

Developmental Milestones & Widely Held Expectations at 2-3 Years

(Taken from Child Development: A Primer by Ingrid Crowther & NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice)

Note: Experts say every child develops differently. These Developmental Milestones are designed to give a general idea of how a child of this age may develop.

Gross Motor Development (large muscles of arms & legs)

- **Balancing**--stands on one foot for few moments before losing balance; falls less frequently when walking or running; squats with balance for long periods of time; walks on balance beam for a few steps
- **Walking/Running**—has a more upright posture; navigates smoothly around obstacles
- **Climbing**—climbs onto chairs or platforms then turns around to sit; towards end of period can coordinate simultaneous arm & leg movements and may alternate feet when climbing up or down stairs, ladders, etc. (one foot each step)
- **Jumping**—jumps down from short heights; achieves higher on-the-spot jumps
- **Sledding**—brings sled up hill, sits on sled & is pushed &/or pushes themselves to descend
- **Ball skills**—throws ball underhand; catches ball with two arms outstretched more often; kicks ball while running and continues to chase & kick it
- **Using Riding Toy Pedals**—by end of 2nd year may start to use pedals for propulsion
- **Sledding**—brings sled up hill, sits and is pushed and/or pushes off to descend

Fine Motor Development (small muscles of thumb & fingers)

- **Manipulation**—increased dexterity moving away from using palmer (in the fist) grasp to pincer (thumb & finger) or tripod grasp (thumb & 2 fingers); holds things in one hand while drinking from cup, etc; easily fits pegs into pegboard; laces a cord shoelace through holes in a lacing toy or places beads on a wire; peels off stickers; takes items apart and fits them together (Duplo, etc); experiments with children's scissors
- **Artwork**—produces wider variety of scribbles, with lines and smaller controlled marks; generally still uses whole arm rather than moving wrist.

Cognitive Development (thinking skills)

- **Symbolic Function**—pretend play is dominated by the type of objects provided (eg: dishes lead to pretend eating, toy animals lead to animal role playing); uses one object to represent another if similar in shape (eg: stick for sword)
- **Attention Span**—increased attention span for areas of interest; may return to an activity over several days
- **Cause & Effect**—has greater knowledge of cause & effect (eg: that a toy must be wound up to operate, squeezing a toy will make a noise, etc)

- **Sorting**—sorts like objects into categories (eg: all cars in one group and all animals in another); starts to sort into more finite categories (all dogs in one group and all cows in another)
- **Concept Development**—develops simple concepts of time (eg: before, after, bedtime); grasps simple spatial concepts (eg: up, down, near, far); identifies quantities generally (eg: lots, more); points to/matches/names some colors and shapes; rote counts to 5 or 10 + (but may miss or insert incorrect numbers)
- **Memory**—remembers words/people/events as demonstrated by rapid vocabulary growth and the naming of familiar adults, peers and objects; repeats sequences of familiar routines
- **Problem Solving**—solves simple problems (eg: how to get down from a climber or how to find a toy that is out of sight); enjoys age-appropriate puzzles, matching games, etc.

Communication & Language Development

- **Language Usage**—uses language not just noises to get attention; uses three or more words together, asks many questions (eg: ‘Why?’ “What’s that?”); uses plurals (eg: dolls, cats) but generalizes grammatical rules to create words (mices, foots); starts to talk about events that have occurred in the past; may stammer
- **Vocabulary Size**—average number of words at 2 yrs is 311; 2 ½ is 574; 3 ranges 2,000- 4,000
- **Reading & Writing**—names pictures in books; looks at books; asks/enjoys to have book read out loud; interested in alphabet as it relates to their name; may start to use writing-like scribbles & letter-like forms

Social/Emotional Development

- **Emotional Control**—uses hugs & kisses to comfort others; egocentric and finds it difficult to wait for something or to take turns; grabbing, biting & hitting decrease as verbal competence increases; may show increased fearfulness (dark & monsters)
- **Peer Interaction**—continues to be possessive of toys & finds it hard to share; observes other children play and may imitate that play; begins to see the benefits of peer relationships
- **Pride in Accomplishments**—shows pride in accomplishments
- **Making of Choices**—easily distracted but towards the end of the period shows increased ability to focus & sustain interest in self chosen activities & materials; enjoys age-appropriate group games/activities led by educator
- **Self-Help Skills**—the ability to do things for themselves continue to expand & become refined so that by the end of the period is able to do the following with verbal prompts &

minimal assistance: wash own hands; use the toilet; independently dress (needing help with starting zippers, doing buttons or tying shoes); eat with a spoon & drink with a cup; help to clean up toys, snack/lunch items

- **Self-Regulation/Coping Skills**—increasingly able, with advanced warning, to change activities or deal with changes in the regular routine with little fuss; able to lie quietly on his/her bed
- **Identity**-- progressively sees themselves as separate from parents/adults with own unique individuality (a sign of growth & maturation), which leads to testing of rules & limits

Creative Development

- **Water, Sand & Playdough**—explores & experiments with the sensation of the material; enjoys filling and dumping activities; flattens and cuts playdough with cookie cutters, or may start to roll into shapes such as snakes & balls
- **Music & Movement**—enjoys listening to music, moves rhythmically, and imitates others' movements to music; starts to sing simple songs; uses rhythm instruments to “play along” to music or a song; uses different body parts to mark a simple beat (eg: clapping, stamping, jumping)
- **Art**—enjoys experimenting with different art mediums (markers, paint, glue, etc.)
- **Blocks/Construction toys**—builds in rows & towers; may make enclosures
- **Dramatic Play**—available objects dictate the type of dramatic play that occurs (eg: using construction vehicles in the sand may lead to digging, road making or driving activities)