



## What Is Cognitive Development

Children grow and develop rapidly in their first five years across the four main areas of development. These areas are motor (physical), language and communication, cognitive and social/emotional.

Cognitive development means how children think, explore and figure things out. It is the development of knowledge, skills, problem solving and dispositions, which help children to think about and understand the world around them. Brain development is part of cognitive development.

As a parent, it is important to foster your child's cognitive development as soon as he/she is born because doing so provides the foundation for your child's success in school and later in life. For example, research shows that children who can distinguish sounds at six months of age are better at acquiring the skills for learning to read at four and five years of age.

To promote your child's cognitive development, it is important that you actively engage in quality interactions on a daily basis. Examples include:

- Talking with your baby and naming commonly used objects.
- Letting your baby explore toys and move about.
- Singing and reading to your baby.
- Exposing your toddler to books and puzzles.
- Expanding on your child's interests in specific learning activities. For example, your toddler might show an early interest in dinosaurs, so you can take him/her on a trip to the natural history museum to learn more about the time that these creatures roamed the earth.
- Answering your child's "why" questions.

Another way that you can foster your child's cognitive development is to provide him/her with choices and prompt him/her to make thoughtful decisions. You should also allow your child to explore different ways of solving problems. While you may want to provide some gentle guidance and encouragement, allow your child some time to figure out things, like a new puzzle. This may require some patience on your part, but it will ultimately help him/her to learn.

For more information on how to encourage and support a child's development, visit the [Cognitive Milestones page](#).