

Early Learning and Development Guidelines

# Young Infants

## Birth to 11 Months



*“Every night after coming home from working nine hours a day, I greet my 4-month-old daughter with smiles and hugs, whispering, ‘Mommy loves you.’ She kicks her feet in excitement and smiles from cheek to cheek, making baby gestures. I respond, imitating her sounds, ‘Goo, goo.’ I carry her in my arms, we sit on the rocking chair, and I begin to read her Goodnight Moon. She listens, pats every page and pulls the book toward her mouth. Being a mother is an amazing experience. She depends on me to guide her along this amazing journey of life.”* Alicia Prieto-Fajardo

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND HERE

First there are some questions for families to reflect on. They offer a springboard for families, caregivers, child care professionals and teachers to talk together about fostering each child's growth and learning.

Next under each area of development, the Guidelines are in two columns. "Children may . . ." provides examples of things that children this age are learning to be, do and know. "Ideas to try with children . . ." offers examples of things families, caregivers, child care professionals, teachers and other caring adults can do to help children learn and develop in healthy ways. Different families may encourage learning and development in different ways.

These Guidelines are a resource. They are not an exhaustive guide to child development, and are not intended to be an assessment tool, a curriculum or a tool to collect data on children.

# What families already know about their children

## Five questions to reflect on

1. What has your child done that surprised you with a new ability, skill or understanding?
2. How does your child go about trying something new?
3. What does your child really enjoy doing?
4. How does your child respond to new situations or challenges?
5. Who among your family and friends does your child enjoy spending time with? What are some of the things that person does with or teaches your child?

*“Parents are their child’s first and most important teachers, and what excites me most about the new Washington Early Learning Guidelines is the potential to share information with parents—in a way that they can really use—about what children can do and learn at different stages of development. The Guidelines celebrate the extraordinary diversity we are fortunate enough to have in our state and are meant to be a guide for ALL children. I believe the Guidelines will help create and strengthen partnerships between parents and educators, making it possible for more children to enter school ready to succeed and to continue succeeding throughout their elementary years.”*

Nina Auerbach, CEO, Thrive by Five Washington



# 1. About me and my family and culture

## ↓ Children may ...

### Family and culture

#### Young Infants develop trusting relationships with familiar adults

- Show preference for primary caregivers.
- Smile at, make sounds, and move body to interact with caregivers. Smile, wave or laugh to respond to friendly adults.
- Respond to caregiver’s face, words and touch.
- Cry to express or relieve self of a variety of feelings; cry may increase when caregiver listens and responds to child’s need.
- Feel safe releasing feelings (such as by crying, trembling, etc.) in the presence of a familiar adult.
- Cry when caregiver is not in sight or cling to caregiver when strangers are nearby.

### Self concept

- Respond with movement and/or sounds when someone speaks the child’s name.
- Explore own toes and fingers.
- Repeat an action to get more effect (such as wriggling in the crib to shake a mobile hanging above, smiling and cooing to get the caregiver to smile back).
- Show pride (face “lights up”) at own behavior.

## ↓ Ideas to try with children ...

### Family and culture

#### Young Infants develop trusting relationships with familiar adults

- Hold, cuddle, hug, smile and laugh with your child.
- Have simple “conversations” with your child to let him/her know what you are doing and what is happening.
- Respond promptly and consistently to your child. Help and comfort your child when he or she is upset or stressed. Identify source of distress (such as hunger, diaper, noise) and try to remedy it. Listen with warmth and caring.
- Respond in an understanding way to your child’s sounds, moods, gestures and facial expressions.
- Stay close to your child in a new setting to be reassuring.
- Involve your child in family and cultural traditions, rituals, routines and activities.

### Self concept

- Use your child’s name when you talk together.
- Communicate with your child about what the child is seeing, hearing and doing, if appropriate.
- Give the child toys and objects to shake, push, poke, etc.
- Show respect for the child and everyone in the environment.



*“By giving our daughter the chance to express herself through art, we are showing her that creativity is a form of expression and freedom.”*

Justin Busby

## ↓ Children may ...

### Self management

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**Young Infants efficiently release tension through babbling, crying, trembling, yawning and laughing.**

- Cry, make sounds and move body to let caregiver know of the need for help, attention or comfort.
- Respond by relaxing or crying harder when adult pays attention. Grow more confident when encouraged to release feelings.
- Use sounds, facial expressions, and body movements to connect with others and with objects in the environment.
- Hold caregiver's attention by babbling, looking at face, etc.
- Look away at times to control the timing of the interaction.

**Young Infants begin to calm their own feelings.**

- Use adult to reassure self by cuddling, grasping adult's finger, etc.
- Comfort self by cooing, babbling, or by clutching, sucking or stroking a favorite blanket or other item.

**Young Infants use a trusted adult as a secure base from which to explore**

- Move away from adult by rolling, scooting, etc.; look back at adult.
- Look for caregiver's response in uncertain situations or when trying something new.
- Wait briefly to touch or eat something in response to caregiver's direction.

**Young Infants begin to notice routines**

- Participate in repeated routines, such as lifting arms toward caregiver to be picked up.

### Learning about learning

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**Young Infants observe and explore their surroundings**

- Explore own body (such as reaching for toes); explore the face and body of caregivers (such as touching ears, hair, hands).
- Show preference for certain toys and activities.
- Show interest in exploring, feeling and looking at objects new to the child.
- Use all senses to explore.
- Begin to act bored (cry, fussy) if activity doesn't change.
- Start interactions with familiar adults and children (such as by smiling or making sounds).
- Start to show the ability to briefly hold in mind a memory of people and things that are out of sight.

## ↓ Ideas to try with children ...

### Self management

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**Young Infants efficiently release tension through babbling, crying, trembling, yawning, and laughing.**

- Let the child express a variety of feelings including distress; respond to the child's feelings, and comfort with closeness and soothing words.
- Be aware of cultural differences in expression of feelings.

**Young Infants begin to calm their own feelings.**

- Notice and help the child learn to calm by holding caregiver's fingers, sucking fingers or holding the blanket.
- Continue to respond to child's distress with closeness, soothing words and listening.
- When infant looks away, wait until he or she looks back to continue talking and playing.

**Young Infants use a trusted adult as a secure base from which to explore**

- Provide a safe and interesting environment for the child to explore.
- Stay nearby while child explores to give child the feeling of security.

**Young Infants begin to notice routines**

- Provide consistent routines for daily activities such as for naptimes.

### Learning about learning

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**Young Infants observe and explore their surroundings**

- Play with your child every day.
- Introduce materials and activities; give the child time to try different things.
- Watch to see what materials and activities hold your child's attention, and what the child enjoys.
- Limit the child's time spent in infant equipment (car seat, carrier, or other containers).
- Take your child outdoors; talk about what the child is hearing, seeing and feeling.

## 2. Building relationships

### ↓ Children may ...

#### Interactions with adults

- Smile at adults.
- Respond to contact with adults, and later, initiate, by using vocalization, facial expressions and body movement.
- Enjoy playing with adults (shown by happy gestures, smiles, gurgles, etc.).

#### Interactions with children

- Smile at other children.
- Initiate contact with other children with vocalizations, facial expressions and body movements.
- Enjoy interacting with other children (shown by happy gestures, smiles, gurgles, etc.).

#### Social behavior

- Notice others' physical characteristics (such as by patting a sibling's hair).
- Notice emotional expressions of adults and other children. Imitate facial expressions.
- Play social games.

### ↓ Ideas to try with children ...

#### Interactions with adults

- Play turntaking games with your child, such as peek-a-boo.
- Give your child a chance to see faces and emotions; name the emotions, if appropriate.

#### Interactions with children

- Give the child opportunities to interact with other children at home, at friends' or relatives' homes, or in small groups.
- Guide your young infant's interactions with other children by helping with watching, and gentle touching.

#### Social behavior

- Read or tell stories about families and friends.
- Help your child learn to identify family members, friends and their relationships and roles.
- Show your child how to be kind to others and treat others with respect.

*“Watching a child grow and change is one of the greatest joys in life. Having the Guidelines will let you know if kids are on the right track and what to expect next. It will also help you with ideas of appropriate activities for the child. Relax and enjoy the moment.”*

Sue Winn, Family Childcare Provider



# 3. Touching, seeing, hearing and moving around

## ↓ Children may ...

### Using the large muscles (gross motor skills)

- Lift head; lift head and chest with weight on hands, when lying on stomach.
- Hold head upright and steady without support.
- When lying on back, bend at hips to lift feet, reach with hands and arms, move head side to side; begin to notice own hands.
- Roll from back to side, back to front and front to back with increasing control.
- Move to explore (roll, crawl, scoot, creep).
- Sit with support; and later, sit without support.
- Stand with support.

### Using the small muscles (fine motor skills)

- Grasp caregiver's fingers.
- Play with own hands by touching them together.
- Reach for toys, objects and bottles with both hands.
- Transfer toys or objects from hand to hand.
- Reach, grasp and release objects.

### Using the senses (sensorimotor skills)

- Turn toward sound and touch.
- Focus eyes on near and far objects; recognize familiar people and things at a distance.
- Follow moving things with eyes.
- Explore things nearby with mouth and hands.
- Actively play, exploring and interacting with what's nearby.

## ↓ Ideas to try with children ...

### Using the large muscles (gross motor skills)

- Provide safe places and times for your child to move around.
- Give your infant "tummy time" while playing with toys or with you.
- Put toys or position yourself just out of reach to encourage rolling, scooting, creeping and crawling.
- Sing songs and play games that involve big movements with arms and legs.

### Using the small muscles (fine motor skills)

- Give your child toys or safe objects to reach, grasp, shake and drop.
- Play finger plays and hand games with your child.

### Using the senses (sensorimotor skills)

- Gently rock, swing or bounce your child in your arms or in a rocking toy.
- Give your child toys or safe objects with different textures, shapes, colors, smells and sounds; name the textures, shapes, colors, smells and sounds.
- Go outside to explore or for playtimes



*“When my son first came to me as a foster child at 9 months old, he was not crawling or eating solid food. He had been sick most of his life as a result of being around constant smoking. And he had been held or confined in a car seat most of the time to keep him away from the drug paraphernalia that was in the apartment. But with the freedom to move around, healthy food, regular sleep, and loving care from me and an excellent child care provider, he soon started to crawl. Then he really came into his own and was walking at 15 months. He’s now 10 and has received awards every year in elementary school for running the fastest and longest for his grade.”*

Adoptive single parent

# 4. Growing up healthy

## ↓ Children may ...

### Daily living skills (personal health and hygiene)

- Soothe self and fall asleep.
- Participate in dressing.

### Nutrition and health

- Suck and swallow.
- Connect breast or bottle with getting fed.
- Help caregiver hold the bottle.
- Chew and bite; eat finger foods.

### Safety

- Prefer caregiver over a stranger.
- Stop/wait when caregiver says “no” or gives a nonverbal cue for alarm/danger.

## ↓ Ideas to try with children ...

### Daily living skills (personal health and hygiene)

- Give your child a safe and comfortable place to sleep; put infant to sleep on his or her back.
- Practice cleanliness routines, such as washing hands before and after meals, swabbing gums, etc.
- Keep regular nap and mealtime routines.
- Give child opportunity to take off socks or mittens.

### Nutrition and health

- Learn and follow your baby's hunger cues for when to feed and when to stop, so he or she drinks an appropriate amount of breast milk or formula. Avoid feeding on a strict schedule.
- Introduce healthy strained foods, then finger foods, as recommended by the child's health care provider. Avoid offering juice or sweetened beverages before 12 months of age.
- Understand the typical signs of illness in a child, and respond with help and soothing; get outside help if needed.
- Call the Family Health Hotline, 1-800-322-2588, to get connected to health resources in the community. Take your child to a health clinic or provider on a regular basis for well-child visits, including immunizations, and developmental, vision and hearing screenings. See also Child Profile, <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/childprofile/default.htm>
- Avoid television, DVDs, computers, tablets or other screen viewing by the child. (See American Academy of Pediatrics, <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;128/5/1040>)

### Safety

- Explain when things are too hot or too cold to touch safely.
- Supervise and guide your child's activities.
- Provide a safe environment (such as keeping choking hazards and poisons out of reach, covering electrical outlets) and avoid asthma triggers (cigarette smoke, mold); provide clear guidance to stop unsafe behavior.
- Understand the risk factors and signs of child abuse and neglect. Respond appropriately. (See <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/What-to-Know-about-Child-Abuse.aspx>, and DEL's Child Care Center Licensing Guidebook, Section 7)



*“As an early learning professional and now a parent, I value literacy as a foundational element of life-long learning. We incorporate informal and intentional daily activities for our four-month-old to support language, such as story time, exploring books, describing routines and labeling emotions. It is amazing to see his interest in books and to watch his skills develop around language and literacy development.”*

Angela Abrams, parent and Early Learning Quality Improvement Coordinator,  
Educational Service District 105

## 5. Communicating (literacy)

Note: Communication skills begin before birth. Language is an important part of cultural identity. Language skills begin in the child’s home language(s). Tribal children may be learning their tribal language at the same time as a home language. Bilingual and bicultural families may speak more than one language at home.

### ↓ Children may ...

#### Speaking and listening (language development)

- Show interest in speech of others.
- Cry, coo and make other sounds.
- Cry in different ways depending on whether hungry, in pain or tired.
- Imitate adult facial expressions.
- Respond when the child’s name is called.
- Vocalize, squeal, laugh and gesture to communicate.
- Babble, try to talk and copy sounds.
- Begin to say consonant sounds, such as “m,” “b.”
- Pay attention to what adult is looking at or pointing to.
- Use a variety of sounds to express emotions.
- Reach and point to communicate.
- Follow simple requests.
- Take turn in “conversation” or vocal play with adults.
- Say first word.

#### Reading

- Imitate sounds of language.
- Show awareness of the sounds of spoken words by focusing on the person speaking.
- Explore books’ physical features (such as by chewing on cloth books).
- Focus attention for a short period of time when looking at books.
- Begin to participate in stories, songs and fingerplays.

#### Writing

- Watch when someone writes or draws.

### ↓ Ideas to try with children ...

#### Speaking and listening (language development)

- Talk with the child, read and tell stories, sing songs.
- Play games and fingerplays that involve taking turns.
- Let your child know that you are interested in his or her sounds, gestures and vocalizations by responding and having “conversations.”
- Describe everyday objects and activities; talk about what you are doing during daily routines; play naming games (such as “Where’s \_\_\_?” Or “What’s that?”), when appropriate.
- Introduce new words in context by saying what your child sees, hears, smells, touches and tastes, when appropriate.
- Repeat questions or directions as needed; help your child understand by using gestures.
- Expand on your child’s language. For example, when he or she says “ba-ba,” say “yes, it’s your bottle.”
- Support use of the home language.

#### Reading

- Look at and read storybooks together; look at picture books, books with repetition; use board, plastic or cloth books.
- Play games with words and sounds.
- Show the child how to look at the pictures and turn pages of the book; don’t worry if he or she turns many pages at a time.
- Use storybooks from child’s own culture and other cultures.
- Read and/or tell stories many times.

#### Writing

- Let your child watch you write or draw. Give the child the chance to scribble.



# 6. Learning about my world

## ↓ Children may ...

### Knowledge (cognition)

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- Pay attention to sights and sounds.
- Look for dropped object.
- Gaze at and track an object with his/her eyes.
- Act to trigger a pleasing sight, sound or motion, such as kicking at a mobile; repeat actions many times to cause a desired effect.
- Show curiosity about things and try to get things that are out of reach.
- Imitate sounds; imitate actions, such as clapping hands, pushing a toy.
- Search for a hidden object.

### Math

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- Play with toys and things of different sizes and shapes.
- Anticipate “more” during routines.

### Science

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- Use the senses (mouthing, watching, grasping, reaching) to get information and explore what’s nearby.
- Use more than one sense at a time, such as when looking at, feeling and shaking a rattle.
- Repeat behaviors to figure out cause and effect. For example, a toy released high always goes down (law of gravity).
- Enjoy filling containers and dumping them out.
- Show interest in animals and pictures of animals.

### Social Studies

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- Show interest in people.
- Notice daily routines.

### Arts

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- Gaze at pictures, photos and mirror images.
- Show interest in sounds, tones, voices, music, colors and shapes.
- Notice and move to music and/or rhythms.

## ↓ Ideas to try with children ...

### Knowledge (cognition)

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- Give your child safe experiences with cause and effect, such as shaking rattles to get a sound, winding up a toy to get music, and balls to roll.
- Play games with your child that show that things that are hidden are still there, such as peek-a-boo, hide and seek, and putting your keys in your pocket.
- Respond to your child’s signals that he or she need help with a toy or activity.
- Play back-and-forth games with sounds and actions; include imitation.

### Math

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- Count out toys or objects; name colors and shapes.
- Use words and play games that involve “more,” “again” or “another.”
- Offer blocks or similar toys to play with, and items with sizes, such as nesting cups or spoons.
- Provide different safe shapes and objects to offer a stimulating environment.

### Science

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- Offer objects that invite the use of more than one sense, such as a toy that rolls and makes music.
- Sing songs and look at books about nature and animals. Take your child outdoors and talk about what you see and hear.
- Give your child the chance to safely explore water, sand or dirt, and to use the senses with things in nature (such as feeling grass).
- Give your child the chance to interact safely with animals.
- Give your child the chance to fill containers, such as boxes and bowls, and empty them.

### Social Studies

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- Take your child on walks or visits in the neighborhood and community. Introduce your child to places you go often and trusted people.

### Arts

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- Give your child opportunities with a variety of music and rhythms.
- Describe what your child sees, hears, feels and smells, if appropriate.
- Give your child a chance to use hands to explore water, soap suds, grass, or similar textures.

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See also, Parent Help 123 on infant child development, <http://www.parenthelp123.org/infants/child-development>, and more in the Information Resources section.

# DIFFERENCES IN DEVELOPMENT

As a parent, you know your baby best.

You notice things such as how and when your baby smiles, sits up, learns new words, walks, or holds a cup. What you are seeing is how your child is growing through different stages of development.

Every baby grows and develops at his or her own pace. It is important to talk with your child's healthcare provider at every visit about the milestones your baby has reached and what to expect next. It is also important to tell your baby's healthcare provider if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay. Please make sure to discuss your concerns if:

## **By age 2 months, your baby:**

- Doesn't respond to loud sounds
- Doesn't watch things as they move
- Doesn't smile at people
- Doesn't bring hands to mouth
- Can't hold head up when pushing up, when on tummy

## **By age 4 months, your baby:**

- Doesn't watch things as they move
- Doesn't smile at people
- Can't hold head steady
- Doesn't coo or make sounds
- Doesn't bring things to mouth
- Doesn't push down with legs when feet are placed on a hard surface
- Has trouble moving one or both eyes in all directions

## **By age 6 months, your baby:**

- Doesn't try to get things that are in reach
- Shows no affection for caregivers
- Doesn't respond to sounds around him or her
- Has difficulty getting things to mouth
- Seems very floppy

- Doesn't make vowel sounds (such as "ah," "eh," "oh")
- Doesn't roll over in either direction
- Doesn't laugh or make squealing sounds
- Seems very stiff, with tight muscles

## **By age 9 months, your baby:**

- Doesn't bear weight on legs with support
- Doesn't sit with help
- Doesn't babble ("mama," "baba," "dada")
- Doesn't play any games involving back-and-forth play
- Doesn't respond to own name
- Doesn't seem to recognize familiar people
- Doesn't look where you point
- Doesn't transfer toys from one hand to the other

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children be screened for general development at the 9-month visit. Ask your child's healthcare provider about your child's developmental screening.

## For more information:

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Talk to your child's health care provider. If you have concerns about your child's development, you may also call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588. This hotline can tell you about free developmental screening and other services, and give you the name of the Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) for your local area. The FRC can help you find out if your child needs further evaluation.

For concerns about children birth to three years old, you can find information from the state Department of Early Learning's Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program at <http://www.del.wa.gov/esit> or go to [http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/esit/docs/PrescreenChart\\_English.pdf](http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/esit/docs/PrescreenChart_English.pdf) for more information on developmental milestones.

The Family Health Hotline can also provide information about immunizations, state-sponsored health insurance, and other resources: [www.withinreachwa.org](http://www.withinreachwa.org). Parent Help 123 offers information on infant development, screening and other resources: <http://www.parenthelp123.org/infants/child-development>

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-800-CDC-INFO or at [www.cdc.gov/concerned](http://www.cdc.gov/concerned) also offers information. See CDC's *Milestone Moments* brochure: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents\\_pdfs/MilestoneMomentsEng508.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/MilestoneMomentsEng508.pdf)

## EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

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Early intervention services during the first years can make a big difference in a child's life. Washington's Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program coordinates a statewide system of early intervention services for children birth to age 3 with developmental disabilities and/or developmental delays. Eligible infants and toddlers and their families are entitled to individualized, high-quality early intervention services in accordance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C.

**What parents and caregivers can do:** If you have concerns about your child's development, a Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) will work with your family to determine if your child is eligible for Part C services. If eligible, the FRC and team, including you, will create an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to deliver services. This is a team effort, with the FRC, parents, caregivers and early intervention providers all working together. The FRC and team, including you, will work together to create a transition plan to move out of early intervention into other services when your child turns 3 years old. Some children will be eligible for preschool special education services offered by the local school district under Part B of the IDEA. For other children, community-based services may be available.

To find the name of the FRC in your local area, call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588. For more information on development, click on [http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/esit/docs/transition\\_English.pdf](http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/esit/docs/transition_English.pdf)

