



# Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ♥ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

## Developmental Milestones

Have you ever wondered if your child is developing normally? If so, you are not alone. It's common for parents to question whether their child is developing as he should be. Common questions include, "He didn't roll over yet, or say his first word; is this okay?" Or, "my child didn't crawl before he started walking; should I be concerned?"

Child development specialists have identified a typical pattern of growth that children generally follow. This growth pattern includes significant achievements, or developmental milestones, that children reach during each phase of their lives – such as sitting up, or taking a first step. Developmental milestones give a general idea of what to expect; however, it is important to remember that each child is unique and develops at his own pace. It is common to see variations in abilities among children of the same age. As a parent, you know your child best. Monitor your child's growth and if you're concerned about how he is progressing and/or you think there could be a problem with your child's development, talk to your child's doctor and share your concerns.



This newsletter contains developmental milestones to be aware of in infancy, the toddler years, and preschool years. It provides some age appropriate activities you can do with your child to help promote his development during each of these life phases.



### In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child's healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ Age-specific information and suggestions about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ Featured activities for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

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# Infants

Within your baby's first 12 months, he may achieve many developmental milestones – rolling over, babbling, eating solid foods, sitting up, crawling, standing, saying his first words, and taking his first step, to name a few. As your child's first teacher, you play a very important role in his development. During this time, he thrives on positive interactions with you, and learns by engaging in new experiences and practicing his newly developing skills. These opportunities and experiences you provide are much more valuable than any expensive toy or "educational program" you might be tempted to buy.



According to "Milestone Moments" by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the following are some ways you can help your baby's development:

- ♥ Hold, gently touch, smile at, and make eye contact with your baby often.
- ♥ Create predictable routines and follow them throughout the day.
- ♥ Talk, read, and sing to your baby.
- ♥ Pay close attention to what your baby likes and doesn't like.
- ♥ Provide safe opportunities for your baby to play and to explore his surroundings.

## Activity for Infants: *Floor Time*

Materials: A soft blanket, *futon*, or beach towel

What to Do:

1. Place your baby on a soft blanket, futon, or towel on the floor to give him a chance to look at new objects or different parts of his environment.
2. Change his position or the position of the blanket, futon, or towel on the floor after a few minutes.
3. Notice what your baby is interested in. If he looks at something, talk about it. For example, "Do you see the fan? I'll turn it on. It spins. Do you feel the cool air?"
4. Wiggle your hand to get your baby's attention.
5. Slowly "walk" your fingers up and around his leg.
6. End the "walk" with a gentle tickle or a soft poke on his tummy.



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

# Toddlers

Toddlers enjoy their new ability to move around and love to explore their surroundings. You may notice that your child is more mobile and is expanding his physical abilities as he learns to throw, run, jump, and climb. He is starting to use words and simple sentences to communicate, and he may start to initiate conversations with others. Reading books or having story time might be an exciting event that he looks forward to. Your



toddler may exhibit more independence — making simple choices for himself, insisting on doing things on his own, or saying “no” frequently.

Here are some ways you can help your toddler’s development:

- ♥ Encourage your child to help with simple chores at home, like picking up toys and helping with making dinner. Praise your child for being a good helper.
- ♥ Give your child attention and praise when he follows instructions. Limit the amount of attention you give to undesirable behavior.
- ♥ Teach your child to identify and say the names of body parts, animals, and other common objects that he encounters.
- ♥ Encourage your child to say a word that names an object instead of pointing to it. If your child can’t say the whole word (e.g., “milk”), give him the sound of the first letter of the word (“m”) to help.

## Activity for Toddlers: *Fun with Play Dough*

### Materials:

- Flour, water, salt
- A plastic measuring cup
- A mixing bowl
- A plastic container with a cover

### What to Do:

1. Show your child how to measure the ingredients: two cups flour, one cup water, and one cup salt.
2. Let him help you mix the ingredients together in a mixing bowl. Add a little more flour if it’s sticky.
3. Help him flatten the play dough on a clean, smooth surface.
4. Show your child how to knead the dough, then how to roll and shape it. Let him discover different ways to work with the dough.
5. As he plays with the play dough, use words to describe what your toddler is doing or how the dough feels. For example, “You pinched off a little piece. Look at how you stretched it to make it longer.”
6. When he is done playing, store the play dough in an airtight plastic container.

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)*





# Preschoolers

At this age, preschoolers are gaining greater control of their bodies and fine-tuning their physical skills. You may notice your child is starting to hop, skip, and climb stairs with ease. He is also mastering other skills such as drawing and dressing himself. He may ask a lot of “why” questions as he seeks to learn more about his expanding world. He experiments with more complex concepts such as size (big and small) and quantity.

You may find that your child wants to spend more time with you and is interested in how things

work. Take advantage of this interest and appeal to his curiosity by introducing new activities you can do together, such as preparing snacks for meals.

*(Continued on page 6)*



## Activities for Preschoolers: *Alphabet Pretzels*

### Materials:

- ½ cup white or wheat flour
- 1 tablespoon yeast
- ½ cup warm water
- 1 teaspoon honey
- ½ teaspoon table salt
- 1 egg, beaten

- Coarse salt or Hawaiian salt (optional)
- Mixing bowl and spoon
- Measuring cups and measuring spoons
- Pastry or basting brush
- Waxed paper

### What to Do:

1. Dissolve yeast in warm water in a mixing bowl.
  2. Add the honey and table salt.
  3. Add the flour and mix well, forming the dough into a ball.
  4. Place dough on a floured surface and knead for five minutes.
  5. Break off small pieces of dough and place them on waxed paper. Help your child to roll the dough into strips and shape them into the letters in his name.
  6. Place the letters on a cookie sheet and let them rise for 40–60 minutes.
  7. About 10 minutes before you’re ready to bake the pretzels, preheat the oven to 425°F. (Keep your child safely away from the oven.)
  8. Brush the pretzels with beaten egg and sprinkle them with coarse salt, if desired.
  9. Bake the pretzels for 10 minutes.
  10. Remove pretzels from the oven and let them cool. Be sure that all hot items are out of your child’s reach.
- After the pretzels have cooled, point to and sound out the letters to your child’s name together with him. Try to form other words using the letters of his name or identify other words that start with each of the letters. Enjoy your pretzels and talk about how it tastes. Add condiments such as mustard to experience a different flavor.

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)*



## How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development.

### Physical Development

- ♥ learn through senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching
- ♥ use and strengthen small muscles, e.g., facial muscles, fingers, hands, and toes

### Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ develop a close bond with you
- ♥ feel important and good about themselves

### Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language
- ♥ increase observation, listening and understanding skills, and attention span

### Cognitive Development

- ♥ develop creativity and imagination
- ♥ recognize math concepts such as numbers, sizes, shapes, sequences, volume, measurement, and time



## Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you do this recipe with your child, show him how to safely handle the items and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Make sure to wash your hands and your child's hands before and after preparing any food.

### Fruit Slush

Adapted from: <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW/resources/FamilyTimeInKitchen.pdf>

#### Ingredients:

- 1 (12 oz.) can frozen 100% juice concentrate
- 1 (12 oz.) can water
- 3 cups ice

#### Equipment:

blender

#### Instructions:

1. Have your child place the juice concentrate, water and half of the ice into the blender. To prevent spills, watch to make sure that the ingredients do not pass the top line of the blender.
2. Blend the ingredients together and gradually add the remaining ice. If the slush is too thick, add more water.
3. Discuss with your child how the ingredients mix together and ask your child to describe what he is seeing and hearing.
4. Enjoy the fruit slush together and talk about how it tastes.



## Preschoolers *(continued from page 4)*

Allowing your child to do things with you helps him feel good about himself and gain confidence in his growing abilities.

Here are some ways you can help your preschooler's development:

- ♥ Expose your child to other children his age. For example, go to play groups, story times, or introduce him to children in the neighborhood.
- ♥ Talk about a variety of topics, including your daily events, what he is feeling and experiencing, and important people in his life.
- ♥ Play games with your child, but also allow time for him to play freely, without structured activities.

## Community Resources

**The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>) has Developmental Milestones charts and other resources to use as a guide for your child's development.

**Family Doctor** (<http://familydoctor.org/>) is a site with health information for the whole family. Go to the Parents & Kids page and search for topics such as toilet training.

**Nutrition Education and Wellness** "Family Time in the Kitchen" ([www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW/resources/FamilyTimeInKitchen.pdf](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW/resources/FamilyTimeInKitchen.pdf)) emphasizes that meal times can be an opportunity for family bonding and learning. It features kid-friendly recipes that everyone can do together.

## Suggested Books

Recommended by Read to Me International [www.readtomeintl.org](http://www.readtomeintl.org).  
For more books, visit the public library [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).



### Infants and Toddlers

***What Does Baby Say? A First Lift-the-Flap Book*** by Begin Smart

This colorful, interactive board book encourages language development, holding baby's attention with questions which are answered by lifting the flap on each spread.

***What Does Baby See?*** by Begin Smart

This wordless board book is illustrated in the first three colors a baby sees — black, white, and red. It encourages language development and promotes attachment, trust, and self-esteem — the building blocks for future success — as readers snuggle with their babies to "read" the book.

### Preschoolers

***The Kissing Hand*** by Audrey Penn

This award-winning book assures children that separation does not need to be feared. The stickers at the end reassure children that their parent's love is with them even though they may be apart. The message of the book is "You are loved," and children learn a secret way to always remember and "carry" their parent's love with them.

***Owen*** by Kevin Henkes

Almost everyone knows children who have had attachments to childhood things. In this charming story, Owen is attached to his favorite fuzzy yellow blanket, which he needs to give up before he starts school. Although Owen has difficulty being apart from his blanket, his parents come up with a solution that satisfies everyone.

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