give baby dry cereal to feed self (do not give baby whole grapes, hot dogs, peanuts, popcorn, or other items baby may choke on)

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Gets into sitting position from lying down position
- Sits down from standing position
- Walks with assistance
- Stands alone
- Bangs two toys together

Activities

- Play stand up/sit down/lie down imitation game
- Help baby walk with and without support
- Let baby “cruise” – walk around holding onto furniture (make sure you have child- proofed areas baby uses)
- Bang soft objects together and encourage baby to imitate
- Imitate baby’s actions
- Roll ball to baby and encourage baby to roll it back

9 to 12 Months

12 to 18 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Enjoys having people clap
- Shows affection or sympathy for others
- Plays chasing and hiding games
- Plays ball or other games with an adult
- Shows specific wants by gestures and vocalizations
- Becomes attached to favorite possession (blanket, toy)
- Begins learning skills to become independent (removing garments, using a spoon or fork)
- May have anxiety about parent leaving

Activities

- Encourage child to repeat familiar words
- While child is bathing or dressing, name body parts and encourage child to repeat the names
- Look at a picture book with child and help child name objects in the pictures
- Use simple cause and effect toys (busy box, jack-in-the-box)
- Sing nursery rhymes and other children's songs over and over again
- Do finger plays with child while singing songs ("Itsy, Bitsy Spider")

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Points to body parts (head, foot) when they are named
- Begins to say names of body parts
- Points to several objects or pictures when they are named
- Follows simple commands ("sit down," "let go")

Activities

- Provide safe, peaceful environment
- Sing to child
- Make up songs to describe daily care routines
- Give child a washcloth and encourage child to "wash" a doll
- Let child help undress self
- Let child start feeding self with a spoon
- Ask child to show how big child is (help child raise hands high)
- Take child on outings (zoo, park) and talk about the things you see and do with child



SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Feeds self with spoon
- Attempts scribbling
- Stacks small objects
- Builds tower of two or more blocks

Activities

- Play game with blocks (stack them up, knock them down)
- Encourage child to draw or scribble with a crayon or water-soluble marker
- Push, squeeze, and play with bean bags or soft sponge balls
- Encourage child to feed self with a spoon

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Walks alone
- Throws a ball
- Sits in a chair
- Stoops to pick up an object

Activities

- Hold child's hand as child walks up stairs
- Allow child to walk and explore as much as possible, but always with supervision
- Provide pull toys and push toys for child to play with
- Roll and throw ball or bean bag with child
- Provide child-size furniture for child to use; sturdy step stools or boxes can be used
- Roll a large ball to child and ask child to roll it back to you

12 to 18 Months

18 to 24 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Likes being read to
- Shows more independence by putting on clothes, feeding self, washing and drying hands
- Exhibits curiosity and is “into everything”
- Has special relationship with each parent or caregiver
- Enjoys playing next to another child, but does not interact much with other child
- Enjoys touching and hugging
- May experience fear when separated from caregiver

Activities

- Give simple directions for child to follow (“get your shoes”)
- Play a simple game of Simon Says
- Read to child five to ten minutes each day; develop a bedtime book-reading ritual
- Answer child’s questions simply
- Label toy boxes/bins with picture of toy
- Give child enough time to finish an activity

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Chooses among toys to play with
- Imitates another child’s play
- Begins to ask questions
- Puts two or more words together (“go out,” “get up”)
- Asks for items by name (ball, doll, cookie)
- Follows one- or two-step directions

Activities

- Encourage gentle play; discourage violent play
- Encourage child to dress and undress self
- Encourage child to help with household chores (carry napkins to table, pick up and put away toys)
- Encourage child to use both a spoon and a fork
- Give child time to get used to new situations and new caregivers
- Encourage child to play near other children by providing two of the same toy for them to use
- Follow through with appropriate expectations and discipline (don’t change “no” to “yes” because child has a tantrum)
- Show an interest in your child’s play

SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Scribbles and imitates simple strokes (vertical line, horizontal line, circular stroke)
- Takes off socks and shoes
- Takes things apart and puts them back together

Activities

- Help child put objects through an opening in a container and then dump them out again
- Give child simple nesting boxes or plastic measuring cups to arrange
- Give child simple insert puzzle to complete (two or three pieces)
- Allow child to finger paint with pudding
- Provide chalk, markers, pencils, paint, and brushes for use on sidewalk, large paper, newspaper
- Let child handle nontoxic modeling clay and shaving cream
- Provide paper for child to tear

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Jumps with both feet
- Moves body in time to music
- Walks up and down stairs with help
- Runs
- Attempts to kick a ball

Activities

- Help child learn to jump with both feet by holding child's hands for support
- Listen to music and swing, clap, and dance to the music with child
- Have short running races on soft surfaces (grass, carpet)
- Play "kick the ball"

18 to 24 Months

24 to 36 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Says "I love you"
- Interacts with other children in simple games
- Verbalizes toilet needs
- Continues to develop competence and independence in self-help skills (brushing teeth, feeding, dressing)
- Helps pick up and put away toys

Activities

- Allow child to make choices (choosing some foods at mealtime, choosing one of two shirts to wear)
- Ask child to follow directions ("pick up your doll and put it on the shelf, please")
- Listen to and talk with child
- Read picture books for ten minutes each day with child and talk about the pictures
- Point out colors of objects in pictures
- Give simple answers to child's questions
- Label shelves and toy boxes/bins with picture and name of toy
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Follows two-step directions ("pick up your shoes and put them in the closet")
- Takes part in simple conversations (responds to "what's your name?")
- Answers simple "what" questions
- Regularly uses two- or three-word sentences ("more juice please")
- Begins to make choices (which shirt to wear, whether to play outside or inside)
- Asks many questions

Activities

- Continue to provide comfort and a safe, peaceful environment
- Praise child when child indicates toilet needs
- Play simple games with child (Ring Around the Rosie, Hide-n-Seek)
- Help child play dress up
- Develop special interactions or "I love you" rituals
- Respect child's expression of independence, but provide guidance and limits (allow child to paint with water on sidewalk or porch floor)



SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Uses spoon and cup independently
- Turns handle to open door
- Completes simple insert puzzle (four to six pieces)
- Unscrews lids
- Builds six- to eight-block tower
- Snips paper with scissors

Activities

- Provide simple puzzles for child to complete
- Provide child with small safety scissors and paper to snip
- Provide sand, pudding, or finger paint for writing with finger
- Provide many containers with tops to open and close
- Provide a busy box or purse with simple hooks to undo, compartments to open, and other things for child to manipulate

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Rides and steers wheeled toys
- Pushes or pulls door to open it
- Walks up stairs holding rail

Activities

- Arrange for child to play games with others (London Bridge Is Falling Down, Tag)
- Encourage child to practice throwing balls and beanbags
- Provide practice in riding a tricycle
- Show child how to jump over a chalk mark or hose laid flat on the ground
- Run with child in safe places
- Let child roll on grass or sand

24 to 36 Months

36 to 48 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Begins to play with other children
- Shares toys and takes turns with assistance
- Begins dramatic play, acting out whole scenes
- Tests limits (when adult says “no,” child acts anyway to see if adult really means “no”)
- Interprets reality to suit personal needs (“I don’t have to share because my brother doesn’t like cookies”)
- Develops sense of humor; tells silly jokes
- Dresses, toilets, and eats with little help
- May develop fears (of the dark, fire, animals)

Activities

- Set limits on behavior and explain why they are necessary (“running into the street is not safe”)
- Use appropriate words to describe past or future events (today, tomorrow, before, after, next)
- During story time, ask child simple questions about the story
- Encourage child to sort and match objects during routine tasks (“which things do we need to take a bath?”, “where do the forks go?”, “what other things could you wear on your feet?”)
- Teach child songs and finger plays
- Talk about sequence of events, tell what comes next
- Provide access to a computer with appropriate children’s software; use it together

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Understands consequences of an event
- Begins to understand time concepts
- Recognizes and matches colors
- Begins to classify and group objects (by size, shape, color)
- Talks in short sentences and joins some sentences together
- Sings, learns finger plays

Activities

- Provide a safe, peaceful, supervised environment
- Set up cooperative play situations (kicking a ball back and forth; working with another child to “cook” and serve an imaginary meal to dolls or adults)
- Help children solve social problems (“tell him you don’t like ...”)
- Describe desired behavior and have consistent expectations for behavior (“please walk next to me when we are in the store”)
- Respond joyfully to child’s jokes
- Give child enough time to dress, toilet, and eat independently

SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Begins to draw people and animals, including head and some other body parts
- Manipulates nontoxic modeling clay (making snakes and balls)
- Stacks small blocks and names structure
- Cuts with scissors
- Completes simple puzzle (six to eight pieces)

Activities

- Provide table toys (puzzles, beads, blocks)
- Provide large sheets of blank, unlined paper
- Allow child to paint driveway with watercolors or plain water
- Offer a variety of writing utensils (paint brushes, markers, colored pencils, crayons)
- Allow child to use materials independently (do not push child to “make” something)
- Provide material for child to manipulate (nontoxic modeling clay, finger paint, shaving cream, sand)

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Walks on a line
- Balances on one foot for several seconds
- Begins to hop on one foot
- Throws a ball a few feet with one hand
- Catches a bounced ball with two hands
- Rides a tricycle independently
- Uses a slide independently

Activities

- Make obstacle course for child to maneuver through (over chairs, under table)
- Play catch with a soft ball, increasing the distance gradually
- Play catch with balls and beanbags of various sizes
- Create a tricycle path with props such as stop signs and drive-through windows
- Play Follow the Leader, including challenging movements
- Play music for dancing

36 to 48 Months

48 to 60 Months

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- Plays with other children cooperatively
- Explores gender roles (mommy/daddy) and community helper roles (firefighter, shopkeeper)
- Understands limits and defines them for others
- Respects authority, though may still test limits
- Participates in group games
- Chooses own friends
- Is sensitive about teasing
- Likes silly jokes
- Dresses, toilets, and eats independently

Activities

- Read story books to child
- Ask child questions about stories and have child retell stories
- Encourage child to act out stories from books or imagination and use different voices for the characters
- Engage child in “what if” games to encourage child’s own storytelling (“what if you could fly?”)
- Expand the range of computer software available to child
- Arrange trips to the library, zoo, and special events such as parades
- Play rhyming games with child (“can you say three words that rhyme with cat?”)

LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

- Asks questions to gain information (“why?”, “how?”)
- Understands routines and can tell what activity comes first or next in a sequence
- Plays with language, making up nonsense words
- Answers questions about stories and retells stories with assistance
- Joins sentences together

Activities

- Provide opportunities for role playing and pretending (discourage violent play)
- Group same-age children together or invite a child of similar age for a “play date” to encourage cooperative play
- Teach simple games (“Duck, Duck, Goose”)
- Allow child to help set limits (“how many turns will each child get?”)
- Help child develop strategies for solving social problems (“use words, not hitting”, “what else could you do?”, “what will you say next time?”)

SMALL MUSCLE SKILLS

- Cuts on a line
- Copies shapes
- Prints a few letters
- Draws to represent objects
- Builds symmetrical structures with blocks
- Makes sculptures with nontoxic modeling clay

Activities

- Provide building toys such as blocks
- Offer child a variety of surfaces to write on (construction paper, envelope, chalkboard, cardboard)
- Encourage child to represent objects and activities through drawing
- Provide nontoxic modeling clay, sand, and paper and glue
- Limit number of different objects child may use at one time

LARGE MUSCLE SKILLS

- Walks backwards
- Walks up and down stairs without help, alternating feet
- Hops
- Begins to skip
- Kicks a ball accurately
- Turns somersaults
- Follows movement directions ("put your hand on your head, take two giant steps, then turn around")

Activities

- Let child help design obstacle course (balance beams, chairs to climb over, tables to crawl under, see-saws)
- Roll and pass large plastic hoops to each other
- Organize a noncompetitive kick-ball game
- Take child to playground to practice climbing, balancing, and other movement activities
- Play "Simon Says," including challenging movements
- Skip with child from the house to the car
- Encourage child to practice walking backwards
- Play music for dancing and provide musical instruments child can play while dancing or marching

48 to 60 Months

This is one of many publications available through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), Florida Department of Education, designed to assist school districts, state agencies that support educational programs, and parents in the provision of special programs. For additional information on this publication, or for a list of available publications, contact the BEESS Resource and Information Center (BRIC) at:

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