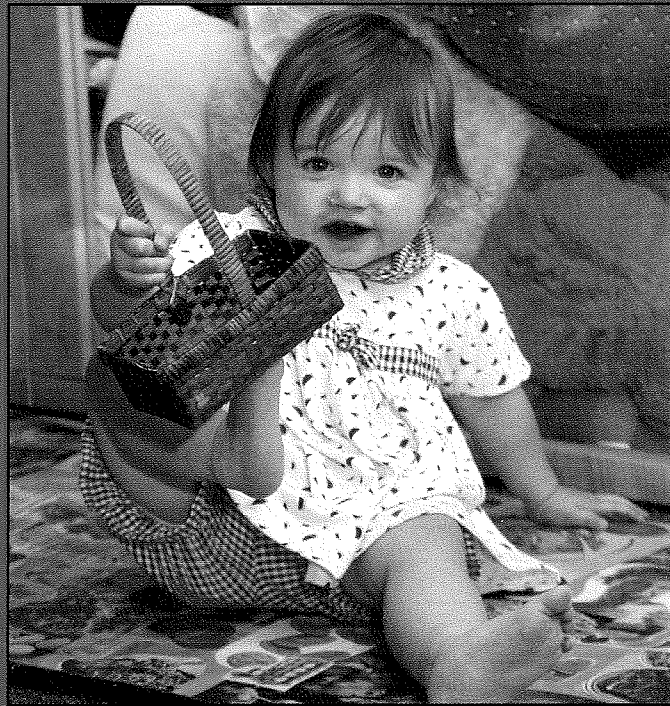




The Gifts of Infancy — Development From Birth to Three



What Are Developmental Milestones?

Developmental milestones are the predictable steps along the way in each person's sequence of growth. While the general course of development is universal, each individual's development is affected by his or her unique characteristics, abilities, and opportunities.

It is important to know about development so that we can provide the opportunities that will meet children's needs appropriately. For instance, if a provider knows that a child can imitate actions, he or she can play little games like "pat-a-cake."

Active Learning

- ◆ Materials
- ◆ Manipulation
- ◆ Choice
- ◆ Communication and language
- ◆ Adult scaffolding (support)

Active Learning: Materials

- ◆ Infants and toddlers learn with all their senses.

- ◆ Infants and toddlers need a variety of materials to explore. These can be
 - Everyday household items

 - Natural materials

 - Soft things

 - Easy-to-grasp objects

 - Materials that make noise

 - Things you can climb on

 - And of course, people!

Active Learning: Manipulation

- ◆ Infants and toddlers need many opportunities to explore the environment using all of their senses.
- ◆ When they take action, they use all of their senses, including their hands, feet, eyes, nose, and mouth.
- ◆ Infants and toddlers enjoy feeling textures, watching patterns of light and shade, listening when people sing or speak, smelling food cooking, and putting everything they can grasp into their mouths.

Active Learning: Choice

- ◆ Even young infants make simple choices, all day long: what to look at, when to nurse, when to stop and gaze, whether to reach for a rattle or a ball.

- ◆ As infants grow to toddlerhood, the choices become more complex. They decide how to eat a cracker, when to take off a bib, what book to look at, and which comfort item to take for naptime.

- ◆ By making choices, young children gain a sense of self-control.

Active Learning: Communication and Language

- ◆ Infants and toddlers communicate what they know.
 - They cry when they need nourishment or comfort.
 - They move their hands and feet in excitement.
 - They coo at familiar people and playthings.
- ◆ Eventually, infants babble, and then take on the inflections of human speech. Before long, they begin to talk.
- ◆ Providers should pay particular attention to children's actions, gestures, sounds, and expressions.
- ◆ Providers can support language development by supplying language and by encouraging children to participate in communication.
- ◆ Infants and toddlers want to convey meaning.
- ◆ Supportive adults understand that infants and toddlers communicate in their own way, and that they understand language long before they can reproduce it themselves.

Active Learning: Adult Scaffolding (Support)

- ◆ Trusting relationships are at the foundation of healthy human development.
- ◆ Young children who are able to form positive, trusting relationships with parents and caregivers are able to summon the courage to explore their world.
- ◆ Providers should take an interest in and enjoy the child's actions and play.
 - The provider can communicate with warmth and acknowledge the child's feelings of either delight or frustration.
 - The provider can talk with the child about what will happen next, encourage the child to solve problems, and respond to the child's signals and communication.

Providers Are Crucial to Healthy Development

- ◆ Have a trusting relationship.
- ◆ Take interest in and enjoy children's actions.
- ◆ Acknowledge an infant's joy or frustration.
- ◆ Supply language and encourage their participation in communication.
- ◆ Take turns in play.
- ◆ Encourage infants and toddlers to solve problems encountered in play.
- ◆ Talk about what will happen next.
- ◆ Use their caregiving routines (feeding, diapering, etc.) to support development.
- ◆ Provide infants with interesting materials to handle and play with, and simple choices to make.

Activities for Infants and Toddlers

When thinking about activities for infants and toddlers, consider the following:

- ◆ How will children use or manipulate the materials, or solve problems with the materials?
- ◆ What choices will children be able to make with the materials?
- ◆ How will the children communicate or use language during this play?
- ◆ How will you support the child's play?