

WHY AND HOW SHOULD LEARNING FOR PRESCHOOLERS CONTINUE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Developmental Milestones & Skills for 2-year-olds

At a Glance

- Two-year-olds typically learn many new physical skills.
- Toddlers begin to engage in more pretend play.
- As kids approach age 3, they usually can understand most of what you say to them.

At 2 years old, kids are officially toddlers. It's a big year for growth. But very young kids develop at different paces, so it can be hard to compare them along the way.

Check out these developmental milestones to get a better idea of which skills are typically expected of a 2-year-old.

Physical milestones

This year, kids may not only grow by leaps and bounds, but also learn how to leap and bound. Expect to see big things happening with the big muscles (gross motor skills), as well as development in small muscle movement (fine motor skills).

Most 2-year-olds learn to do things like these by their third birthday:

Gross motor skills

- Walk, run, and start learning to jump with both feet
- Pull or carry toys while walking
- Throw and kick a ball; try to catch with both hands

- Stand on tiptoes and balance on one foot
- Climb on furniture and playground equipment
- Walk upstairs while holding the railing; may alternate feet

Fine motor skills

- Start brushing own teeth and hair
- May pull pants up and down
- Turn on the faucet and wash hands
- Build a block tower of at least four blocks
- Start practicing snaps and zipping up (if you start the zip)
- Hold utensils and crayons with fingers instead of a fist, although at this age the grasp still may not be quite right

Cognitive milestones

Toddlers start thinking in new ways, learning new skills, finding new techniques to solve problems, and showing their independence. By the end of this year, kids typically:

- Enjoy more complicated pretend play, like pretending that a box is a spaceship or assigning people characters when playing
- Remember and talk about things that happened in the past, using phrases like “the other day” or “a long time ago”
- Do three- to four-piece puzzles
- Group toys by type, size, or colour
- Recite favourite books and nursery rhymes with you
- May follow two-step directions, like “take off your coat and hang it up”

Language milestones

By the time children are approaching their third birthday, they usually understand much of what you say to them. They’re also talking more. At this age, kids can typically:

- Understand the words for familiar people, everyday objects, and body parts

- Use a variety of single words by 18 months and speak in sentences of two to four words by 24 months (may combine nouns and verbs, like “mommy eat”); have a vocabulary of 200+ words by 36 months
- Repeat words they hear
- Start asking “What’s that?” and “Why?”
- Begin using plurals (*dogs*) and basic pronouns (*me, you*)

Social and emotional milestones

Two-year-olds typically start to be more independent and more interested in other kids. But not having the words to express themselves can be frustrating. By the end of this year, kids will likely do things like this:

- Mimic what other kids and adults do and say, as well as *how* they say it
- Be happy to play near, if not with, other kids
- Start to realize they can do things without your help
- Disobey more than before, doing things they’re told not to do, just to test what happens
- Have tantrums when frustrated
- Show increasing separation anxiety by 18 months, which typically eases a lot by 24 months; become increasingly independent and aware of themselves as their own person between 24 and 36 months

Reading Skills

- Look at pictures and name familiar items, like dog, cup, and baby
- Answer questions about what they see in books
- Recognize the covers of favourite books
- Recite the words to favourite books
- Start pretending to read by turning pages and making up stories

Writing Skills

- Hold crayon in clenched fist
- Understand that crayons are used for making scribbles

Math Skills

- Understand that numbers mean “how many” (using fingers to show how many years old they are)
- Begin reciting numbers, but may skip some of them
- Understand words that compare or measure things (*under, behind, faster*)
- Match basic shapes (triangle to triangle, circle to circle)
- Explore measurement by filling and emptying containers
- Start seeing patterns in daily routines and in things like floor tiles

All kids develop at their own rate, and some take more time to gain skills than others. But if they aren’t meeting the majority of these milestones as age 3 approaches, it’s a good idea for parents and caregivers to talk with their child’s health care provider.

Reference:

Morin, A., n.d. *Understood - For learning and thinking differences*.

[online] Understood.org. Available at:

<<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/signs-symptoms/developmental-milestones/skill-development-from-birth-to-age-5>> [Accessed 23 April 2021].