

Childhood skills checklists: Should we be concerned?

Sam's family is worried. He's 18 months old and lacks many of the skills his older sister had at that age. Grandma is concerned. "Shouldn't he be..." has cropped up in several conversations.

"He's healthy and seems fine otherwise," said the doctor at the last appointment. "Let's see how he's doing at his two-year check."

When a family understands typical developmental milestones, they may feel more comfortable addressing questions about their child's development. The following checklist indicates skills the majority of children can accomplish at specific ages.

When looking at a child's development, the following developmental areas are important to consider:

- Gross and fine motor skills (how the child moves around the home and uses their hands and arms)
- Communication skills (how the child communicates with family members and how well the child understands their communication)
- Social and emotional development (engagement, response to caregivers, coping)
- Cognitive development (thinking, play skills, problem solving)

The checklist beginning on page two is divided into these developmental areas.

Parents should not panic if a child is not doing all the items listed for their age group. Children develop at their own rate, so it is difficult to know exactly when a child will learn a particular skill. This checklist is a general guide.

It is important for a family to take into consideration their own cultural beliefs and practices when using this checklist. For instance, in some cultures, independence in a young child is not important, because members of the family believe it is their responsibility to care for the child's needs. A child from a culture where independence is not valued at an early age may not be feeding or dressing themselves at the same age as a child from another culture or lifestyle.

However, if the child can perform only a few or none of the skills, the family may want to take a closer look at the child's development and speak with their pediatrician, family doctor, or nurse practitioner.

If the child is on an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and already receiving early intervention services, this checklist can also be used by families to gauge their child's progress toward completing a goal or outcome and determine the next level skill for their child to complete. Children's developmental skills build on each other, so it is important for a family to understand what foundational skill their child needs to accomplish in order to progress to the next skill level.

Families can use the checklists as a way to mark or highlight areas of specific concern. There is an extra box on page four to write in other information, like how often you see a certain behavior, when it happens, or additional observations and concerns. This information will be helpful to share if you reach out to a doctor or seek a referral.

Additional resources

If you would like to view videos that show typical child development, please go to MN Help Me Grow at <http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/DevelopMilestone/index.html>

View PACER's information handout: PHP-c67, "When Concerns Arise: Deciding to make a referral" at <https://media.pacer.org/php/php-c67.pdf>

By the age of 3 months, a child can usually:

Moving: Motor	Interacting: Social and emotional
<input type="checkbox"/> Lift head and chest when lying on stomach <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet to familiar voice or touch <input type="checkbox"/> Move arms and legs easily and vigorously <input type="checkbox"/> Smile at people <input type="checkbox"/> Show improved head control	<input type="checkbox"/> Quiet to familiar voice or touch <input type="checkbox"/> Smile at people <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy being hugged and cuddled
Talking: Language and communication	Thinking: Cognitive
<input type="checkbox"/> Make cooing sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Laugh in response to you <input type="checkbox"/> Cry when hungry or uncomfortable <input type="checkbox"/> Make gurgling noises	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognize breast or bottle <input type="checkbox"/> Follow movement by turning head <input type="checkbox"/> Startle at loud noises

By the age of 6 months a child can usually:

Moving: Motor	Interacting: Social and emotional
<input type="checkbox"/> Roll over in both directions <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to sit with assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Support weight on both legs when standing and attempt to bounce <input type="checkbox"/> Rock back and forth on hands and knees; may crawl backward before moving forward	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognize familiar faces and begin to know if someone is a stranger <input type="checkbox"/> Point at things <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy playing with others, especially family <input type="checkbox"/> Like to look at self in mirror <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to other people's emotions and express happiness <input type="checkbox"/> Make sounds to express happiness or displeasure
Talking: Language and communication	Thinking: Cognitive
<input type="checkbox"/> Make sounds like "bababa," "dadada," and "mamama" <input type="checkbox"/> Understand "no" <input type="checkbox"/> Copy gestures such as nodding head for "yes" and shaking head for "no"	<input type="checkbox"/> Use hands and mouth to explore the world <input type="checkbox"/> Transfer objects from hand to hand <input type="checkbox"/> Like to look at self in mirror <input type="checkbox"/> Look around at things

By the age of 9 months a child can usually:

Moving: Motor	Interacting: Social and emotional
<input type="checkbox"/> Get in and out of sitting position and sits well without support <input type="checkbox"/> Creep or crawl <input type="checkbox"/> Pull to stand and remain standing with support <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to take steps while holding on to furniture (cruising)	<input type="checkbox"/> Show feelings by smiling, crying, and pointing <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer certain toys <input type="checkbox"/> Cling to familiar adults <input type="checkbox"/> Cry when you leave and act shy around strangers <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to own name
Talking: Language and communication	Thinking: Cognitive
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes sounds like “bababa,” “dadada,” and “mamama” <input type="checkbox"/> Understand “no” <input type="checkbox"/> Copy gestures such as nodding head for “yes” and shaking head for “no” <input type="checkbox"/> Point at things	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch an object as it falls <input type="checkbox"/> Look for objects they see someone hide <input type="checkbox"/> Transfer things smoothly from hand to hand <input type="checkbox"/> Play peek-a-boo <input type="checkbox"/> Use thumb and index finger to pick things up <input type="checkbox"/> Turn pages in a book <input type="checkbox"/> Put things in mouth

By the age of 12 months a child can usually:

Moving: Motor	Interacting: Social and emotional
<input type="checkbox"/> Pull to stand and walk holding on to furniture <input type="checkbox"/> Get into sitting position without help <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to stand alone <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to take steps alone	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer certain people and toys <input type="checkbox"/> Imitate sounds, gestures, or actions for attention <input type="checkbox"/> Cry when you leave and act shy around strangers <input type="checkbox"/> Put arm or leg out to help with dressing <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy playing games like “peek-a-boo” <input type="checkbox"/> Show affection with familiar people
Talking: Language and communication	Thinking: Cognitive
<input type="checkbox"/> Use simple gestures like shaking head “no” or waving “bye-bye” <input type="checkbox"/> Say “mama” and “dada” <input type="checkbox"/> Try to say words <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to simple requests such as shaking head when asked, “Are you all done?”	<input type="checkbox"/> Put objects in and out of containers <input type="checkbox"/> Look at the correct picture when it is named <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to use common objects correctly <input type="checkbox"/> Follow simple directions <input type="checkbox"/> Explore things by banging or shaking <input type="checkbox"/> Poke with index finger

By the age of 2 years a child can usually:

Moving: Motor	Interacting: Social and emotional
<input type="checkbox"/> Kick a ball forward <input type="checkbox"/> Throw a ball overhand <input type="checkbox"/> Walk up and down stairs with support <input type="checkbox"/> Stand on tiptoes <input type="checkbox"/> Build tower of four or more blocks <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to run <input type="checkbox"/> Climb on and off furniture without help <input type="checkbox"/> Put simple puzzles together	<input type="checkbox"/> Play briefly beside other children, and express excitement when with other children <input type="checkbox"/> Imitate others, especially adults and older children <input type="checkbox"/> Show more independence <input type="checkbox"/> Show defiance, such as doing what the child was told not to do <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to play with other children
Talking: Language and communication	Thinking: Cognitive
<input type="checkbox"/> Use two or three words together <input type="checkbox"/> Point to things or pictures in a book when named <input type="checkbox"/> Follow simple directions <input type="checkbox"/> Know names of familiar people and body parts	<input type="checkbox"/> Find things even when hidden under two or more covers <input type="checkbox"/> Explore how things work by touching them and trying them out <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to sort shapes and colors <input type="checkbox"/> Follow two-step directions such as, "Pick up your truck and put it on the shelf" <input type="checkbox"/> Play simple pretend or make-believe games <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat sentences and rhymes in familiar books <input type="checkbox"/> Name items pictured in a book such as a dog, cat, car, or baby

Notes (frequency, observations, additional concerns):