

Your Growing

A silhouette of a family of five jumping joyfully against a sunset sky. The family consists of a woman on the far left, a young girl, a young boy, another young girl, and a young boy on the far right. They are all holding hands and jumping in the air, with their hair and clothes blowing in the wind. The background is a bright orange and yellow sunset sky with some clouds.

For parents, the first five years of a child's life seem to fly by. To help monitor and chart those many developments, look for these milestones.

By Tracy A. Mozingo

Babies grow up so quickly. If you blink, you may miss an important milestone, like the first time your son opens and closes his hands or when your baby daughter tries to imitate the face you're making.

The first five years of a child's life are filled with major developmental milestones — physical, mental, and emotional. During this time, children become unique individuals who master a wide range of skills — from walking to making conversation. For parents, this very special time offers opportunities to help their children fulfill their potential.

“It's important for parents to learn how to play with their children, to notice the little things that happen on a day-to-day basis,” says Tanya Remer Altmann, M.D., FAAP, editor-in-chief of the book, *The Wonder Years: Helping Your Baby and Young Child Successfully Negotiate The Major Developmental Milestones*.

Child



Finding ways for your baby to flourish physically, mentally, and emotionally involves marking the milestones he or she reaches during this period. Walking, expressing wishes and desires effectively (verbally and nonverbally), handling physical objects — all of these accomplishments come relatively quickly to a developing baby.

“It’s so hard to think back and remember every precious thing your first baby learned,” says Dr. Altmann, “and that can include when they were supposed to learn them.”

Movement Milestones

For example, “movement” milestones at certain ages are always an important area for parents to understand and follow. But Dr. Altmann cautions parents not to obsess on each individual milestone.

“While the developmental milestones will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect as your child gets older, don’t be alarmed if his development takes a slightly different course,” she says. “In other words, you can’t always compare your child to the toddler next door and expect their skill sets to be exactly the same.”

Regardless of the each milestone’s course, parents can participate in their children’s development at each stage along the way. ●

The First Year

- Reaches sitting position without assistance
- Crawls forward on his belly
 - Assumes hands-and-knees position and begins crawling
- Gets from sitting to crawling or prone (lying on stomach) position
- Pulls self up to stand
- Walks holding on to furniture
- Stands momentarily and possibly walks two or three steps without support

Parent Participation: Play “come and get it.” Hold an interesting toy just outside of your baby’s reach and praise him when his hands stretch out toward it.

The Second Year

- Walks alone
- Pulls toys behind her while walking
- Carries large toy or several toys while walking
- Begins to run
- Stands on tiptoe
- Kicks a ball
- Climbs onto and down from furniture unassisted
- Walks up and down stairs holding on to support

Parent Participation: Give your baby an old purse full of neat objects. Let her pull everything out and put it back in. Good practice for unloading shopping bags!



The Third Year

- Climbs well
- Walks up and down stairs, alternating feet
- Kicks ball
- Runs easily
- Pedals tricycle
- Bends over easily without falling

Parent Participation: Play “ring around the roses” and clap while listening to music.

The Fourth Year

- Hops and stands on one foot up to five seconds
- Goes upstairs and downstairs without support
 - Kicks ball forward
 - Throws ball overhand
- Catches bounced ball most of the time
- Moves forward and backward with agility

Parent Participation: Let your child be active. Give him plenty of outside play time and jump into the fun with him!



The Fifth Year

- Stands on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- Hops, somersaults and maybe even skips
- Swings, climbs
- Becomes more skilled at putting on clothes

Parent Participation: Play dress-up. Collect old sunglasses, dresses, shoes, clothing, and jewelry in a large box and let your child’s imagination run wild. A favorite superhero or starlet may emerge from your cast-offs.

