You are your child's first teacher

Sunrise Skill Builders

From birth to 5 years of age
Dear Parents,

Columba and I are writing this letter to you as fellow parents. Much like you and other parents in Florida, we are committed to being the best parents we can possibly be. Although we have had many wonderful experiences as the Governor and First Lady, nothing has ever surpassed the joy of being a parent.

Columba and I are the proud parents of three wonderful children, George, Noelle, and Jeb, Jr. Although being a parent is a tremendous commitment that can offer challenges, it also offers many rewards. We knew that as our children’s first teacher we had the ability to influence their future success and that our involvement was one of the keys to their readiness for school. In addition to our own personal experiences, we knew that research studies have shown that parents’ involvement with their children, from birth to adulthood increases their children’s achievement and self-esteem. Knowing all of these things impressed us that we needed to be involved with our children and to begin at a very early age.

Please do not miss this “window of opportunity” in your child’s life. Take full advantage of every opportunity that you have as a parent to participate and be an active part of their success. Whether it is reading to your child, telling your child stories, or taking trips to a park or the grocery store, make the time you spend with your child, quality time. Begin now to provide your children with the necessary tools to become the wonderful people that you know and believe they can be.

Sincerely,

Jeb and Columba

Gerber Information Line Parent Resource Center (800) 443-7237  Advice from parents and grandparents on a variety of non-medical topics and coupons

I Am Your Child Campaign (888) 447-3400  Information on local parenting programs and services as well as a free videotape and CD-ROM

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (800) 695-0285  Information and referrals for all types of disabilities, from birth to age 22

National Parent Information Network (800) 583-4135  Research sent free of charge to callers on subjects ranging from toilet training to preschools

Florida Child Care Resource and Referral Network  (888) FLChild  Referrals to child care programs and a free packet of information and resources on choosing quality child care
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Zero to Three http://www.zerotothree.org Extensive information on the physical, intellectual, and social development of infants and toddlers

Baby Center http://www.babycare.com Features information, expertise, guidance, peer support and products to assist parents with all aspects of child-rearing

Breastfeeding.com http://www.breastfeeding.com An online resource for nursing mothers

Florida Child Care Resource and Referral Network http://www.flchild.org Information on identifying quality child care and locating child care for your child

Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services http://www.centraldirectory.org Information for parents that have questions about their child’s development and assistance for finding services for children with special needs

Florida KidCare http://www.FloridaKidcare.org Low cost health insurance for uninsured children from birth to age 18 offered by the State of Florida

The National Center for Fathering http://www.fathers.com Dedicated to helping men be better fathers by conducting research and developing practical resources especially for dads

National Safe Kids Campaign http://www.safekids.org National organization focused on the prevention of unintentional childhood injury, provides lots of fact sheets and information on child safety

Teach More, Love More http://www.teachmorelovemore.org An excellent web site for parents provided by the Early Childhood Initiative in Miami, includes a wide variety of good information and resources for parents

Telephone Hot Lines

ChildHelp National Hotline (800)-4-A-CHILD Advice and referrals from counselors 24 hours a day for parents who have questions or emergencies

Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc. (800) 825-5736 or (727) 523-1130 (Voice and TDD) Information, referrals, training, and individualized assistance for all types of disabilities

Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services (800) 654-4440 Information and referral regarding diagnostic, treatment, early intervention, or adaptive equipment services for parents with children with special needs

Florida Family Healthline (800) 451-2229 Information, counseling, and referrals for parents of young children, birth to age 5
Parents as First Teachers

Somewhere along the line, you had a favorite teacher. Chances are, you still remember what made him or her so special.

Teachers make an incredible impact on our lives. Their influence often makes a difference in how well we do and what we achieve later in life. Why is this important to you as a new parent when your baby's first day of school is so far away?

Scientists have explored the brains of babies and young children. They now know that during the first five years of life, the brain has windows of opportunity for learning. Just as an electrician must carefully run wiring throughout a new house during construction, your baby's brain must wire itself for the future. The brain wires itself in reaction to the world that surrounds it.

In the earliest years, you help your baby's brain develop properly through appropriate nurturing. Nurturing means giving your baby all the things necessary to grow and thrive. In addition to healthy food, nurturing means reading books to your baby, singing songs and giving lots of love and affection. It means playing music, telling stories, holding and making eye contact when you feed your baby. It means a safe place to live and doctor visits at the right times.

Compact Disks

I Am Your Child, I Am Your Child Campaign. (1997). (Available for $5.00 from I Am Your Child, 1010 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20007.) This CD answers questions parents have about their children from pregnancy through the first three years of life. It includes advice based on current research on how a child's brain develops.

Note: There are numerous educational compact disks aimed at helping preschool-age children practice number and letter skills. They are available at retail stores and the public library.

Internet Sites


I Am Your Child Campaign http://www.iamyourchild.org. Information on promoting a child’s healthy development, local services for parents, and free materials.


ParenthoodWeb http://parenthoodweb.com. Advice on parenting from pediatricians and psychiatrists and e-mail responses to questions.


Scientists have discovered that appropriate nurturing can increase a child’s IQ by 10 or more points. Growth rates in premature babies can be doubled. Grade promotion rates increase, and adjustment to school can be easier. Even children with special needs may perform at grade level in school. Regardless of capacity, all children benefit from nurturing. Clearly, success in school is directly connected with what happens from conception through early childhood.

As a parent and your child’s first teacher, take advantage of the windows of opportunity described in this book. In addition, you will find guidelines for physical, language, intellectual, and social-emotional activities and milestones for typical development in ages birth to 6 months, 6 to 12 months, 1 to 2 years, 2 to 3 years, 3 to 4 years, and 4 to 5 years.

Remember, as your child’s first teacher, you play a vital role in making sure your child is ready to learn all that he or she can.
Children with Special Needs

The information in the Sunrise Skill Builders is designed for parents of all developing infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, including parents of a child with special needs. With nurturing and care, children with special needs can make astounding developmental progress, grow up in the family home, and go to school. Most will get a job and eventually live productive lives on their own.

If you are a parent of a child with special needs, you may travel a somewhat different – and sometimes difficult – path when raising your child. There are early intervention resources where you can turn for help.

Many people, including the staff at the hospital where your baby is born, as well as your doctor, can refer you to the appropriate resources. Many parent support groups meet regularly both in large and small cities to share information and provide assistance. Through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), many local agencies offer education and therapeutic programs for infants, toddlers, and preschool children as well as their family members. Professionals will work with you and your child with the goal of helping him or her reach the highest possible potential.

Early intervention, regardless of a child’s special challenges, is essential for maximizing development. For more information, contact your school district or call Florida’s Central Directory (1-800-654-4440) and ask for the telephone number of the early intervention program office for your area.

What to Expect During the First Year and What to Expect During the Toddler Years (1996). Eisenberg, A., Murkoff, H.E., & Hathaway, S.E. New York: Workman. These two books tell parents what to expect each month of their infant’s or toddler’s development. They also include a helpful question-and-answer section and descriptions of common childhood illnesses.

Working and Caring (1987). Brazelton, T.B. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. This book follows three families as they deal with such issues as returning to work and choosing child care. Throughout the book, Dr. Brazelton offers practical advice on balancing family and work.


Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five (1997). Leach, P. New York: Knopf. Written from the child’s point of view, this book contains excellent information on how to meet a child’s needs from one of the country’s foremost authorities on children’s development.


Your One-year-old, Two-year-old. (1979-1982). Ames, L. B. New York: Dell. This is a series of books sponsored by Yale’s Gesell Institute on young children that describes the child at each year of age and offers recommendations to parents.

Magazines

Child (One year subscription available for $12 from Child, P.O. Box 32720, Harlan, IA 51593-2452.) This magazine includes articles on development, health and safety, multicultural issues, and a variety of features about real problems experienced by real families.

Exceptional Parent (One year subscription available for $36 from Exceptional Parents, 555 Kinderkamack Road, Oradell, NJ 07649 or (201) 634-6550.) This magazine gives parents of children with disabilities practical advice on meeting their special need, including a comprehensive resource guide, which includes information about parent organizations and programs.

Parenting (One year subscription available for $9.97 from Parenting, P.O. Box 52424, Boulder, CO 80323-2424.) This magazine’s regular features address such issues as healthy growth, social-emotional development, and childhood illnesses. It also contains parent-buying guides.
Birth to 6-Months of Age

NEWBORNS


*Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families, The* (1997). Covey, S.R. New York: Golden Books. Best-selling author Covey applies his “7 habits” formula for success to the family. He advises families to try, among other things, to set goals and to use problem-solving to avoid or end conflicts.


*Toys “R” Us Toy Guide for Differently-abled Kids* (1997). Toys “R” Us (Available for free at all Toys “R” Us stores). Designed especially for children with disabilities, this guide is useful for all parents. The description of each toy indicates the thinking, visual, social, and other skills it helps develop.
Birth to 6 Months of Age

Your baby is unique. He will grow and develop at his own pace in his own way. Babies have their own awake/sleep cycles, their own preferences for how they like to be held, their own cycles of eating and eliminating, and their own preferences for interaction with you and others. The ways babies use their senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) to learn about their world also differ. Some babies are very sensitive to noises and changes in lighting, and others are not. You know your baby’s rhythms and preferences better than anyone else.

Babies love the people around them. They look intently at their mother’s and father’s faces. They delight in language. Long before they can say words, babies coo, then babble, and then make sounds that imitate the rhythm and tone of adult talk. They even quickly learn to take turns during conversations, cooing in response to their father’s words, stopping and waiting for the father to answer and repeating the process.

Babies learn through all of their senses. They can identify their mother through her smell at birth. They put things in their mouths and learn about different shapes, textures, and tastes. Babies move their bodies and soon learn that they can change what they see, hear, or feel by their own activity.

Your baby needs you and the security you provide most of all. The young infant thrives on the warmth and caring of a close relationship. The interactions you have with your child are much more important than the nice toys you provide. When you respond to the smiles, cries, coos, and eye contact of your baby, you are meeting your baby’s needs and he feels secure. Secure infants are able to explore their surroundings, feel good about themselves, and grow into more confident children and adults. A positive relationship with you is essential to help your baby reach his future potential. A baby’s sense of well being comes in part from how you respond to his efforts to communicate. By anticipating your baby’s need for food, rest, and quiet time as well as stimulation, you help him get ready for the world.

Newborn to 5 Years Old Resource Guide

Unless otherwise noted, the following resources are available from bookstores, public libraries, and school libraries. Your family doctor, pediatrician, county health department, and United Way “Success by Six” program should also have helpful materials.

Books

Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5 (1998). Shelov, S.P. & Hannemann, R. E. (Eds.). New York: Bantam. Produced by the American Academy of Pediatrics, this reference is an excellent resource on children’s health and development. It contains information on each stage of development ranging from “health watch” to suitable toys and activities.


Games to Play with Babies, Games to Play with Toddlers, Games to Play with Two-Year-Olds (1993). Silberg, J. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House. This series of books include a variety of games that foster physical development, coordination, bonding, and other essential aspects of early development.

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child and Sweet Baby: How to Soothe Your Newborn. (1999). Weissbluth, M. New York: Fawcett Books. Two books that teach parents how to soothe their babies to help them sleep better and create healthy sleep habits.
Fears

All children go through periods of fear. It is a normal part of their development. It also gets the parents’ attention and support. Although you cannot stop your child from being fearful, you can help her to take the fears less seriously and learn from them.

Fears usually crop up at periods of new and rapid learning when new abilities can throw a child off balance. As the child learns to handle the fears, she learns to handle the new spurt in learning.

Without realizing it, parents can fuel fears. When your child wakes up crying about monsters in her room, you may remember your own childhood fears and overdo the comfort. Your child may sense your anxiousness and become even more fearful.

A better approach is to stay calm. Listen to your child, let her know that all children have fears from time to time, and reassure her that she will learn to overcome her fears. Allow her to be dependent at times and cuddle with a “lovey,” and also reinforce when she shows bravery. Talk about why she may be afraid (“You are learning something new, and it’s natural to be worried.”)

As your child works through her fears, she will also successfully master her new spurt in development. Your calmness and reassurance will have been a key to her success.

Physical Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Place your baby in different positions when he is awake and has an adult watching – back, stomach, and sitting with support – to help develop different skills.

• Help strengthen neck muscles during play time with lots of games that involve moving his eyes or placing him on his stomach and encouraging him to lift his head.

• Offer your baby lots of safe things to grab, hold, poke, and wave.

• Talk and sing to your baby from various distances and locations. Use a happy and friendly voice.

• Put your baby on his back and pedal his legs gently like a bicycle.

Typical 6-month Milestones

• Sits up with a little support
• Begins to crawl
• Picks up objects with one hand
• Turns his head at the sound of your voice and watches you move
• Examines his fingers or the toy he’s holding
• Smiles spontaneously
Language and Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Show and tell your baby what makes the sounds he hears – the doorbell, a music box, or even banging a spoon on a plate.
• Talk to your baby face to face so he can see your expressions change.
• Talk and sing to your baby during diapering, dressing, feeding, and other regular routines. Tell him what you are doing – “Now, I’m going to put you in the car seat.”
• Pay attention to the rhythm of your baby’s babbles. When he pauses, you respond and then pause for him to respond. Repeat sounds and words.
• Listen to your baby’s cries remembering that it is the only way he can talk to you. Try to figure out what he needs, give it to him, and comfort him.

Typical 6-month Milestones

• Responds to name
• Smiles or vocalizes to initiate a response from you
• Reaches for and grasps toys
• Babbles using all types of sounds
• Recognizes different sounds, like a sister’s voice.
• Looks to see where something lands after being dropped
• Recognizes mother or father in a crowd

Toys for Learning

1 to 5 Years Old

• Lots of pretend play materials – washable dolls and stuffed toys with accessories, dress-up materials, housekeeping items, puppets, and transportation toys
• Sand and water play materials
• Wooden and hollow blocks, more types of interlocking blocks
• Puzzles (30-50 pieces), card games, and simple board games
• Pattern-making materials like pegboards, stringing beads (smaller sizes), or color cubes
• Dressing, lacing, stringing, and weaving materials
• Lots of picture and pop-up books
• Art materials – crayons, markers, paper, clay/dough, glue and collage materials
• Workbench with woodworking materials (hammer, saw, nails – used with supervision)
• Musical materials – instruments, recorded music
• Push and pull toys and large and small balls
• Ride-on equipment with pedals, wagons, scooters
• Climbing and sliding equipment with soft surface underneath

A Few Book Suggestions for Your 1 to 5-year-old

• Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman
  a wonderful story of being yourself despite what others say
• The Legend of the Poinsettia by Tomie DePaola
  reinterpretation of a beautiful story from Mexico which tells how the poinsettia came to be
• Dr. Seuss books
  children love the funny rhymes and making up their own
• Something from Nothing by Phoebe Gilman
  a retelling of a traditional Jewish folktale proves that it is possible to find something from nothing
• The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant
  a warm look at a family get-together
• Something Good by Robert Munsch
  a fun story about a father’s trip to the grocery store with his children
Social/Emotional Development
As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Show your child how to get along with other people by setting a good example.
- Help your child develop good problem-solving skills by using negotiation with her regarding an activity. (“You want to go to Tanya’s house, and I want you to clean up your room. Is there a way we can negotiate and work this out?”)
- Provide lots of opportunities to play with other children. Talk about friendships and what you do to stay friends.
- Expect good behavior and praise your child for it. Go light on the criticism if you haven’t explained what’s expected.
- Prepare your child for changes by explaining what will happen.

Typical 6-month Milestones
- Smiles, laughs, or kicks to show pleasure, excitement, or joy.
- Frowns, cries or turns away to indicate sadness, anger, fear, disappointment, or discomfort.
- Reacts to strangers with soberness or fear.
- Can usually be comforted by you or another familiar adult.
- Responds with pleasure when you arrive.

Typical 5-year-old Milestones
- Shows self-confidence by expressing emotions appropriately and shows a willingness to try new experiences
- Can follow group rules and shows respect for materials and others
- Makes transitions between home and school and activities without anxiety
- Enjoys playing cooperatively with other children, is able to compromise and offer suggestions
- Engages easily with adults and shows a sense of community by helping in group situations
- Uses a variety of problem-solving strategies, but seeks out and needs adult help at times

Smile and laugh with your baby.
- When your baby acts as if he needs attention, find out what’s wrong – is he hungry or does he need a dry diaper?
- Hold and talk to your baby during feeding.
- When your baby feels like playing, sing, play peek-a-boo and other fun games.
- If something upsets your baby, hold and rock him, speak in a soothing voice, and comfort him.
- Respect your baby’s cues. He’ll tell you when he needs a break by turning away or crying.
Toys for Learning

- Rattles with handles, teething rings, and other safe objects baby can chew
- Bells with handles, music boxes, and other toys that make sounds
- Hanging mobiles with colorful objects (mobiles should be out of reach - gradually raise as focus improves)
- Washable cloth toys, dolls, and stuffed animals (make sure all parts are permanently attached)
- Unbreakable mirrors
- Texture balls and play gyms used with supervision
- Cloth, plastic, or cardboard books

A Few Book Suggestions

For Your Newborn to 6-month-old

- Baby Faces Series by Scholastic – photos of babies playing familiar games like peek-a-boo
- Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown – a wonderful bedtime classic with calm, rhyming words
- Baby Animals by K. Warabe – each page has a bright, bold picture of an animal
- Snapshot Series and Touch and Feel Series Board Books by Dorling Kindersley (DK) Publishing – board books filled with bright photos, soft textures, and great pictures

Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Give your child quiet time for coloring, playing or just thinking.
- Ask your child to look at you when you give instructions and to repeat them back to you.
- Encourage your child to play imaginative games like being a teacher or an astronaut.
- Prepare for unexpected events like getting lost in a store – have your child explain to you what she would do and say.
- Practice carrying out a series of instructions. For example, tell your child to put away a toy, brush her teeth and get ready for bed.

Typical 5-year-old Milestones

- Shows interest in problem-solving and represents their thinking using math words like “more,” “taller,” “thicker,” “smallest,” or geometric shapes
- Enjoys making patterns, sorting, and comparing
- Can count objects up to at least 20 and may be able to count by rote up to 100
- Shows interest in measurements like comparing weights or using time concepts
- Enjoys observing, exploring, and describing objects, weather, and living things
- Begins to understand similarities and differences in people, past and present, and places
- Has an understanding of the reasons for rules
Language Development
As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Read signs and billboards as you travel through the neighborhood, pointing out letters and numbers.
- On a trip to the grocery store, show your child the connection between words and things.
- Help your child get a library card and start using it.
- Read to your child and then ask her to tell you the story.
- Encourage your child to draw pictures and tell stories about the pictures. Write down her words.

Typical 5-year-old Milestones

- Listens attentively and understands the meaning of a message
- Uses longer and more complex sentences and participates actively in discussions
- Enjoys books and develops preferences in certain topics or authors
- Shows understanding of print by pointing to words and “writing” stories from left to right
- Begins to sound out simple words and associate the correct sound with many letters
- Enjoys representing stories through pictures and play and dictates stories about a picture

The Brain from Birth to 6 Months

Did you know?

Stress affects brain function. The amount of emotional security and safety a baby feels directly influences brain activity. When someone is afraid or under stress, the brain begins to function on a more basic level, one that promotes survival. It is much like when you react to pain automatically. If a baby is afraid or unsure of his environment, then the brain focuses on building a wiring system for survival and the wiring that allows him to learn complex activities is not formed. The amount of time spent reacting to stress takes away from the window of learning opportunities.

Research has demonstrated that premature babies who are cuddled and held develop much more rapidly than those who are not held as much. Hold, caress, and talk gently to your baby frequently. A baby who feels safe and loved can learn more easily.

Children who grow up in nurturing and stimulating environments are better prepared for school, and the benefits of this help remain with them as students. They usually have higher IQ test scores and are more likely to graduate from high school.
Physical Development
As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Encourage your child to pick out her own clothes and get dressed without help and to help around the house. Praise all efforts – even when clothes don’t match or are buttoned unevenly.
- Prepare and have meals with your child and show her how to use a spoon, fork, and table knife.
- Teach your child safety rules like using 911, looking both ways before crossing a street, and walking inside.
- Provide puzzles, blocks, markers, and pencils to practice fine motor skills.
- Provide opportunities to play outdoors on safe, soft surfaces in activities that encourage running, jumping, and climbing.
- Encourage your child to write her name and draw.

Typical 5-year-old Milestones

- Shows characteristics of good health such as actively participating in movement, visual, and hearing activities
- Shows interest in health and safety issues by washing hands, naming healthy foods, and talking about safety rules
- Dresses, cleans up messes, and takes care of toileting needs independently
- Moves forwards and sideways, stopping and starting with balance and control
- Uses eye-hand coordination to accomplish many fine motor tasks such as cutting, constructing, and putting together puzzles
- Uses pencils, scissors, and paint brushes using a mature grasp
- Attempts to write her name
The year before kindergarten is a time of transition for a 4- to 5-year-old child. Babyhood is long gone. This age child still lacks the experiences and social-emotional maturity to always make good decisions. It does no good to become angry with a child for doing something incorrectly. Think of it as another learning opportunity for your child. As she becomes better able to control her feelings and interact with others with words, she is gaining invaluable skills in negotiation and self-control.

During this year, your child will continue her phenomenal growth in language ability. You are her primary language model. Show how words, letters, and numbers are connected and how important they are in your life. For example, make a trip to the grocery store a learning experience by asking your child to show you all the red vegetables or find the number 5 on a price sign. When you hear your child make errors (for example, saying “mouses” instead of “mice”), simply repeat it correctly without drawing attention to the mistake. Many of these mistakes will be self-corrected at a later stage.

Children at this age will also have a better understanding of the power of words and may experiment with rejecting others, making verbal threats, and bossing others around. It is important that adults are nearby when children are playing to intervene when words become hurtful and isolate one or more children. Adults should take such isolation seriously and help the isolated child to find her own words to express her feelings to others.

Your child will also be very interested in responsibilities and will enjoy helping with chores. Find meaningful ways that she can help. Small jobs, such as helping to set the table or sorting the socks in the laundry, help teach responsibility as well as intellectual skills.
6 Months to 1 Year of Age

A typically developing baby accomplishes amazing feats during the second six months of life. Legs that once seemed as sturdy as spaghetti usually become strong enough for baby to stand. Hands grab at and get everything in sight. Words—like “mama”, “dada”, and “bye-bye”—flow from your baby’s mouth.

Mobile infants explore everything around them, so it is very important that you make sure their environment is clean and safe and that areas on the floor have room for free movement. Be aware that babies develop motor skills at very different rates—a early crawler can be a late walker. It may help to get down on all fours to see your home from your baby’s viewpoint. Install outlet covers, baby gates, and other safety items as needed.

Your baby loves to imitate you at this age. She is learning so much about how things work and how people behave. She will realize that she is separate from you and may become distressed when you leave or when a stranger appears. A strong, loving relationship gives your baby the secure base from which she can explore her world.

Now is the time to begin teaching your baby the names of objects around her. Remember that she learns by listening to you. Talk and sing to your baby. Play games or sing songs that include her name. Make up your own songs using melodies from such favorites as “Happy Birthday” or “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.”

Not sure what too small means? Use this as a measure:
If a toy is less than 1 1/2 inches wide, don’t let a baby or toddler play with it!

READY TO GO
4 to 5 Years of Age
**Music and Your Child**

The window of opportunity for learning a musical instrument can begin at age 3 and remain open until age 10. A person can still learn to play an instrument after that period, but it may be harder. Most musical prodigies start learning to play their instrument before age 10. However, don’t go overboard as the parent of a musical toddler. Children this age should not be required to practice for a certain time each day.

Early exposure to music and learning an instrument not only contribute to better musical ability, but also seem to improve the capacity to learn mathematics and develop spatial ability. Studies of preschool children who have been exposed to musical training confirm that early musical training significantly improves spatial intelligence, which is critical for learning mathematics. (Spatial sense is the awareness of how shapes or objects, two or three dimensional, are related. For example, think about the relationship between a city map, which is two-dimensional, and the city itself, which is three-dimensional.)

Brain research has discovered that the part of the brain used in music learning is close to that which is responsible for mathematics, spatial aptitude and logic. This connection may explain why people with musical talent tend to have excellent spatial, and mathematical ability.

**Physical Development**

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Provide clean, safe areas on the floor for free movement.
- Be aware that babies develop motor skills at very different rates – an early crawler can be a late walker.
- Make an area with sturdy furniture where your baby can practice pulling upright to a standing position.
- Give your baby blocks, rattles, and toys to hold and drop.
- Offer action toys, such as pull-string toys and busy boxes.

**Typical 1-year-old Milestones**

- Creeps on hands and knees or begins to walk
- Sits without support
- Holds, explores, and throws objects
- Switches toys from one hand to another
- Feeds herself with finger foods
- Identifies one or more body parts
Language Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Talk often to your baby. Describe her actions and build on them.
- Ask questions using visual cues and encourage your baby to respond by pointing or reaching.
- Make a sound and encourage your baby to copy you.
- Play simple games that put words with actions and sounds.
- Read short books to your baby as she sits on your lap.
- Show your baby large, colorful pictures and books of animals, toys, and people, while talking about what she sees.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

- Can understand many more words than she can say
- Imitates simple sounds and says short words like “mama” and “dada”
- Shows intense interest in adult language
- Likes being held and read to
- Shows an interest in pictures
- Enjoys songs

Basic Equipment: 3- to 4 Years Old

- Lots of pretend play materials – washable dolls and stuffed toys with accessories, dress-up materials, housekeeping items, puppets, and transportation toys
- Sand and water play materials
- Wooden and hollow blocks
- Puzzles (15–30 pieces) and simple card games
- Pattern-making materials like pegboards, stringing beads, or color cubes
- Dressing, lacing, and stringing materials
- Lots of picture and pop-up books
- Art materials – crayons, markers, paper, clay/dough, glue, and collage materials
- Musical materials – instruments, recorded music
- Push and pull toys and balls
- Ride-on equipment with pedals
- Climbing equipment with soft surface underneath

A Few Book Suggestions

- **Blueberries for Sal** by Robert McCloskey
  a little girl and a little bear mix up their mothers while gathering blueberries
- **Jamil Jamil Went Down the Hill** by Virginia Kroll
  wonderful rhymes and illustrations based on Mother Goose favorites with a focus on the African continent
- **Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear?** by N. W. Carlstrom
  a wonderful poem with great illustrations about what a childlike bear wears from morning to night
- **Silly Sally** by Audrey Wood
  Sally travels to town going backwards and upside down
- **Where the Wild Things Are** by Maurice Sendak
  a classic about one boy’s journey of fears and his return to the comforts of home
Social/Emotional Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Provide times for your child to play with other children.
• Take your child to new places with new people.
• Ask your child to help with simple household chores like putting dirty clothes in the hamper.
• Provide clear, consistent rules and predictability to his day.
• Set a good example by sharing some of your belongings with your child.
• Help your child learn to settle arguments with words, without hitting or screaming.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

• Shows more independence and likes to do things by himself but may need support to try new things
• Finds routines very comforting and can become upset when things are done differently
• Enjoys helping with household chores
• Plays well with one or two other children, but also likes to play alone
• Seeks adult help when needed to settle conflicts
• Can follow simple rules with gentle reminders

Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Give your baby boxes, buckets and cups for dumping and filling with water, or other safe objects.
• Provide nesting measuring cups, stacking rings and blocks that she can sort by color and size.
• Play games by dropping and hiding toys.
• Play peekaboo.
• Ask your baby to do simple things like come to you.
• Do things your baby can imitate like blinking your eyes, making animal sounds, or clapping your hands.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

• Puts things in a container then empties it
• Drops objects on purpose
• Tries to build with blocks
• Finds toys that are dropped or that are partially hidden
• Starts imitating simple actions, such as blowing a kiss or petting a dog
Social/Emotional Development

As your child's first teacher, you can:

• Introduce new people to your baby from the safety of your arms.
• Talk to your baby when you move out of sight so she knows you are near.
• Learn to distinguish what your baby means by “no.” Is she telling you she doesn’t want something or that she is tired?
• Provide opportunities to be around other children.
• Change your tone of voice and facial expression when expressing approval and disapproval.
• Play simple games with your baby.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

• Shows anxiety at separation from you or when a stranger approaches
• Expresses negative feelings
• Shows interest in other children
• Shows pleasure in new accomplishments
• Enjoys playing games with you and laughs at funny sounds and activities
• Is aware of your approval and disapproval
• Begins to try to feed herself

Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Play games that teach your child colors, numbers, and shapes.
• Provide puzzles, matching games, and patterning materials and work on them with your child.
• Give directions that use positional words. For example, “Look under the sink, and bring me a garbage bag.”
• Play cards or other games that require finding items that are the same and different.
• Sing, dance, draw, and play pretend with your child.

Typical 4-year-old Milestones

• Sorts blocks according to shape and color
• Points and counts 5 to 10 objects correctly
• Can match and sort shapes
• Understands several positional words like “above,” “below,” and “under”
• Enjoys finding things that are the same or different
• Notices major changes in the environment
• Enjoys creative materials and activities but may sustain attention for only limited periods of time
Toys for Learning
6 Months to 1 Year Old

- Rattles with handles, teething rings, and other safe objects baby can chew
- Push and pull and pop-up toys
- Washable cloth toys, dolls, and stuffed animals (make sure all parts are permanently attached)
- Unbreakable mirrors
- Sand and water play materials
- Lightweight blocks
- Simple 2-3 piece puzzles
- Cloth, plastic, or cardboard picture books
- Musical toys – bells, rattles, and lightweight banging instruments
- Texture balls and low, soft climbing platforms

A Few Book Suggestions for your 6-month to 1-year-old

- At Home by S. Tucker – bright pictures of familiar objects
- The Going to Bed Book by Sandra Boynton – a soothing, rhyming story of animals on their way to bed
- Hippety-Hop Hippety-Hey: Growing rhymes from birth to age three by Opal Dunn & Sally Anne Lambert – A collection of rhymes and how to use them with different age children
- Jamberry by Bruce Degan – a playful poem with musical words and fun pictures
- Read Aloud Series by Rosemary Wells – a fun board book series that introduces classic songs like “The Itsy Bitsy Spider”

Language Development
As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Utilize every opportunity to talk – in the car, while shopping, and during dinner.
- Read a favorite book to your child every day.
- While reading to your child, ask questions about the story, point out particular words and letters, and call attention to rhyming words.
- Teach your child songs that are easy to remember.
- Provide pencils, markers, and paper for drawing and writing.

Typical 4-year-old Milestones

- Follows 2 or 3-step directions
- Speaks clearly
- Asks and answers questions
- Enjoys being read to and pretends to read
- Recognizes some letters, especially those in his own name
- Creates rhyming words and nonsense words
- Tells a story about a picture
- Is beginning to write several letters
Temperament

Does your baby wake up from a nap immediately kicking and wanting attention or does she wake up slowly and get upset if you move her too quickly? During the second half of the first year, a baby’s temperament – a child’s natural way of reacting to the world around her – is apparent. Understanding how your baby responds can help you understand what is normal for your child, help you anticipate how your child will react to particular things, and give you tools to assist with your child’s adjustment.

There are nine elements that are used to assess temperament:

1. Activity Level - is she always moving or does she prefer to stay in one place for a while?
2. Distractibility - is she easily distracted or not?
3. Persistence - is she likely to get “locked in” to an activity or can she easily be redirected?
4. Approach and Withdrawal - how does she handle the new and stressful?
5. Intensity - is she loud when she’s excited or upset or is she mild in her reactions?
6. Adaptability - how does she deal with change?
7. Regularity - are her sleep, bowel habits, and rhythms predictable?
8. Sensitivity - does she adjust easily to differences in textures, smells, tastes, and temperature or not?
9. Mood - is she basically positive or negative in her reactions?

Based on your answers to these questions, you may describe your child as active, quiet, or somewhere in between.

Once you understand your child’s temperament, you can anticipate her reactions. If you have a very spirited child, you know that she is not trying to make things difficult for you by her emotional reactions to her “scratchy” clothes - this is simply her natural perceptions. You also know when she is her “usual self” and when she is not. When she’s not, you can make a decision about whether she might be sick or feeling stressed or moving into a spurt in development.

Physical Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Provide areas at home to run, jump, hop, play ball, and ride a tricycle.
- Play catch with your child.
- Let your child choose his clothes and dress himself. Offer assistance if needed.
- Show your child how to cut paper with scissors and paste pictures on paper.
- Provide pencils, markers, and paper for drawing and writing.
- Provide clothes that are easy to manage and give frequent reminders to go to the bathroom.

Typical 4-year-old Milestones

- Uses toilet independently
- Moves with balance and control, making quick stops and turns
- Goes up and down stairs alternating feet without holding for support
- Throws a ball with reasonable accuracy and catches a ball by moving
- Can cut on a line with scissors
- Holds a pencil correctly in a pincer grasp
- Zips his jacket
Between the third and fourth birthdays, a child changes in significant ways. Watch him closely and you will see that he walks more like a big boy than a toddler. His understanding of the world around him makes a giant leap. Research shows that children under 3 tend to scribble when drawing a person. By 4, most children are skilled enough to draw a stick-figure person.

Changing, too, is the way children play with each other. Cooperative play – joining in with other children — becomes the norm. At the beach or in a sandbox, children are likely to work together to build a city. They may play “family,” with each child taking on a different role. There are likely to be disagreements as children this age begin to play together. Sharing still is in the future. Just remember that young children learn what kind of communication works and what doesn’t when playing with their peers.

You may find that your 3-to-4-year-old talks constantly. This is normal as the preschool years are the prime time for learning speech. Don’t forget that your child is learning to speak by hearing you. Children begin to acquire good grammar and a rich vocabulary in their earliest years.

During this year, most children finally become potty trained. Do yourself a favor and give constant reminders to go to the bathroom.

You may also find it useful to keep a bag of crayons, paper and small toys with you at all times. That way your child will have something to keep him busy and occupied.
1 to 2 Years of Age

This is a busy year. Before your eyes, your baby turns into a toddler who walks, talks, and lets you know exactly how he feels. Toddlers are striving to discover who they are and to exert their independence and control. Of course, the sense of security you have provided for your baby helps your toddler feel confident enough to be independent at times. Very often, however, he will need your smiles, hugs, and comfort as reminders that you are there to protect and love him.

As your toddler strives for independence, offer him safe choices whenever possible, keep his day as predictable as possible (toddlers love routine), and support his individuality. By following his interests, you encourage curiosity and creativity, and you build his self-esteem. He soaks up all of your words and attention.

Toddlers love books, rhyming games, and simple songs. Your child will want to hear the same story over and over again. Repetition – repeating a story – helps him learn. Toddlers also enjoy playing with other children, but it’s too early to expect him to understand what it means to share or take turns. Instead of scolding, try distracting him with something interesting.

Remember, neatness is not part of what it means to be a toddler. Your child is preparing for life when he tries to feed himself or drops his spoon to see where it goes. Put a mat under the high chair to catch messes and provide a safe place to learn these new skills.

BIG KIDS NOW

3 to 4 Years of Age
Physical Development
As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Create lots of safe places in your home where your toddler can explore without any fear of danger.
- Dance to music and clap when your toddler moves to music.
- Help your toddler build block towers.
- Let your toddler help when you’re dressing him and talk about what you are doing.
- Help your toddler finger paint pictures and make forms with Play Doh.
- Provide finger foods at mealtime and encourage your toddler to feed himself.

Typical 2-year-old Milestones

- Walks without assistance
- Dances to music
- Stacks blocks to build a tower
- Helps while getting dressed
- Enjoys playing with finger paints
- Uses a spoon to eat

Think about what you already know about your child and use the information to help you through the terrible twos. Does she require more sleep than most children? Then make sure she gets it. Does she have trouble staying still and paying attention? Don’t make her sit still too long and provide plenty of opportunities for movement and play.

Most importantly, begin to see your child as her own person – an individual who may be quite different than you. Remember that you are your child’s teacher as well as a parent. Model behavior that you want for your child. When things get tough, try not to yell. Remain calm and find a way for both of you to cool off.
Language Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Repeat what your child says correctly. If he says “ju-ju”, you might say, “You want your juice,”
- Read, read, read! Read at least one picture book to your toddler every day and talk about what you see.
- Talk about what is happening. “Here are some blocks. Let’s stack the blocks.”
- When reading books, ask your toddler simple questions about the pictures. Point to what you are talking about.
- Sing action songs that require moving hands and feet.

Typical 2-year-old Milestones

- Uses gestures as well as voice to help communicate
- Puts two-word sentences together to express wants and needs
- Understands sentences and responds to simple questions
- Asks “why” repeatedly to engage adults in conversation
- Likes looking at picture books and reading and will point to pictures
- Enjoys hearing rhymes and songs

Terrible or terrific? (continued)

Do not expect her to always understand or be flexible enough to do what you want – many grownups can’t even do that!

Think about what you already know about your child and use the information to help you through. Does she require more sleep than most children? Then make sure she gets it. Does she have trouble staying still and paying attention? Don’t make her sit still too long and provide plenty of opportunities for movement and play.

Most importantly, begin to see your child as her own person – an individual who may be quite different from you. Remember that you are your child’s teacher as well as a parent. Model behavior that you want for your child. When things get tough, try not to yell. Remain calm and find a way for both of you to cool off. With your guidance and loving support, the “terrible twos” really can be terrific.
An 18-month-old baby and a 2½-year-old toddler are as different as night and day. A child in the in-between months is often said to be going through the “terrible twos.” During these months, your child may have many temper tantrums and often refuse to let you help her with anything. “No!” seems to be her favorite word. On the other hand, her mood can change from sobbing to sunny in the blink of an eye.

If this is happening to you, consider it typical behavior. During these early months of life, your child takes a giant step. This is when she’s learning to talk and communicate with you and others. Her body is changing as her movement becomes better coordinated. Most of the bad behavior you see is directly related to the frustration she’s experiencing. A child may see you tie her shoes with perfect ease – and wonder why she can’t do the same.

So what can you do to help you and your child make it through these sometimes difficult months?

First, try not to become angry. Remember that you are dealing with a very small child, not a small adult.

**Terrible or Terrific?**

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Offer toys that represent real objects in his world such as play telephones to help him learn about being a “big person.”
- Give your toddler help when he needs it rather than pressing it on him too soon or ignoring him.
- Provide lots of good props for make-believe play. Pretending lays the foundation for advanced thinking skills.
- Name and point to your child’s body parts.
- Ask him to find a toy, blanket, or other belongings or ask him to name familiar objects.

**Typical 2-year-old Milestones**

- Understands objects still exist when out of sight
- Can imitate actions of others when that person is no longer in front of him
- Can take on the role of others in pretend play – feeds the doll rather than himself
- Recognizes belongings and toys
- Knows the names of favorite toys and familiar objects
- Refers to himself by name
Social/Emotional Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Provide your toddler opportunities to be with other children, but do not expect or pressure him to share. You can begin to introduce the idea of “taking turns.”

• Distract and divert, rather than saying “no” frequently, and in recognizing that your toddler does not yet have impulse control.

• Establish regular routines to avoid power struggles and to add structure and predictability for your toddler.

• Provide opportunities for your toddler to help with simple household chores and encourage him to do things for himself, such as eating, washing hands, and getting undressed.

• Give your toddler lots of hugs, smiles, and praise.

Typical 2-year-old Milestones

• Enjoys being around other children for short periods of time but often ignores others or chooses to watch. Interactions are typically fleeting, but toddlers learn a lot from their peers.

• Seems more comfortable than before with strangers

• Notices when others are upset

• Wants to help with household chores

• Follows simple rules but may need to be reminded

Toys for Learning

2 to 3 Years Old

• Lots of pretend play materials – washable dolls and stuffed toys with accessories, dress-up materials, housekeeping items, puppets, and transportation toys

• Sand and water play materials

• Wooden and hollow blocks

• Puzzles – 8 to 20 pieces

• Pattern-making materials like pegboards, stringing beads, or color cubes

• Dressing, lacing, and stringing materials

• Lots of picture and pop-up books

• Art materials – crayons, markers, paper, clay/dough, glue, and collage materials

• Musical materials – instruments, recorded music

• Push and pull toys and balls

• Ride-on equipment with pedals

• Climbing equipment with soft surface underneath

A Few Book Suggestions

• All by Myself by Mercer Mayer – a great book about growing independence and all the things a young boy can do

• Here Are My Hands by Bill Martin – celebrates hands, feet, ears, and other body parts

• No Peas for Nellie by Chris Demarest – Nellie would rather eat a big furry spider than eat her peas!

• Quick as a Cricket by Audrey Wood – a wonderful picture book about changing emotions

• Ten, Nine, Eight by Molly Bank – a counting book that starts with 10 and goes down to 1
**Social/Emotional Development**

*As your child’s first teacher, you can:*

- Arrange for your child to play with other children for brief periods.
- Make opportunities for quiet time to play alone but under supervision.
- Provide opportunities to interact with other adults – older brothers and sister, cousins, and grandparents.
- Be predictable and available so your toddler knows she can count on you to help her solve problems and keep her safe.
- Avoid anger and violence at home or on television.

**Typical 3-year-old Milestones**

- Separates with more ease from a parent or caregiver
- Plays side-by-side with other children, occasionally interacting
- Talks to familiar adults easily
- Enjoys playing alone
- Asks for adult help to solve problems
- Shows concern by helping a friend that falls

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**Basic Equipment: 1 to 2 Years Old**

- Large push and pull toys
- Washable cloth toys, dolls, and stuffed animals (make sure all parts are permanently attached)
- Pretend play toys such as dress-up and housekeeping items
- Unbreakable mirrors
- Sand and water play materials
- Small wooden and lightweight blocks
- Simple 4-5 piece puzzles
- Cloth, plastic, or cardboard picture books
- Shape sorters, matching games, containers to nest and stack, pegs
- Art materials such as crayons, markers, paper, finger paints, and Play Doh
- Musical toys – bells, rattles, and lightweight banging instruments
- Texture balls and tunnels
- Low, soft climbing platforms
- Stable ride-on toys propelled by pushing with feet

**A Few Book Suggestions**

- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin a fun, repetitious book filled with animals and colors
- *Lily and Willy* by M. Alexander a book about two friends, one with a doll and one with a teddy bear
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle fun, beautiful book with repetitious words and familiar foods
- *Where Does it Go?* by Margaret Miller toddlers will love figuring out the right and wrong places to put their belongings
- *Zip, Whiz, Zoom!* by Stephanie Calmenson go for a trip to grandma’s house in many different vehicles
Concerns about Learning and Growing

If you are worried about your child’s development in any area – physical, language, intellectual, or social/emotional – talk to your health care provider, your child’s care giver or teacher. You are in a better position than anyone else to sense when something may be wrong. As a new parent, you may have doubts about your knowledge of typical development, but you should trust your intuition and observations.

If you feel you are overly concerned or pushing your child to “catch up”, ask for an evaluation. If your health care provider assures you that all is well, but you continue to think there are problems, ask for a referral for a developmental assessment. Children can overcome many problems of development. The earlier the problem is identified and early intervention is started, the better the outcome.

Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Play games finding colors and shapes around the home, in the grocery store, and at other places you go.
- Play matching games.
- Provide a variety of dress-up clothes and props as well as adequate space for pretend play.
- Label some of her belongings with her name and point out words that she sees often.
- Give your child one and two-step directions, such as “Please go to your room and bring me your shoes.”

Typical 3-year-old Milestones

- Sorts blocks by color
- Recognizes that she has the same number of cars as a friend
- Identifies several shapes and colors
- Talks about similarities and differences, such as hair color
- Is able to repeat rules but unable to follow them consistently
- Enjoys creative activities such as art and music
Language Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Listen and talk to your child about her activities and your own.
• Read at least one book to your child every day.
• Provide music for and sing with your child.
• Point out familiar words like her name and “Stop” on the stop sign.
• Ask your child “who”, “what” and “where” questions about stories and events.

Typical 3-year-old Milestones

• Enjoys being read to and listens attentively
• Uses short sentences to ask and answer questions
• Follows two-step directions
• Recognizes a favorite book by its cover
• Repeats simple rhymes and songs
• Identifies her name on a label
• Scribbles on paper and reports what she wrote
2 to 3 Years of Age

Many changes happen to your child during this year of life. Some – like losing baby fat – are easy to see. Others – like gaining social skills – are more difficult to spot.

A 2-to-3-year-old is much better at reading other children’s and adults’ signals. They show that they know much more about symbols through their dramatic play and their expanding vocabulary. Your toddler will work out simple dramatic play themes like dressing up to go to a party or pretending a block is a telephone. Although she may prefer “parallel” play – sitting happily next to another child and playing with similar toys – you will also see your child playing with another child more often.

There will be conflict because your toddler is concerned about what is mine and what is yours. Having two or more popular toys, if your child spends lots of time with others, may help; however, fights over toys are likely to occur. Don’t despair. For the most part, quarreling is how toddlers start learning the social skills that enable them to get along with others later in life. As your toddler works out these conflicts, she will begin to see that others have feelings too, and she will build a sense of herself as a social being – competent and cooperative.

Your promotion of language skills at this age is very important. Read to your child often. Ask lots of questions. Encourage your child to sing. If your child sees that reading, writing, and talking are important to you, she’s likely to want to imitate you!

Physical Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Give many opportunities for outdoor play.
- Hold your child’s hand while you walk up and down stairs.
- Bounce a large, soft ball back and forth.
- Provide crayons, markers, and paper along with lots of encouragement.
- Encourage self-help skills such as washing hands, brushing teeth, and dressing and undressing, but assist when necessary.

Typical 3-year-old Milestones

- Runs, jumps, and gallops
- Uses alternative feet going up the steps while holding your hand
- Catches a large ball with two hands
- Looks at things without squinting
- Knows how to use a toothbrush
- Buttons and unbuttons large buttons
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As your child’s first teacher, you can:
• Provide your toddler opportunities to be with other children, but do not expect or pressure him to share. You can begin to introduce the idea of “taking turns.”
• Distract and divert, rather than saying “no” frequently, and in recognizing that your toddler does not yet have impulse control.
• Establish regular routines to avoid power struggles and to add structure and predictability for your toddler.
• Provide opportunities for your toddler to help with simple household chores and encourage him to do things for himself, such as eating, washing hands, and getting undressed.
• Give your toddler lots of hugs, smiles, and praise.

Typical 2-year-old Milestones
• Enjoys being around other children for short periods of time but often ignores others or chooses to watch. Interactions are typically fleeting, but toddlers learn a lot from their peers.
• Seems more comfortable than before with strangers
• Notices when others are upset
• Wants to help with household chores
• Follows simple rules but may need to be reminded

1 to 2 Years

2 to 3 Years

Social/Emotional Development

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Terrible or Terrific?

An 18-month-old baby and a 21/2-year-old toddler are as different as night and day. A child in the in-between months is often said to be going through the “terrible twos.” During these months, your child may have many temper tantrums and often refuse to let you help her with anything. “No!” seems to be her favorite word. On the other hand, her mood can change from sobbing to sunny in the blink of an eye.

If this is happening to you, consider it typical behavior. During these early months of life, your child takes a giant step. This is when she’s learning to talk and communicate with you and others. Her body is changing as her movement becomes better coordinated. Most of the bad behavior you see is directly related to the frustration she’s experiencing. A child may see you tie her shoes with perfect ease—and wonder why she can’t do the same.

So what can you do to help you and your child make it through these sometimes difficult months?

First, try not to become angry. Remember that you are dealing with a very small child, not a small adult.

Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Offer toys that represent real objects in his world such as play telephones to help him learn about being a “big person.”
- Give your toddler help when he needs it rather than pressing it on him too soon or ignoring him.
- Provide lots of good props for make-believe play. Pretending lays the foundation for advanced thinking skills.
- Name and point to your child’s body parts.
- Ask him to find a toy, blanket, or other belongings or ask him to name familiar objects.

Typical 2-year-old Milestones

- Understands objects still exist when out of sight
- Can imitate actions of others when that person is no longer in front of him
- Can take on the role of others in pretend play—feeds the doll rather than himself
- Recognizes belongings and toys
- Knows the names of favorite toys and familiar objects
- Refers to himself by name
Language Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Repeat what your child says correctly. If he says “ju-ju”, you might say, “You want your juice,”
• Read, read, read! Read at least one picture book to your toddler every day and talk about what you see.
• Talk about what is happening. “Here are some blocks. Let’s stack the blocks.”
• When reading books, ask your toddler simple questions about the pictures. Point to what you are talking about.
• Sing action songs that require moving hands and feet.

Typical 2-year-old Milestones

• Uses gestures as well as voice to help communicate
• Puts two-word sentences together to express wants and needs
• Understands sentences and responds to simple questions
• Asks “why” repeatedly to engage adults in conversation
• Likes looking at picture books and reading and will point to pictures
• Enjoys hearing rhymes and songs

Terrible or terrific? (continued)

Do not expect her to always understand or be flexible enough to do what you want – many grownups can’t even do that!

Think about what you already know about your child and use the information to help you through. Does she require more sleep than most children? Then make sure she gets it. Does she have trouble staying still and paying attention? Don’t make her sit still too long and provide plenty of opportunities for movement and play.

Most importantly, begin to see your child as her own person – an individual who may be quite different from you. Remember that you are your child’s teacher as well as a parent. Model behavior that you want for your child. When things get tough, try not to yell. Remain calm and find a way for both of you to cool off. With your guidance and loving support, the “terrible twos” really can be terrific.
Typical 2-year-old Milestones

- Walks without assistance
- Dances to music
- Stacks blocks to build a tower
- Helps while getting dressed
- Enjoys playing with finger paints
- Uses a spoon to eat

Physical Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Create lots of safe places in your home where your toddler can explore without any fear of danger.
- Dance to music and clap when your toddler moves to music.
- Help your toddler build block towers.
- Let your toddler help when you’re dressing him and talk about what you are doing.
- Help your toddler finger paint pictures and make forms with Play Doh.
- Provide finger foods at mealtime and encourage your toddler to feed himself.

Think about what you already know about your child and use the information to help you through the terrible twos. Does she require more sleep than most children? Then make sure she gets it. Does she have trouble staying still and paying attention? Don’t make her sit still too long and provide plenty of opportunities for movement and play.

Most importantly, begin to see your child as her own person— an individual who may be quite different than you. Remember that you are your child’s teacher as well as a parent. Model behavior that you want for your child. When things get tough, try not to yell. Remain calm and find a way for both of you to cool off.
1 to 2 Years of Age

This is a busy year. Before your eyes, your baby turns into a toddler who walks, talks, and lets you know exactly how he feels. Toddlers are striving to discover who they are and to exert their independence and control. Of course, the sense of security you have provided for your baby helps your toddler feel confident enough to be independent at times. Very often, however, he will need your smiles, hugs, and comfort as reminders that you are there to protect and love him.

As your toddler strives for independence, offer him safe choices whenever possible, keep his day as predictable as possible (toddlers love routine), and support his individuality. By following his interests, you encourage curiosity and creativity, and you build his self-esteem. He soaks up all of your words and attention.

Toddlers love books, rhyming games, and simple songs. Your child will want to hear the same story over and over again. Repetition – repeating a story – helps him learn. Toddlers also enjoy playing with other children, but it’s too early to expect him to understand what it means to share or take turns. Instead of scolding, try distracting him with something interesting.

Remember, neatness is not part of what it means to be a toddler. Your child is preparing for life when he tries to feed himself or drops his spoon to see where it goes. Put a mat under the high chair to catch messes and provide a safe place to learn these new skills.

3 to 4 Years of Age

BIG KIDS NOW
3 to 4 Years of Age

Between the third and fourth birthdays, a child changes in significant ways. Watch him closely and you will see that he walks more like a big boy than a toddler. His understanding of the world around him makes a giant leap. Research shows that children under 3 tend to scribble when drawing a person. By 4, most children are skilled enough to draw a stick-figure person.

Changing, too, is the way children play with each other. Cooperative play — joining in with other children — becomes the norm. At the beach or in a sandbox, children are likely to work together to build a city. They may play “family,” with each child taking on a different role. There are likely to be disagreements as children this age begin to play together. Sharing still is in the future. Just remember that young children learn what kind of communication works and what doesn’t when playing with their peers.

You may find that your 3-to-4-year-old talks constantly. This is normal as the preschool years are the prime time for learning speech. Don’t forget that your child is learning to speak by hearing you. Children begin to acquire good grammar and a rich vocabulary in their earliest years.

During this year, most children finally become potty trained. Do yourself a favor and give constant reminders to go to the bathroom.

You may also find it useful to keep a bag of crayons, paper and small toys with you at all times. That way your child will have something to keep him busy and occupied.
Temperament

Does your baby wake up from a nap immediately kicking and wanting attention or does she wake up slowly and get upset if you move her too quickly? During the second half of the first year, a baby’s temperament – a child’s natural way of reacting to the world around her – is apparent. Understanding how your baby responds can help you understand what is normal for your child, help you anticipate how your child will react to particular things, and give you tools to assist with your child’s adjustment.

There are nine elements that are used to assess temperament:

1. Activity Level - is she always moving or does she prefer to stay in one place for a while?
2. Distractibility – is she easily distracted or not?
3. Persistence – is she likely to get “locked in” to an activity or can she easily be redirected?
4. Approach and Withdrawal – how does she handle the new and stressful?
5. Intensity – is she loud when she’s excited or upset or is she mild in her reactions?
6. Adaptability – how does she deal with change?
7. Regularity – are her sleep, bowel habits, and rhythms predictable?
8. Sensitivity – does she adjust easily to differences in textures, smells, tastes, and temperature or not?
9. Mood – is she basically positive or negative in her reactions?

Based on your answers to these questions, you may describe your child as active, quiet, or somewhere in between.

Once you understand your child’s temperament, you can anticipate her reactions. If you have a very spirited child, you know that she is not trying to make things difficult for you by her emotional reactions to her “scratchy” clothes – this is simply her natural perceptions. You also know when she is her “usual self” and when she is not. When she’s not, you can make a decision about whether she might be sick or feeling stressed or moving into a spurt in development.

Physical Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Provide areas at home to run, jump, hop, play ball, and ride a tricycle.
- Play catch with your child.
- Let your child choose his clothes and dress himself. Offer assistance if needed.
- Show your child how to cut paper with scissors and paste pictures on paper.
- Provide pencils, markers, and paper for drawing and writing.
- Provide clothes that are easy to manage and give frequent reminders to go to the bathroom.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

- Uses toilet independently
- Moves with balance and control, making quick stops and turns
- Goes up and down stairs alternating feet without holding for support
- Throws a ball with reasonable accuracy and catches a ball by moving
- Can cut on a line with scissors
- Holds a pencil correctly in a pincer grasp
- Zips his jacket
Toys for Learning
6 Months to 1 Year Old

- Rattles with handles, teething rings, and other safe objects baby can chew
- Push and pull and pop-up toys
- Washable cloth toys, dolls, and stuffed animals (make sure all parts are permanently attached)
- Unbreakable mirrors
- Sand and water play materials
- Lightweight blocks
- Simple 2-3 piece puzzles
- Cloth, plastic, or cardboard picture books
- Musical toys – bells, rattles, and lightweight banging instruments
- Texture balls and low, soft climbing platforms

A Few Book Suggestions for your 6-month to 1-year-old

- At Home by S. Tucker – bright pictures of familiar objects
- The Going to Bed Book by Sandra Boyton – a soothing, rhyming story of animals on their way to bed
- Hippety-Hop Hippety-Hey: Growing rhymes from birth to age three by Opal Dunn & Sally Anne Lambert – A collection of rhymes and how to use them with different age children
- Jamberry by Bruce Degan – a playful poem with musical words and fun pictures
- Read Aloud Series by Rosemary Wells – a fun board book series that introduces classic songs like “The Itsy Bitsy Spider”

Language Development
As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Utilize every opportunity to talk – in the car, while shopping, and during dinner.
- Read a favorite book to your child every day.
- While reading to your child, ask questions about the story, point out particular words and letters, and call attention to rhyming words.
- Teach your child songs that are easy to remember.
- Provide pencils, markers, and paper for drawing and writing.

Typical 4-year-old Milestones

- Follows 2 or 3-step directions
- Speaks clearly
- Asks and answers questions
- Enjoys being read to and pretends to read
- Recognizes some letters, especially those in his own name
- Creates rhyming words and nonsense words
- Tells a story about a picture
- Is beginning to write several letters
Social/Emotional Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Introduce new people to your baby from the safety of your arms.
• Talk to your baby when you move out of sight so she knows you are near.
• Learn to distinguish what your baby means by “no.” Is she telling you she doesn’t want something or that she is tired?
• Provide opportunities to be around other children.
• Change your tone of voice and facial expression when expressing approval and disapproval.
• Play simple games with your baby.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

• Shows anxiety at separation from you or when a stranger approaches
• Expresses negative feelings
• Shows interest in other children
• Shows pleasure in new accomplishments
• Enjoys playing games with you and laughs at funny sounds and activities
• Is aware of your approval and disapproval
• Begins to try to feed herself

Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Play games that teach your child colors, numbers, and shapes.
• Provide puzzles, matching games, and patterning materials and work on them with your child.
• Give directions that use positional words. For example, “Look under the sink, and bring me a garbage bag.”
• Play cards or other games that require finding items that are the same and different.
• Sing, dance, draw, and play pretend with your child.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

• Sorts blocks according to shape and color
• Points and counts 5 to 10 objects correctly
• Can match and sort shapes
• Understands several positional words like “above,” “below,” and “under”
• Enjoys finding things that are the same or different
• Notices major changes in the environment
• Enjoys creative materials and activities but may sustain attention for only limited periods of time
**Social/Emotional Development**

As your child's first teacher, you can:

- Provide times for your child to play with other children.
- Take your child to new places with new people.
- Ask your child to help with simple household chores like putting dirty clothes in the hamper.
- Provide clear, consistent rules and predictability to his day.
- Set a good example by sharing some of your belongings with your child.
- Help your child learn to settle arguments with words, without hitting or screaming.

**Typical 1-year-old Milestones**

- Shows more independence and likes to do things by himself but may need support to try new things
- Finds routines very comforting and can become upset when things are done differently
- Enjoys helping with household chores
- Plays well with one or two other children, but also likes to play alone
- Seeks adult help when needed to settle conflicts
- Can follow simple rules with gentle reminders

**Typical 4-year-old Milestones**

- Shows more independence and likes to do things by himself but may need support to try new things
- Finds routines very comforting and can become upset when things are done differently
- Enjoys helping with household chores
- Plays well with one or two other children, but also likes to play alone
- Seeks adult help when needed to settle conflicts
- Can follow simple rules with gentle reminders

**Intellectual Development**

As your child's first teacher, you can:

- Give your baby boxes, buckets and cups for dumping and filling with water, or other safe objects.
- Provide nesting measuring cups, stacking rings and blocks that she can sort by color and size.
- Play games by dropping and hiding toys.
- Play peekaboo.
- Ask your baby to do simple things like blinking your eyes, making animal sounds, or clapping your hands.

**Typical 1-year-old Milestones**

- Puts things in a container then empties it
- Drops objects on purpose
- Tries to build with blocks
- Finds toys that are dropped or that are partially hidden
- Starts imitating simple actions, such as blowing a kiss or petting a dog
Language Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Talk often to your baby. Describe her actions and build on them.
• Ask questions using visual cues and encourage your baby to respond by pointing or reaching.
• Make a sound and encourage your baby to copy you.
• Play simple games that put words with actions and sounds.
• Read short books to your baby as she sits on your lap.
• Show your baby large, colorful pictures and books of animals, toys, and people, while talking about what she sees.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

• Can understand many more words than she can say
• Imitates simple sounds and says short words like “mama” and “dada”
• Shows intense interest in adult language
• Likes being held and read to
• Shows an interest in pictures
• Enjoys songs

Basic Equipment: 3-to-4 Years Old

• Lots of pretend play materials – washable dolls and stuffed toys with accessories, dress-up materials, housekeeping items, puppets, and transportation toys
• Sand and water play materials
• Wooden and hollow blocks
• Puzzles (15–30 pieces) and simple card games
• Pattern-making materials like pegboards, stringing beads, or color cubes
• Dressing, lacing, and stringing materials
• Lots of picture and pop-up books
• Art materials – crayons, markers, paper, clay/dough, glue, and collage materials
• Musical materials – instruments, recorded music
• Push and pull toys and balls
• Ride-on equipment with pedals
• Climbing equipment with soft surface underneath

A Few Book Suggestions

• Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey
  a little girl and a little bear mix up their mothers while gathering blueberries
• Jamil Jamil Went Down the Hill by Virginia Kroll
  wonderful rhymes and illustrations based on Mother Goose favorites with a focus on the African continent
• Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? by N. W. Carlstrom
  a wonderful poem with great illustrations about what a childlike bear wears from morning to night
• Silly Sally by Audrey Wood
  Sally travels to town going backwards and upside down
• Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
  a classic about one boy’s journey of fears and his return to the comforts of home
Music and Your Child

The window of opportunity for learning a musical instrument can begin at age 3 and remain open until age 10. A person can still learn to play an instrument after that period, but it may be harder. Most musical prodigies start learning to play their instrument before age 10. However, don’t go overboard as the parent of a musical toddler. Children this age should not be required to practice for a certain time each day.

Early exposure to music and learning an instrument not only contribute to better musical ability, but also seem to improve the capacity to learn mathematics and develop spatial ability. Studies of preschool children who have been exposed to musical training confirm that early musical training significantly improves spatial intelligence, which is critical for learning mathematics. (Spatial sense is the awareness of how shapes or objects, two or three dimensional, are related. For example, think about the relationship between a city map, which is two-dimensional, and the city itself, which is three-dimensional.)

Brain research has discovered that the part of the brain used in music learning is close to that which is responsible for mathematics, spatial aptitude and logic. This connection may explain why people with musical talent tend to have excellent spatial, and mathematical ability.

Physical Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Provide clean, safe areas on the floor for free movement.
- Be aware that babies develop motor skills at very different rates – an early crawler can be a late walker.
- Make an area with sturdy furniture where your baby can practice pulling upright to a standing position.
- Give your baby blocks, rattles, and toys to hold and drop.
- Offer action toys, such as pull-string toys and busy boxes.

Typical 1-year-old Milestones

- Creeps on hands and knees or begins to walk
- Sits without support
- Holds, explores, and throws objects
- Switches toys from one hand to another
- Feeds herself with finger foods
- Identifies one or more body parts
6 Months to 1 Year of Age

A typically developing baby accomplishes amazing feats during the second six months of life. Legs that once seemed as sturdy as spaghetti usually become strong enough for baby to stand. Hands grab at and get everything in sight. Words – like “mama”, “dada”, and “bye-bye” – flow from your baby’s mouth.

Mobile infants explore everything around them, so it is very important that you make sure their environment is clean and safe and that areas on the floor have room for free movement. Be aware that babies develop motor skills at very different rates - an early crawler can be a late walker. It may help to get down on all fours to see your home from your baby’s viewpoint. Install outlet covers, baby gates, and other safety items as needed.

Your baby loves to imitate you at this age. She is learning so much about how things work and how people behave. She will realize that she is separate from you and may become distressed when you leave or when a stranger appears. A strong, loving relationship gives your baby the secure base from which she can explore her world.

Now is the time to begin teaching your baby the names of objects around her. Remember that she learns by listening to you. Talk and sing to your baby. Play games or sing songs that include her name. Make up your own songs using melodies from such favorites as “Happy Birthday” or “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”.

Not sure what too small means? Use this as a measure:

If a toy is less than 1 1/2 inches wide, don’t let a baby or toddler play with it!

1 1/2
4 Years to 5 Years of Age

The year before kindergarten is a time of transition for a 4-to-5-year-old child. Babyhood is long gone. This age child still lacks the experiences and social-emotional maturity to always make good decisions. It does no good to become angry with a child for doing something incorrectly. Think of it as another learning opportunity for your child. As she becomes better able to control her feelings and interact with others with words, she is gaining invaluable skills in negotiation and self-control.

During this year, your child will continue her phenomenal growth in language ability. You are her primary language model. Show how words, letters, and numbers are connected and how important they are in your life. For example, make a trip to the grocery store a learning experience by asking your child to show you all the red vegetables or find the number 5 on a price sign. When you hear your child make errors (for example, saying “mouses” instead of “mice”), simply repeat it correctly without drawing attention to the mistake. Many of these mistakes will be self-corrected at a later stage.

Children at this age will also have a better understanding of the power of words and may experiment with rejecting others, making verbal threats, and bossing others around. It is important that adults are nearby when children are playing to intervene when words become hurtful and isolate one or more children. Adults should take such isolation seriously and help the isolated child to find her own words to express her feelings to others.

Your child will also be very interested in responsibilities and will enjoy helping with chores. Find meaningful ways that she can help. Small jobs, such as helping to set the table or sorting the socks in the laundry, help teach responsibility as well as intellectual skills.
**Physical Development**

As your child's first teacher, you can:

- Encourage your child to pick out her own clothes and get dressed without help and to help around the house. Praise all efforts – even when clothes don’t match or are buttoned unevenly.
- Prepare and have meals with your child and show her how to use a spoon, fork, and table knife.
- Teach your child safety rules like using 911, looking both ways before crossing a street, and walking inside.
- Provide puzzles, blocks, markers, and pencils to practice fine motor skills.
- Provide opportunities to play outdoors on safe, soft surfaces in activities that encourage running, jumping, and climbing.
- Encourage your child to write her name and draw.

**Typical 5-year-old Milestones**

- Shows characteristics of good health such as actively participating in movement, visual, and hearing activities
- Shows interest in health and safety issues by washing hands, naming healthy foods, and talking about safety rules
- Dresses, cleans up messes, and takes care of toileting needs independently
- Moves forwards and sideways, stopping and starting with balance and control
- Uses eye-hand coordination to accomplish many fine motor tasks such as cutting, constructing, and putting together puzzles
- Uses pencils, scissors, and paint brushes using a mature grasp
- Attempts to write her name
The Brain from Birth to 6 Months

Did you know?

Stress affects brain function. The amount of emotional security and safety a baby feels directly influences brain activity. When someone is afraid or under stress, the brain begins to function on a more basic level, one that promotes survival. It is much like when you react to pain automatically. If a baby is afraid or unsure of his environment, then the brain focuses on building a wiring system for survival and the wiring that allows him to learn complex activities is not formed. The amount of time spent reacting to stress takes away from the window of learning opportunities.

Research has demonstrated that premature babies who are cuddled and held develop much more rapidly than those who are not held as much. Hold, caress, and talk gently to your baby frequently. A baby who feels safe and loved can learn more easily.

Children who grow up in nurturing and stimulating environments are better prepared for school, and the benefits of this help remain with them as students. They usually have higher IQ test scores and are more likely to graduate from high school.

Language Development
As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Read signs and billboards as you travel through the neighborhood, pointing out letters and numbers.
• On a trip to the grocery store, show your child the connection between words and things.
• Help your child get a library card and start using it.
• Read to your child and then ask her to tell you the story.
• Encourage your child to draw pictures and tell stories about the pictures. Write down her words.

Typical 5-year-old Milestones

• Listens attentively and understands the meaning of a message
• Uses longer and more complex sentences and participates actively in discussions
• Enjoys books and develops preferences in certain topics or authors
• Shows understanding of print by pointing to words and “writing” stories from left to right
• Begins to sound out simple words and associate the correct sound with many letters
• Enjoys representing stories through pictures and play and dictates stories about a picture
Toys for Learning

- Rattles with handles, teething rings, and other safe objects baby can chew
- Bells with handles, music boxes, and other toys that make sounds
- Hanging mobiles with colorful objects (mobiles should be out of reach - gradually raise as focus improves)
- Washable cloth toys, dolls, and stuffed animals (make sure all parts are permanently attached)
- Unbreakable mirrors
- Texture balls and play gyms used with supervision
- Cloth, plastic, or cardboard books

A Few Book Suggestions
For Your Newborn to 6-month-old

- Baby Faces Series by Scholastic – photos of babies playing familiar games like peek-a-boo
- Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown – a wonderful bedtime classic with calm, rhyming words
- Baby Animals by K. Warabe – each page has a bright, bold picture of an animal
- Snapshot Series and Touch and Feel Series Board Books by Dorling Kindersley (DK) Publishing – board books filled with bright photos, soft textures, and great pictures

Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Give your child quiet time for coloring, playing or just thinking.
- Ask your child to look at you when you give instructions and to repeat them back to you.
- Encourage your child to play imaginative games like being a teacher or an astronaut.
- Prepare for unexpected events like getting lost in a store – have your child explain to you what she would do and say.
- Practice carrying out a series of instructions. For example, tell your child to put away a toy, brush her teeth and get ready for bed.

Typical 5-year-old Milestones

- Shows interest in problem-solving and represents their thinking using math words like “more,” “taller,” “thicker,” “smallest,” or geometric shapes
- Enjoys making patterns, sorting, and comparing
- Can count objects up to at least 20 and may be able to count by rote up to 100
- Shows interest in measurements like comparing weights or using time concepts
- Enjoys observing, exploring, and describing objects, weather, and living things
- Begins to understand similarities and differences in people, past and present, and places
- Has an understanding of the reasons for rules
Social/Emotional Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Show your child how to get along with other people by setting a good example.
• Help your child develop good problem-solving skills by using negotiation with her regarding an activity. (“You want to go to Tanya’s house, and I want you to clean up your room. Is there a way we can negotiate and work this out?”)
• Provide lots of opportunities to play with other children. Talk about friendships and what you do to stay friends.
• Expect good behavior and praise your child for it. Go light on the criticism if you haven’t explained what’s expected.
• Prepare your child for changes by explaining what will happen.

Typical 5-year-old Milestones

• Shows self-confidence by expressing emotions appropriately and shows a willingness to try new experiences
• Can follow group rules and shows respect for materials and others
• Makes transitions between home and school and activities without anxiety
• Enjoys playing cooperatively with other children, is able to compromise and offer suggestions
• Engages easily with adults and shows a sense of community by helping in group situations
• Uses a variety of problem-solving strategies, but seeks out and needs adult help at times

Social/Emotional Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Smile and laugh with your baby.
• When your baby acts as if he needs attention, find out what’s wrong – is he hungry or does he need a dry diaper?
• Hold and talk to your baby during feeding.
• When your baby feels like playing, sing, play peek-a-boo and other fun games.
• If something upsets your baby, hold and rock him, speak in a soothing voice, and comfort him.
• Respect your baby’s cues. He’ll tell you when he needs a break by turning away or crying.

Typical 6-month Milestones

• Smiles, laughs, or kicks to show pleasure, excitement, or joy.
• Frowns, cries or turns away to indicate sadness, anger, fear, disappointment, or discomfort.
• Reacts to strangers with soberness or fear.
• Can usually be comforted by you or another familiar adult.
• Responds with pleasure when you arrive.
Language and Intellectual Development

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

• Show and tell your baby what makes the sounds he hears – the doorbell, a music box, or even banging a spoon on a plate.
• Talk to your baby face to face so he can see your expressions change.
• Talk and sing to your baby during diapering, dressing, feeding, and other regular routines. Tell him what you are doing – “Now, I’m going to put you in the car seat.”
• Pay attention to the rhythm of your baby’s babbles. When he pauses, you respond and then pause for him to respond. Repeat sounds and words.
• Listen to your baby’s cries remembering that it is the only way he can talk to you. Try to figure out what he needs, give it to him, and comfort him.

Typical 6-month Milestones

• Responds to name
• Smiles or vocalizes to initiate a response from you
• Reaches for and grasps toys
• Babbles using all types of sounds
• Recognizes different sounds, like a sister’s voice.
• Looks to see where something lands after being dropped
• Recognizes mother or father in a crowd

Toys for Learning 1 to 5 Years Old

• Lots of pretend play materials – washable dolls and stuffed toys with accessories, dress-up materials, housekeeping items, puppets, and transportation toys
• Sand and water play materials
• Wooden and hollow blocks, more types of interlocking blocks
• Puzzles (30-50 pieces), card games, and simple board games
• Pattern-making materials like pegboards, stringing beads (smaller sizes), or color cubes
• Dressing, lacing, stringing, and weaving materials
• Lots of picture and pop-up books
• Art materials – crayons, markers, paper, clay/dough, glue and collage materials
• Workbench with woodworking materials (hammer, saw, nails – used with supervision)
• Musical materials – instruments, recorded music
• Push and pull toys and large and small balls
• Ride-on equipment with pedals, wagons, scooters
• Climbing and sliding equipment with soft surface underneath

A Few Book Suggestions for Your 1 to 5-year-old

• Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman
  a wonderful story of being yourself despite what others say
• The Legend of the Poinsettia by Tomie DePaola
  reinterpretation of a beautiful story from Mexico which tells how the poinsettia came to be
• Dr. Seuss books
  children love the funny rhymes and making up their own
• Something from Nothing by Phoebe Gilman
  a retelling of a traditional Jewish folktale proves that it is possible to find something from nothing
• The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant
  a warm look at a family get-together
• Something Good by Robert Munsch
  a fun story about a father’s trip to the grocery store with his children
**Physical Development**

As your child’s first teacher, you can:

- Place your baby in different positions when he is awake and has an adult watching – back, stomach, and sitting with support – to help develop different skills.
- Help strengthen neck muscles during play time with lots of games that involve moving his eyes or placing him on his stomach and encouraging him to lift his head.
- Offer your baby lots of safe things to grab, hold, poke, and wave.
- Talk and sing to your baby from various distances and locations. Use a happy and friendly voice.
- Put your baby on his back and pedal his legs gently like a bicycle.

**Birth to 6-mon.**

**Typical 6-month Milestones**

- Sits up with a little support
- Begins to crawl
- Picks up objects with one hand
- Turns his head at the sound of your voice and watches you move
- Examines his fingers or the toy he’s holding
- Smiles spontaneously

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**Fears**

All children go through periods of fear. It is a normal part of their development. It also gets the parents’ attention and support. Although you cannot stop your child from being fearful, you can help her to take the fears less seriously and learn from them.

Fears usually crop up at periods of new and rapid learning when new abilities can throw a child off balance. As the child learns to handle the fears, she learns to handle the new spurt in learning.

Without realizing it, parents can fuel fears. When your child wakes up crying about monsters in her room, you may remember your own childhood fears and overdo the comfort. Your child may sense your anxiousness and become even more fearful.

A better approach is to stay calm. Listen to your child, let her know that all children have fears from time to time, and reassure her that she will learn to overcome her fears. Allow her to be dependent at times and cuddle with a “lovey,” and also reinforce when she shows bravery. Talk about why she may be afraid (“You are learning something new, and it’s natural to be worried.”)

As your child works through her fears, she will also successfully master her new spurt in development. Your calmness and reassurance will have been a key to her success.
Birth to 6 Months of Age

Your baby is unique. He will grow and develop at his own pace in his own way. Babies have their own awake/sleep cycles, their own preferences for how they like to be held, their own cycles of eating and eliminating, and their own preferences for interaction with you and others. The ways babies use their senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) to learn about their world also differ. Some babies are very sensitive to noises and changes in lighting, and others are not. You know your baby's rhythms and preferences better than anyone else.

Babies love the people around them. They look intently at their mother’s and father’s faces. They delight in language. Long before they can say words, babies coo, then babble, and then make sounds that imitate the rhythm and tone of adult talk. They even quickly learn to take turns during conversations, cooing in response to their father’s words, stopping and waiting for the father to answer and repeating the process.

Babies learn through all of their senses. They can identify their mother through her smell at birth. They put things in their mouths and learn about different shapes, textures, and tastes. Babies move their bodies and soon learn that they can change what they see, hear, or feel by their own activity.

Your baby needs you and the security you provide most of all. The young infant thrives on the warmth and caring of a close relationship. The interactions you have with your child are much more important than the nice toys you provide. When you respond to the smiles, cries, coos, and eye contact of your baby, you are meeting your baby’s needs and he feels secure. Secure infants are able to explore their surroundings, feel good about themselves, and grow into more confident children and adults. A positive relationship with you is essential to help your baby reach his future potential. A baby’s sense of well being comes in part from how you respond to his efforts to communicate. By anticipating your baby’s need for food, rest, and quiet time as well as stimulation, you help him get ready for the world.

Newborn to 5 Years Old

Resource Guide

Unless otherwise noted, the following resources are available from bookstores, public libraries, and school libraries. Your family doctor, pediatrician, county health department, and United Way “Success by Six” program should also have helpful materials.

Books

Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5 (1998). Shelov, S.P. & Hannemann, R. E. (Eds.). New York: Bantam. Produced by the American Academy of Pediatrics, this reference is an excellent resource on children’s health and development. It contains information on each stage of development ranging from “health watch” to suitable toys and activities.


Games to Play with Babies, Games to Play with Toddlers, Games to Play with Two-Year-Olds (1993). Silberg, J. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House. This series of books include a variety of games that foster physical development, coordination, bonding, and other essential aspects of early development.

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child and Sweet Baby: How to Soothe Your Newborn. (1999). Weissbluth, M. New York: Fawcett Books. Two books that teach parents how to soothe their babies to help them sleep better and create healthy sleep habits.


Materials for Families of Students with Exceptionalities and Those Who Work with Families: Annotated Catalog (1996). Greenwood, C. (Available from the Clearinghouse/Information Center, Bureau of Student Services and Exceptional Education, Florida Department of Education, 325 W. Gaines Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400 or 850/488-1879.) This catalog lists nearly 2,000 books, videotapes, and other resources that parents may borrow from the Clearinghouse Information Center.


Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families, The (1997). Covey, S.R. New York: Golden Books. Best-selling author Covey applies his “7 habits” formula for success to the family. He advises families to try, among other things, to set goals and to use problem-solving to avoid or end conflicts.


Toys “R” Us Toy Guide for Differently-abled Kids (1997). Toys “R” Us (Available for free at all Toys “R” Us stores). Designed especially for children with disabilities, this guide is useful for all parents. The description of each toy indicates the thinking, visual, social, and other skills it helps develop.
The information in the Sunrise Skill Builders is designed for parents of all developing infants, toddlers, and preschoolers including parents of a child with special needs. With nurturing and care, children with special needs can make astounding developmental progress, grow up in the family home, and go to school. Most will get a job and eventually live productive lives on their own.

If you are a parent of a child with special needs, you may travel a somewhat different – and sometimes difficult – path when raising your child. There are early intervention resources where you can turn for help.

Many people, including the staff at the hospital where your baby is born, as well as your doctor, can refer you to the appropriate resources. Many parent support groups meet regularly both in large and small cities to share in formation and provide assistance. Through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), many local agencies offer education and therapeutic programs for infants, toddlers, and preschool children as well as their family members. Professionals will work with you and your child with the goal of helping him or her reach the highest possible potential.

Early intervention, regardless of a child’s special challenges, is essential for maximizing development. For more information, contact your school district or call Florida’s Central Directory (1-800-654-4440) and ask for the telephone number of the early intervention program office for your area.

What to Expect During the First Year and What to Expect During the Toddler Years (1996). Eisenberg, A., Murkoff, H.E., & Hathaway, S.E. New York: Workman. These two books tell parents what to expect each month of their infant’s or toddler’s development. They also include a helpful question-and-answer section and descriptions of common childhood illnesses.

Working and Caring (1987). Brazelton, T.B. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. This book follows three families as they deal with such issues as returning to work and choosing child care. Throughout the book, Dr. Brazelton offers practical advice on balancing family and work.


Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five (1997). Leach, P. New York: Knopf. Written from the child’s point of view, this book contains excellent information on how to meet a child’s needs from one of the country’s foremost authorities on children’s development.


Your One-year-old, Two-year-old (1979-1982). Ames, L.B. New York: Dell. This is a series of books sponsored by Yale’s Gesell Institute on young children that describes the child at each year of age and offers recommendations to parents.

Magazines

Child (One year subscription available for $12 from Child, P.O. Box 32720, Harlan, IA 51593-2452.) This magazine includes articles on development, health and safety, multicultural issues, and a variety of features about real problems experienced by real families.

Exceptional Parent (One year subscription available for $36 from Exceptional Parents, 555 Kinderkamack Road, Oradell, NJ 07649 or (201) 634-6550.) This magazine give parents of children with disabilities practical advice on meeting their special need, including a comprehensive resource guide, which includes information about parent organizations and programs.

Parenting (One year subscription available for $9.97 from Parenting, P.O. Box 52424, Boulder, CO 80323-2424.) This magazine’s regular features addresses such issues as healthy growth, social-emotional development, and childhood illnesses. It also contains parent-buying guides.
Scientists have discovered that appropriate nurturing can increase a child’s IQ by 10 or more points. Growth rates in premature babies can be doubled. Grade promotion rates increase, and adjustment to school can be easier. Even children with special needs may perform at grade level in school. Regardless of capacity, all children benefit from nurturing. Clearly, success in school is directly connected with what happens from conception through early childhood.

As a parent and your child’s first teacher, take advantage of the windows of opportunity described in this book. In addition, you will find guidelines for physical, language, intellectual, and social-emotional activities and milestones for typical development in ages birth to 6 months, 6 to 12 months, 1 to 2 years, 2 to 3 years, 3 to 4 years, and 4 to 5 years.

Remember, as your child’s first teacher, you play a vital role in making sure your child is ready to learn all that he or she can.
Parents as First Teachers

Somewhere along the line, you had a favorite teacher. Chances are, you still remember what made him or her so special.

Teachers make an incredible impact on our lives. Their influence often makes a difference in how well we do and what we achieve later in life. Why is this important to you as a new parent when your baby’s first day of school is so far away?

Scientists have explored the brains of babies and young children. They now know that during the first five years of life, the brain has windows of opportunity for learning. Just as an electrician must carefully run wiring throughout a new house during construction, your baby’s brain must wire itself for the future. The brain wires itself in reaction to the world that surrounds it.

In the earliest years, you help your baby’s brain develop properly thorough appropriate nurturing. Nurturing means giving your baby all the things necessary to grow and thrive. In addition to healthy food, nurturing means reading books to your baby, singing songs and giving lots of love and affection. It means playing music, telling stories, holding and making eye contact when you feed your baby. It means a safe place to live and doctor visits at the right times.

Compact Disks

I Am Your Child, I Am Your Child Campaign. (1997). (Available for $5.00 from I Am Your Child, 1010 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20007.) This CD answers questions parents have about their children from pregnancy through the first three years of life. It includes advice based on current research on how a child’s brain develops.

Note: There are numerous educational compact disks aimed at helping preschool-age children practice number and letter skills. They are available at retail stores and the public library.

Internet Sites

Center for Applied Linguistics http://www.cal.org. Materials and resources for preschoolers and families who speak English as a second language

I Am Your Child Campaign http://www.iamyourchild.org. Information on promoting a child’s healthy development, local services for parents, and free materials

Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc. http://www.gate.net/~fnd. Information, referrals, training and individualized assistance for all types of disabilities


National Institutes of Health http://www.nih.gov. Information on childhood diseases, including current research on rare diseases


ParentTalk Newsletter http://www.tnpc.com/parentalk/index.html. Articles by physicians and psychologists written especially for parents

ParentSoup http://parentsoup.com. Discussion groups on issues ranging from divorce to discipline

ParenthoodWeb http://parenthoodweb.com. Advice on parenting from pediatricians and psychiatrists and e-mail responses to questions

Parenting Q&A http://www.parenting-qa.com. Answers to commonly asked questions about parenting and other useful information

Wellness Web http://wellweb.com/index.htm. Advice on such topics as physician selection and medical treatment options
Zero to Three  http://www.zerotothree.org  Extensive information on the physical, intellectual, and social development of infants and toddlers

Baby Center  http://www.babycenter.com  Features information, expertise, guidance, peer support and products to assist parents with all aspects of child-rearing

Breastfeeding.com  http://www.breastfeeding.com  An online resource for nursing mothers

Florida Child Care Resource and Referral Network  http://www.flchild.org  Information on identifying quality child care and locating child care for your child

Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services  http://www.centraldirectory.org  Information for parents that have questions about their child’s development and assistance for finding services for children with special needs

Florida KidCare  http://www.FloridaKidcare.org  Low cost health insurance for uninsured children from birth to age 18 offered by the State of Florida

The National Center for Fathering  http://www.fathers.com  Dedicated to helping men be better fathers by conducting research and developing practical resources especially for dads

National Safe Kids Campaign  http://www.safekids.org  National organization focused on the prevention of unintentional childhood injury, provides lots of fact sheets and information on child safety

Teach More, Love More  http://www.teachmorelovemore.org  An excellent web site for parents provided by the Early Childhood Initiative in Miami, includes a wide variety of good information and resources for parents

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**Telephone Hot Lines**

ChildHelp National Hotline (800)-4-A-CHILD  Advice and referrals from counselors 24 hours a day for parents who have questions or emergencies

Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc. (800) 825-5736 or (727) 523-1130 (Voice and TDD)  Information, referrals, training, and individualized assistance for all types of disabilities

Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services (800) 654-4440  Information and referral regarding diagnostic, treatment, early intervention, or adaptive equipment services for parents with children with special needs

Florida Family Healthline (800) 451-2229 Information, counseling, and referrals for parents of young children, birth to age 5
Dear Parents,

Columba and I are writing this letter to you as fellow parents. Much like you and other parents in Florida, we are committed to being the best parents we can possibly be. Although we have had many wonderful experiences as the Governor and First Lady, nothing has ever surpassed the joy of being a parent.

Columba and I are the proud parents of three wonderful children, George, Noelle, and Jeb, Jr. Although being a parent is a tremendous commitment that can offer challenges, it also offers many rewards. We knew that as our children’s first teacher we had the ability to influence their future success and that our involvement was one of the keys to their readiness for school. In addition to our own personal experiences, we knew that research studies have shown that parents’ involvement with their children, from birth to adulthood increases their children’s achievement and self-esteem. Knowing all of these things impressed us that we needed to be involved with our children and to begin at a very early age.

Please do not miss this “window of opportunity” in your child’s life. Take full advantage of every opportunity that you have as a parent to participate and be an active part of their success. Whether it is reading to your child, telling your child stories, or taking trips to a park or the grocery store, make the time you spend with your child, quality time. Begin now to provide your children with the necessary tools to become the wonderful people that you know and believe they can be.

Sincerely,

Jeb and Columba

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Gerber Information Line Parent Resource Center (800) 443-7237 Advice from parents and grandparents on a variety of non-medical topics and coupons

I Am Your Child Campaign (888) 447-3400 Information on local parenting programs and services as well as a free videotape and CD-ROM

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (800) 695-0285 Information and referrals for all types of disabilities, from birth to age 22

National Parent Information Network (800) 583-4135 Research sent free of charge to callers on subjects ranging from toilet training to preschools

Florida Child Care Resource and Referral Network (888) FLChild Referrals to child care programs and a free packet of information and resources on choosing quality child care
You are your child's first teacher

Sunrise Skill Builders
From birth to 5 years of age

Florida Department of Education