

Motor Skill Development in Young Children

Infants 0-6 months

- Reflexive grasp at birth, voluntary grasp at 3 months
- Arm movements are random and not controlled.
- Will watch the movement of their hands and bring them to their mouth.
- Will begin to hold objects in their hands and reach for toys using both arms.

Infants 6-12 months

- Begins to grasp and hold onto objects.
- Pokes at objects using their pointer finger.
- Pincer grasp develops (using index finger and thumb to grasp objects)
- Transfers objects between hands (beginning of crossing midline skills)
- Explore textures and sensory objects with their mouth.

Young Toddlers 12-24 months

- Can build a tower 2-3 blocks high.
- Paints with whole arm movements, shifts hands, makes strokes.
- Scribbles with crayons on paper.
- Waves goodbye.
- Bangs objects together (beginning of bilateral coordination)
- Puts small objects in a container.

Toddlers 2-3 years

- Manipulates clay or playdough.
- Makes snips on paper with scissors.
- Turns single pages of books.
- Can stack a tower 9 blocks high.
- Can pick up small objects with pincer grasp (index finger and thumb).
- Imitates circular, vertical, and horizontal strokes.
- Paints with some wrist action, makes dots, lines, circular strokes.



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**A Scribble
or a
Masterpiece**

**During the first year of life, a
child's brain will double in size.
This development helps babies
learn to control their bodies and
movement.**

The Brain: Birth to Three

1. The brain can create more synapses (connections) than it needs.
2. The synapses that are used a lot become permanent.
3. The synapses that are not used frequently are eliminated.
4. Every waking hour of a baby's life, new synapses are formed through verbal and physical interactions with family and other caregivers.
5. The majority of the brain's basic wiring occurs in the first few years of life.
6. A baby's surroundings begin to influence the cells within the brain from the start at

By 12 months, an area of the brain called the hippocampus- referred to as the seat of memory and located at a point in the brain roughly between the ears – has matured enough for toddlers to recall actions and events that occurred a few hours, or even a day, earlier. Within the 12-18 month range, the ability to recall another person's earlier action and repeat it some time later, called "deferred imitation," becomes well established. This means that toddlers have the potential to learn from what they have seen others do. You may demonstrate the use of a particular toy, such as banging on a musical instrument or placing a peg in a hole. While the toddler may not repeat the action immediately, he may display it in some form at a later time. in the day or week.

Developing a Sense of Touch

Touch is a major way a young child explores the world.

Be open to new activities and different ways to plan, and use play materials to engage in pretend play.

1. Sensory writing- writing with yogurt, whipped cream, applesauce, rainbow pudding, or other edible items will provide touch experiences.
2. Household items- have pots and pans accessible for safe exploration opportunities.
3. Texture touching- use daily routines such as washing laundry and allow your baby to feel the contrasting surfaces like bumpy towels, smooth sheets, etc.
4. Squirt bottles- add 1 ½ cups of water to several squirt bottles. Add 8 drops of food coloring to each. Encourage your child to squirt designs on paper outdoors or on the sidewalk or driveway.

Focus on the process of play, not the final product. It is nice to see a painted picture, but the most important learning takes place during the process of painting.