

Developmental Milestones

Birth to One Year

by Natalie J. Dahl, M.S., CCC-SLP

Many people think that communication begins when a child says his or her first words. But in a child's first year of life, there are so many things that happen to prepare a child to communicate with others. These skills can be developed by actively engaging with people and environments. This occurs when a child is touched, spoken to, and shown pictures, objects, places, and people.

The following lists show behaviors that a child will probably exhibit throughout his or her first year of life. Every child is unique, and these lists should be used as a general guide. If a child is not meeting the developmental milestones listed below, it is recommended to consult a speech-language pathologist to determine further action.



Birth to Three Months

- Startles to loud, sudden sounds by crying or jerking body
- Reacts to familiar objects, like a bottle or parents
- Recognizes caregiver's voice and quiets if crying
- Has different cries for different needs (e.g. pain versus hunger)
- Makes cooing sounds with changes in intonation
- Watches objects intently
- Smiles at people



Three to Six Months

- Babbles and coos when alone and with others
- When babbling, uses consonant-vowel syllable (e.g. ba, pa, mi) and changes in intonation to sound speech-like
- Laughs, giggles, and shows pleasure
- Makes sounds when upset
- Moves eyes and/or turns head in direction of sounds
- Reacts when name is spoken
- Responds to changes in tone of caregiver's voice
- Attends to music
- Voice is louder for babbling and crying than before
- Notices toys that make sounds
- Shows delight when bottle or breast is presented

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Six to Nine Months

- Begins to understand and respond to simple words like “no” and phrases like “come here” and “want more?”
- Looks at family members when they are named and looks when caregiver points
- Babbles with rhythmic pattern; two or more syllables are often strung together to sound like words, like “mama,” although meaning is not typically understood yet
- Plays games like “pat-a-cake,” “bye-bye,” and “peek-a-boo”
- Shakes head to show “no”
- Uses sounds and gestures to get others’ attention



Nine to Twelve Months

- Enjoys imitating simple sounds
- Understands words for common items and people, like “cup,” “milk,” “daddy,” “ball;” understands that words represent objects
- Jabbers loudly and will try to “talk” to others with intent
- Listens to stories and/or songs for a short time
- Imitates animal sounds
- Says one or two words, like “hi,” “uh-oh,” “mama,” “dada,” “dog”
- Immediately turns and looks directly at source of sounds

Resources: