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NEW!

# DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES



## Why Are Developmental Stages Important?



All children can learn. In fact, children are naturally curious and WANT to learn. But, each child is unique in the way that he/she absorbs information. Some do better by watching, some by listening and some by doing. Understanding a child's strengths and weaknesses is critical to assessing what they have learned and where their peers are in the developmental process. Identifying areas where a child is falling behind can help to determine if intervention is necessary or if there are other environmental issues that are contributing to the problem. All children should be given opportunities to be successful. Knowing approximately where they should be in their development keeps the goal setting process heading in the right direction.

## Let's Explore Developmental Stages!

There are broad areas of development. **1) Social/ Emotional, 2) Physical, 3) Cognitive and 4) Language.** Children develop in all four areas at the same time so they will overlap on a regular basis.

### SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

Just as the label says, this area is about social skills and emotional understanding. Children gradually learn ways to act in society and how to feel and behave in social situations. Confidence, responsibility and empathy are major goals for social/emotional development.

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| Confidence /Sense of Self | Child becomes aware of who they are and how to interact with other people.               |
| Responsibility            | Learning to follow rules and routines, have respect for others.                          |
| Empathy                   | Showing empathy and getting along with others. (e.g., sharing, taking turns, compassion) |

### PHYSICAL

Physical development is critical. While there are certain milestones which children reach at specific ages, all children progress at their own pace. The two focus areas are fine motor and gross motor skills.

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| Gross Motor | This area involves the large muscles; legs, arms torso, etc. Children learn coordination of large muscles to achieve balance and stability. Running, jumping, skipping, throwing and catching are all gross motor practice.  |
| Fine Motor  | Fine motor skills are using their hands to hold things. For example, the opposable thumb needs practice to hold a pencil or button a shirt. These skills also involve hand/eye coordination. The fine motor skills are achieved after the basic gross motor skills like crawling or walking. |

### COGNITIVE

Cognitive Development happens in the brain! Children develop cognitive abilities as they learn new skills, explore the world around them, solve problems and understand concepts. Everyday there are challenges to be met and problems to be solved. Learning to think through the situation for solutions is cognitive development.

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| Problem Solving  | Children are sponges. They absorb everything around them. By gaining knowledge, testing possible solutions to problems and acquiring information they are expanding their world of understanding.  |
| Logical Thinking | This involves gathering data and making sense of the world by comparing, contrasting, sorting, measuring, classifying, counting, and recognizing patterns. Logical thinking helps children organize their world and gain a better understanding of how it works.   |
| Understanding    | This aspect of Cognitive development takes it a step further. By using objects to represent other things, like a shoe to be a car for a doll indicates that there is an understanding of what a car does. Understanding that the doll is a representation of a person introduces abstract thinking. This helps to develop their imagination. |

### LANGUAGE

Language development happens all the time! This is understanding and communicating with words, both spoken and written. The areas of communication develop gradually as the child is exposed to language. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing develop interdependently in children.

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| Listening & Speaking | Language development is learning to communicate with others. Children gradually increase their vocabulary, express themselves, understand other people, have a conversation, and use their words to resolve issues.  |
| Reading & Writing    | This development happens after (and along side) listening and speaking. Children learn to make sense of letters and differentiate them from numbers. They learn how letters represent sounds and are combined to make words. Then comes READING! Yay! When children begin to read, the world opens up to them. Writing further expands their communication and aids in the visual representation of their understanding. |