

(If you have difficulty reading this, try using another web browser such as Google Chrome or Safari.)

This site was prepared to give parents guidelines for the typical development of 2 to 5 year olds. By learning what to expect and what you can do to help, you will enhance your child's development. Guidelines for each of the age levels are provided along with activities to stimulate development. If after trying the suggestions provided on this site, you have concerns about your child's development, contact the primary campus in your district to request to speak with a speech pathologist or the campus educational diagnostician.

	Language Skills	Social Skills	Cognitive Skills	Physical Skills
2 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Speaks about 50 words · Links two words together · Uses some adjectives (big, happy) · Speaks clearly enough for parents to understand some of the words · Can name a number of objects common to his/her surroundings <p>Responds to such commands as “show me your eyes (nose, mouth, hair)”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Becomes aware of his/her identity as a separate individual · May become defiant; may have temper tantrums · Becomes interested in playing with other children · Separation anxiety begins to fade · Plays games like tag, hide and seek · Plays a role in “pretend” games like house or school (mom, dad, teacher) · Shy with strangers, especially adults · Claims certain articles as being his/her own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Begins to play make-believe · Begins to sort objects by shape and color · Scribbles · Finds hidden objects · Points to at least 5 body parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Walks alone and stands on tiptoe · Climbs on furniture and begins to run · Builds a tower of six or more blocks · Empties objects from a container
3 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Speaks 250 to 500 or more words · Speaks in three-and four-word sentences · Uses pronouns (I, you, we, they) and some plurals · States first name · Knows at least three prepositions, usually in, on, under · Has most vowels and the consonants p, b, m, w, n well established · Readily follows simple commands even though the stimulus objects are not in sight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Imitates parents and playmates · Takes turns · Expresses affection openly · Easily separates from parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Asks “why” questions · Correctly names some colors · Copies a circle · Understands the concepts of same and different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Walks up and down stairs, alternating feet · Kicks, climbs, runs, and pedals a tricycle · Builds a tower of nine or more blocks · Manipulates small objects and turns book pages one at a time

4 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Answers simple questions · Speaks in complete sentences · Uses prepositions (under, beside, in front) · Speaks clearly enough for strangers to understand · Articulates /b/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /y/ · Average sentence length = 4 words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cooperates with playmates · Tries to solve problems · May have a best friend · Becomes more independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Becomes involved in more complex imaginary play · Prints some capital letters · Draws a person with two to four body parts · Understands the concepts of morning, afternoon, and night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stands on one foot for at least five seconds · Throws ball overhand, kicks ball forward and catches bounced ball most of the time · Dresses and undresses · Uses safety scissors 	
5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understands rhyming · Uses compound and complex sentences · Uses future tense · Speech should be completely intelligible, in spite of articulation problems · Should have all vowels and the consonants, m, p, b, h, w, k, g, t, d, n, ng, y (yellow) · Should be able to define common objects in terms of use (hat, shoe, chair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Wants to be like friends · Follows rules · Understands gender · Wants to do things alone · Follows simple rules in board or card games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Uses imagination to create stories · Correctly counts 10 or more objects · Copies a triangle and other geometric patterns · Understands the concepts of time and sequential order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stands on one foot for at least 10 seconds · Hops, swings, and somersaults · May learn to ride a bike and swim · Brushes own teeth and cares for other personal needs 	

LANGUAGE CONCERNS:

Although there is an innate capacity for language development, children must be provided with some stimulation to promote good speech and language development. The more enriching the stimulation, the better the child's chances are for full development of language. The first five years of life are the most vital for development of speech and language skills. The quality of the child's communication skills is directly influenced by the quality and quantity of verbal interaction with his parents. Parents are the models for children to copy. Almost everything you do or say as a parent is interpreted by your child in some way. Being a good model will help your child develop good speech and language skills.

To Stimulate Language Development:

- Teach your child the names of everyday items.
- Talk to your child throughout daily activities. Talk **with** your child, not only **to** your child.
- When talking to your child, speak simply and clearly. Try not to use "baby talk". Talk to him/her as an adult, but in simple, short sentences.
- Provide experiences to stimulate speech and language development. (Examples: Read to your child. Go to the park or zoo. Take him shopping. Visit people, Go for a nature walk. Clean the house. Help with yard work. Plant a garden. Go out to eat.) Provide many experiences and talk about them as you are doing them and afterwards.
- When your child is experiencing something for the first time, talk to him/her before you go, when you are there, and again when you have returned.

- Try to look at your child when he/she is talking to you. Pay attention to your child and be a good listener when he/she talks to you.
- Describe what you see, feel, hear, smell, taste. Use short, simple sentences.
- Use parallel talk. Describe what your child is doing, feeling, hearing.
- Ask a question or make a statement to encourage conversations. (Try to avoid yes/no questions.) Ask questions such as "Why is the cat running?" or statements such as "Tell me about the baby elephant in the picture."
- Read a book to your child at least one time per day.
- Have your child deliver a message. (Example: "Tell Daddy it's time to eat.")
- Make speaking and listening experiences pleasant, worthwhile, and fun for your child. Don't rush your child when he/she is speaking.
- Give verbal praise such as "Yes, that's right."; "Good job"; "Way to go!" Be enthusiastic when you praise your child.
- Confirm you understand your child by smiling, nodding, hugging, and following through appropriately on his/her requests.
- Expand on your child's speech patterns. (Example: If your child says "Doggy run." You could expand the child's phrase by saying "Yes, the doggy is running.")
- Repeat your child's speech, showing delight in his/her correct speech sounds, or if they are incorrect, stressing the correct sounds, but not forcing the child to say the words correctly. (Example: Child says "wa-wa"; Parent says "water".)
- Add new information (modeling) (Example: Child says "Doggy bark." Parent says "Yes, the dog is barking. He wants a dog biscuit. Would you like to give him one?" or Child says "More juice". Parent says "You want more juice. I'd be glad to get you some more juice.")
- Tell your child stories and encourage your child to tell you stories. Use books, magazines, or toys to stimulate stories.
- When your child reaches 4 years of age:
 1. Help him/her classify objects and things. (Example: farm animals, zoo animals, things you ride in)
 2. Teach your child the correct use of a telephone, including how to call 911 in the case of an emergency.
 3. Let your child help plan activities.
- When your child reaches 5 years of age:
 1. Encourage your child to use language whenever possible. Allow him/her to express his/ her feelings, ideas, dreams, wishes, and fears.
 2. Provide opportunities for your child to learn the primary colors, names of coins, and concepts such as morning, afternoon and evening.
 3. Talk about the days of the week.
 4. Provide opportunities for your child to count objects up to 10.
 5. Talk to your child as you would an adult. He now needs to learn from a more advanced model. However, remember he will still understand more than he will be able to say.

How to Choose a Good Book:

1. Pictures should be clear with not too many objects on a page.
2. Books should have a picture story that makes sense without the printed words.
3. The story should be appropriate for the child's age level.
4. Include books that teach new speech sounds, concepts (such as farm animals, things we wear, parts of the body) or morals (how to share, make friends, etc...)
5. Books should help add new words to the child's vocabulary. Alphabet books, picture dictionaries, and even mail order catalogs emphasize development of new words.

How to Read with Your Child:

1. Let your child choose the books and pages to read.
2. Sit together for as long as the child is interested.
3. Hold the child in your lap or put your arm around him.
4. Let him hold the book and turn the pages.
5. Point to the pictures as you talk about them.
6. Let your child describe the pictures and tell the story to you. If he/she is just saying sounds, imitate his sounds and provide new sounds and words for him to imitate.
7. You tell the story, but leave out words or parts of sentences for the child to fill in.
8. Show delight and enthusiasm as you read the books.

Early Identification of Communication Disorders:

If a child displays one of the following behaviors, it does not necessarily mean that speech development is abnormal. It is suggested, however, that you contact a speech pathologist for a professional evaluation if any of the statements below describe your child.

1. The child is not talking at all by age two.
2. Speech is difficult to understand after age three.
3. The child omits many beginning sounds after age three. (Example: "go ark" for "dog bark")
4. The child uses mostly vowel sounds when speaking after age three. (Example: "um ee i un" for "Come see Dick run")
5. There are many substitutions of easy sounds for difficult ones at age five. (Example: "do" for "go", "tandy" for "candy")
6. Word endings are often dropped after age five. (Example: "He wa ho" for "He walked home")
7. Words are left out, mixed up, or ungrammatical in sentences at age five. (Example: "Him eating ice cream" for "He is eating ice cream")
8. The child has difficulty with any speech sounds at age seven.
9. Voice is monotone, too loud or too soft, too high or too low. It has poor quality, or too little or too much sound goes through the nose.
10. The child displays frequent repetitions of sounds or words, prolongations of sounds, blocks on words or other stuttering behavior. (Remember that a certain amount of disfluency around age 3 to 4 is considered normal.) These behaviors may or may not be accompanied by struggling behavior avoidance, anxiety, tension, and facial grimaces.

If You Think Your Child Stutters:

Between the ages of two and six almost all children will begin to repeat sounds, syllables and whole words when they are speaking. This is not stuttering but rather, normal non-fluent duplications in speech. The amount of repetitions will vary from child to child and from situation to situation. It may last from several weeks to several months. It may disappear for a time and then re-appear later. Eventually it will disappear all together. Patient acceptance of your child's speech at this time is most important. You can help your child during this time by:

1. Not calling attention to your child's repetitions either by facial expressions or word or deed.
2. Not telling your child to "slow down" or "take it easy"
3. Being sure your child is getting proper rest, diet, and exercise.
4. Trying to relieve all tensions in the home.
5. Being sure your child knows he/she is loved for who he/she is.
6. Giving your child plenty of time to talk without interruption.
7. Trying not to be impatient or embarrassed by his/her speech.
8. Not expecting your child to be a "little adult" in everything he does.
9. Being calm in your discipline.
10. Remembering that hesitations and repetitions are perfectly natural in a child's early speech and may continue for some time.

Activities to Develop Early Childhood Social Skills:

Day to day interaction and play will develop children's social skills naturally. Children will take time to learn the rules of interaction such as turn taking and eye contact, but there are activities you can incorporate into your play which will help children understand these rules.

· Eye Contact - To encourage eye contact always try and get down to your child's eye-level when you speak to them. Encourage your child to be in the same room and to face you when they are talking to you. When your child communicates, respond and wait for the child's response, don't rush communication. It is important to wait because some children need more time to process the language and formulate a response. You can help cue a response by looking expectantly at your child and smiling. Try not to communicate when you are busy with something else, stop and take the time to listen and respond to your child.

· Turn-taking - Turn-taking skills usually start to develop in the first few months of life when the baby makes a gesture or noise and receives or waits for a response from the mother. The baby soon learns to make another noise or gesture when the mother responds. Turn-taking is a vital communication skill for children to learn as it is one of the basic fundamentals of positive and successful interaction. When playing turn-taking games with a very young child it might be worth avoiding the use of pronouns such as "my, your, his, her" etc as this may be confusing. Use names such as "John's turn", "Mom's turn" etc... Daily interaction with your child should produce lots of turn-taking opportunities. Remember to face your child, be at their level and give eye contact. Turn-taking can also be practiced with all manner of games that require 2 or more people to take turns.

· Building a tower: take turns in putting the blocks on a tower until it collapses.

· Blowing bubbles: take turns in blowing bubbles.

· Dice and board games: this requires turns. Board games for older children are good for turn-taking skills because they have rules and structure.

· Sing Nursery Rhymes - sing a familiar nursery rhyme to your child, but leave off a word or two from the end of each verse and wait expectantly to see if they attempt to sing the last words. If your child makes an attempt at the final words, resume your turn and start the next verse.

· Listening skills - You can work on listening skills by asking your child to pause and listen, and then acknowledge, when he hears a sound, such as a bird singing or a car passing. Some children will often interrupt, it is important to calmly stop them and tell them that it is your turn to speak and they must display "good listening". A simple game to play for listening and attention skills is "Ready, SteadyGo". You can use a number of toys for this game (ball, toy car, row of dominoes, balloon), but the object of the game is to get your child to wait and listen. Get them to hold the toy ready to let it go, say "ready...steady...", then pause and let them wait for you to say "GO" before they release the toys. You can increase the pause between words, or say "wait" before you say "GO".

· Shared attention - Attending to something together is another good way to help your child learn. It helps children focus on what others are talking about, puts conversation into a context and helps develop listening and attention skills. This also helps children focus on, and stay on a topic of conversation, rather than constantly changing the subject. Go for a walk and point to, look at, and talk about the things you see. Listening and attention skills are the building blocks of speech and language development. Some children find these skills more difficult to master than others. There are lots of ways to enhance your children's listening and attention skills, not least by turning off the television and spending some quality time with them. Try to find activities that share your attention that you can both enjoy and focus on together. Also don't forget to praise good listening and good looking.

· Body language and using gesture - Try to use body language and gesture when you speak. This helps the child understand what you are saying, but it may also teach them to do the same so that they can make themselves understood more effectively. Body language plays a huge part in helping others gain meaning from what we say, this is a good skill for children to learn, especially if their speech is not clear in the early years.

Activities to Develop Early Childhood Cognitive Skills:

· Hide and Seek (and variations: count by twos, fives, tens)

· I Spy (colors, shapes, textures, smells, other adjectives)

· Charades

· Simon Says

· Twenty Questions with increasingly helpful clues

· "Hotter/Colder" (hide something and guide with clues to proximity)

· "Pictionary" (not the real board game, but just you and your child with a piece of paper)

· "Highlights" or Puzzlemania magazine (some activities are too hard, but others are fine) <!--[endif]-->

· Sorting laundry

· Board Games, such as: Memory; Connect Four; Dominoes; Dot to Dot game; Tic Tac Toe; Battleship; Old Maid; Uno; Candyland (the easiest); Chutes and Ladders (slightly harder); Guess Who? (harder)

· Toys such as: Megafort (strategy, imagination); Tangrams or mosaic-type games; harder Lego sets (deduction, directions; puzzles (25 pieces for beginners, up to 300 pieces for a 5 yr old)

· Sensory/Motor: obstacle course; putting away silverware (no sharp knives obviously); matching/folding socks; filling dishwasher (plastic items); "What Do You Feel?": blindfold and feel/identify objects in sand, rice, beans, or brown bags

Remember that with cognitive development, you are trying to grow and exercise thinking skills. **All Problems are Opportunities.** The more problems your child encounters and works out, the more efficient thinking will take place. This is because little children learn a lot by memory and routine. Simple chores and house projects are great teachers. Real-life applications with problems to work through, will stimulate your child's cognitive development.

- Reason through their own situations with them—ask the right questions and wait for them to respond, don't just fix everything or tell them the right conclusion.
- Be prepared to “be in the moment.” Learning opportunities come up frequently with preschool children where they're open to your guidance/moralizing, but you have to be prepared to do it on *their* timetable... (usually never yours!)
- Allow your child to make harmless mistakes and learn from them.
- Tell them something isn't right and let them guess. As in, “We can't go to bed until we're all ready. But we're not ready yet. What do we have to do?”

Always, always, always ask questions like, “What do we do next?” “What should you do?” “What do we need?”... This teaches children to think before they act, cry, or seek help. Most three to five year olds verbalize their thinking aloud rather than silently, so you can figure out what's making them upset or stuck. Older children may be able to answer Why? or What If? scenarios, which gives you a chance to get inside their thinking process and embellish or refine it.

If You Think Your Child May Have Gross Motor Difficulties:

Gross motor skills are the abilities usually acquired during infancy and early childhood as part of a child's motor development. These gross movements come from large muscles. By two years of age, most children are able to stand up, walk, run, walk up stairs, kick a ball, lift, throw a ball, etc.. Try these activities to stimulate your child's gross motor skills development:

- Dancing, either freestyle or through songs with movements, such as "I'm a Little Teapot," "The Wheels on the Bus," or "Popcorn": *I'm a piece of popcorn, put me in a pan/Shake me, shake me, as fast as you can* (child shimmies, shakes, and jumps)/*And I ... will ...* (child crouches down low) ... *POP!* (child jumps as high as he can).
- Walking around the house, neighborhood, or park. For variety, add in marching, jogging, skipping, hopping, or even musical instruments to form a parade. As you walk, count, play games, or tell stories.
- Swimming and other water play.
- Balancing: Have your child walk on a piece of string or tape, a low beam or plank at the playground, or a homemade balance beam.
- Playing pretend: Kids boost motor skills when they use their bodies to become waddling ducks, stiff-legged robots, galloping horses, soaring planes—whatever their imagination conceives!
- Riding tricycles, scooters, and other ride-on toys; pulling wagons or pushing large trucks, doll strollers, or shopping carts.
- Building and navigating obstacle courses—indoors with furniture, pillows, boxes, blankets; outdoors with rocks, logs, or playground equipment.
- Throwing, catching, and rolling large, lightweight, soft balls.
- Playing tag or other classic backyard games, such as Follow the Leader, Red Light/Green Light, Tails, or Simon Says (avoid or modify games that force kids to sit still or to be eliminated from play, such as Duck Duck Goose or musical chairs).
- Swinging, sliding, and climbing at a playground or indoor play space.

If You Think Your Child is Having Fine Motor Difficulties:

Fine (or small) motor skills involve the smaller muscles in the fingers, toes, eyes and other areas. The actions that require fine motor skills tend to be more intricate, such as drawing, writing, and grasping objects. Try these activities below:

Fine Motor Activities:

- Molding and rolling play dough into balls - using the palms of the hands facing each other and with fingers curled slightly towards the palm.
- Rolling play dough into tiny balls (peas) using only the finger tips.
- Using pegs or toothpicks to make designs in play dough.
- Cutting play dough with a plastic knife or with a pizza wheel by holding the implement in a diagonal volar grasp. (see attached diagram)
- Tearing newspaper into strips and then crumpling them into balls. Use to stuff scarecrow or other art creation.
- Scrunching up 1 sheet of newspaper in one hand. This is a super strength builder.
- Using a plant sprayer to spray plants, (indoors, outdoors) to spray snow (mix food coloring with water so that the snow can be painted), or melt "monsters". (Draw monster pictures with markers and the colors will run when sprayed.)
- Picking up objects using large tweezers such as those found in the "Bedbugs" game. This can be adapted by picking up Cheerios, small cubes, small marshmallows, pennies, etc., in counting games.

- Shaking dice by cupping the hands together, forming an empty air space between the palms.
- Using small-sized screwdrivers like those found in an erector set.
- Lacing and sewing activities such as stringing beads, Cheerios, macaroni, etc.
- Using eye droppers to "pick up" colored water for color mixing or to make artistic designs on paper.
- Rolling small balls out of tissue paper, then gluing the balls onto construction paper to form pictures or designs.
- Turning over cards, coins, checkers, or buttons, without bringing them to the edge of the table.
- Making pictures using stickers or self-sticking paper reinforcements.
- Playing games with the "puppet fingers" -the thumb, index, and middle fingers. At circle time have each child's puppet fingers tell about what happened over the weekend, or use them in songs and finger plays.

Scissor Activities

When scissors are held correctly, and when they fit a child's hand well, cutting activities will exercise the very same muscles which are needed to manipulate a pencil in a mature tripod grasp. The correct scissor position is with the thumb and middle finger in the handles of the scissors, the index finger on the outside of the handle to stabilize, with fingers four and five curled into the palm.

- Cutting junk mail, particularly the kind of paper used in magazine subscription cards.
- Making fringe on the edge of a piece of construction paper.
- Cutting play dough with scissors.
- Cutting straws or shredded paper.

TO ENCOURAGE CHILD TO HOLD CRAYON WITH THUMB AND FINGERS (23-25 mo.)



The child holds a crayon with her thumb and fingers, rather than in a fist hand.

1. Place the paper on the table and tape it down, if necessary.
2. Place the crayon on the table in front of the child and let her pick it up. She may have a preferred hand, but do not insist she use a particular hand.
3. The child can grasp the crayon in her thumb and fingers with her forearm in pronation or palm down position.
4. Place the crayon on the table and turn its writing point toward the child's little finger. Let the child pick the crayon up with her thumb and fingers, palm down. She then adjusts the crayon, turning her fingers so the point of the crayon is in position to make contact with the paper
5. Position the child's hand with her little finger resting on the table. Place the crayon between her thumb and fingers.
6. Use large crayons, at first, because they are easier to grasp than the smaller crayons.

TO ENCOURAGE CHILD TO HOLD PENCIL WITH THUMB AND FINGERS-ADULT-LIKE GRASP (29-31 mo.)



The child holds a pencil with his thumb and fingers in an adult-like grasp.

1. Let the child use a primary pencil which is wider in diameter than a regular pencil. It will be easier for him to grasp than a regular pencil.

Let the child hold a spoon for self feeding with his thumb and fingers in an adult-like grasp, with forearm supination or the palm up position. (Holds: spoon in fingers—palm up).