

Child development involves the biological, psychological and emotional changes that occur in human beings between birth and the conclusion of adolescence. Some age-related development periods include: new born (ages 0-4 weeks); infant (ages 4 weeks - 1 year); toddler (ages 12 months-24 months); pre-schooler (ages 2-5 years); school-aged child (ages 6-13 years); adolescent (ages 14-19).^[3]

The development of children can differ between each individual. This can be a result of genetic and environmental factors, but most commonly involves an interaction between the two.

New born and Infant

In the first year, babies learn to focus their vision, reach out, explore, and learn about the things that are around them. Cognitive, or brain development means the learning process of memory, language, thinking, and reasoning. Learning language is more than making sounds ("babble"), or saying "ma-ma" and "da-da". Listening, understanding, and knowing the names of people and things are all a part of language development. During this stage, babies also are developing bonds of love and trust with their parents and others as part of social and emotional development. The way parents cuddle, hold, and play with their baby will set the basis for how they will interact with them and others.

Toddler

During the second year, toddlers are moving around more, and are aware of themselves and their surroundings. Their desire to explore new objects and people also is increasing. During this stage, toddlers will show greater independence; begin to show defiant behaviour; recognise themselves in pictures or a mirror; and imitate the behaviour of others, especially adults and older children. Toddlers also should be able to recognise the names of familiar people and objects and form simple phrases and sentences. During this stage, toddlers should be able to follow two- or three-step directions, sort objects by shape and colour, imitate the actions of adults and playmates, and express a wide range of emotions.

Pre-schooler

As children grow into early childhood, their world will begin to open up. They will become more independent and begin to focus more on adults and children outside of the family. They will want to explore and ask about the things around them even more. Their interactions with family and those around them will help to shape their personality and their own ways of thinking and moving. During this

stage, children should be able to ride a tricycle, use safety scissors, notice a difference between girls and boys, help to dress and undress themselves, play with other children, recall part of a story, and sing a song.

School-aged children

Middle childhood brings many changes in a child's life. By this time, children can dress themselves, catch a ball more easily using only their hands, and tie their shoes. Having independence from family becomes more important now. Events such as starting school bring children this age into regular contact with the larger world. Friendships become more and more important. Physical, social, and mental skills develop quickly at this time. This is a critical time for children to develop confidence in all areas of life, such as through friends, schoolwork, and sports. For older aged school children, this is an important time for children to gain a sense of responsibility along with their growing independence. Also, physical changes of puberty might be showing by now, especially for girls.