

GROWING & DISCOVERING

A MILESTONE CHECKLIST

Birth through three years



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Notice Progress. Stay Curious.

Milestones give us a starting point.

I want parents to notice the small discoveries that happen during everyday play. What is your child trying? What feels easier? How do they move, communicate, and connect with you?

Use this as a conversation guide.

The age pages include selected milestones most children can do by that age, based on CDC guidance. Check skills you have seen your child use. Leave a box blank when you have not seen it yet, and bring questions to your pediatrician. A blank box is a reason for conversation, not a diagnosis.

Make room for your child's story.

Between age checkpoints, use the younger age page. For children born more than three weeks early, use corrected age through age two: subtract the weeks born early from their actual age. Your care team can help you apply this.

This is a parent observation tool, not a complete developmental checklist or a standardized screening test. The CDC checkpoints reflect skills reached by at least **75%** of children by each listed age.

The First Weeks

BIRTH TO ABOUT 2 MONTHS

Begin with getting to know each other.

In the newborn weeks, I focus on comfort, connection, and opportunities to move. These are observations to share with your care team, rather than newborn milestone deadlines.

- ☐ I notice movement in both arms and both legs.
- ☐ I notice brief moments of looking toward my face.
- ☐ I am learning the cues for hunger, comfort, and a break.
- ☐ I offer short, awake, supervised floor-play moments.
- ☐ I have shared feeding, movement, or comfort concerns with the pediatrician.

Down Before Up

Give your baby space to move on their back, explore supported side-lying, and try brief tummy time while awake and closely supervised. Always place your baby on their back for sleep.

By 2 Months

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Lifts their head during tummy play.
- ☐ Moves each arm and leg.
- ☐ Lets their hands open for brief moments.

Sounds & connection

- ☐ Makes little sounds in addition to crying.
- ☐ Responds to a loud sound.
- ☐ Settles with your voice or when you pick them up.
- ☐ Shares a smile when you talk or smile at them.

Looking & learning

- ☐ Pays attention to your face.
- ☐ Follows you with their eyes as you move.
- ☐ Pauses to look at a toy for a few seconds.

What I also notice

I notice whether my baby looks comfortably toward both sides. A persistent head preference or tilt deserves a conversation.

My notes / questions: _____

By 4 Months

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Keeps their head steady while you hold them upright.
- ☐ Props on forearms during tummy play.
- ☐ Keeps hold of a toy placed in their hand.
- ☐ Swings an arm toward toys and brings hands to their mouth.

Sounds & connection

- ☐ Coos with vowel-like sounds.
- ☐ Answers your talking with sounds of their own.
- ☐ Turns toward your voice.
- ☐ Smiles for your attention and gives little chuckles.

Looking & learning

- ☐ Studies their own hands.
- ☐ Opens their mouth at the sight of a breast or bottle when hungry.

What I also notice

I look for hands coming toward the middle and participation from both sides of the body, rather than one side doing all the work.

My notes / questions: _____

By 6 Months

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Rolls from their belly onto their back.
- ☐ Presses up through straight arms during tummy play.
- ☐ Uses their hands for support when sitting.

Sounds & connection

- ☐ Shares back-and-forth sounds with you.
- ☐ Makes squeals and playful raspberry sounds.
- ☐ Recognizes familiar people and laughs.

Play & learning

- ☐ Reaches for a toy they want.
- ☐ Explores safe objects with their mouth.
- ☐ Enjoys looking at their reflection.
- ☐ Closes their lips to signal they have had enough food.

What I also notice

I watch how rolling happens and whether both sides participate. Supported sitting should allow play without persistent stiffness or collapse.

My notes / questions: _____

By 9 Months

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Sits steadily without being held.
- ☐ Moves into sitting independently.
- ☐ Passes an object between their hands.
- ☐ Gathers food toward them with their fingers.

Sounds & connection

- ☐ Babbles repeated syllables, such as ba-ba or ma-ma.
- ☐ Raises their arms to ask to be picked up.
- ☐ Responds when you say their name.

Play & learning

- ☐ Searches for a toy that has fallen out of view.
- ☐ Taps two objects against each other.
- ☐ Enjoys peek-a-boo and may react when you leave.

What I also notice

I also notice floor exploration: turning, rolling, pivoting, and attempts to move toward toys. Getting into sitting matters as well as staying there.

My notes / questions: _____

By 12 Months

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Uses a stable support to pull into standing.
- ☐ Moves along furniture while holding on.
- ☐ Uses thumb and index finger together to pick up food.
- ☐ Takes a drink from an open cup you are holding.

Sounds & connection

- ☐ Uses a special name for a parent.
- ☐ Waves to say goodbye.
- ☐ Briefly pauses or stops in response to no.

Play & learning

- ☐ Places an object inside a container.
- ☐ Finds a toy after watching you hide it.
- ☐ Joins in a familiar interactive game.

What I also notice

The first birthday is not a deadline for independent walking. I look at transitions, movement on the floor, and cruising in both directions.

My notes / questions: _____

By 15 Months

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Makes a few independent steps.
- ☐ Feeds themselves some foods using their fingers.

Words & connection

- ☐ Attempts one or two words beyond parent names.
- ☐ Points when they want something or need assistance.
- ☐ Looks toward a familiar object you name.
- ☐ Responds to a direction supported by your words and gesture.

Play & learning

- ☐ Piles two small objects on top of one another.
- ☐ Experiments with using familiar objects as intended.
- ☐ Brings you something they want to share.
- ☐ Shows affection and copies other children's play.

What I also notice

I notice confidence and balance as steps emerge. A child who always leads with one side or struggles to shift weight may benefit from support.

My notes / questions: _____

By 18 Months

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Walks independently.
- ☐ Gets onto and off a chair or couch independently.
- ☐ Experiments with scribbling.
- ☐ Practices with a spoon and drinks from an open cup.

Words & connection

- ☐ Attempts at least three words beyond parent names.
- ☐ Carries out one simple direction without a gesture.
- ☐ Points to share an interesting discovery.

Play & learning

- ☐ Copies a familiar household activity.
- ☐ Uses a toy in simple play, such as pushing a car.
- ☐ Explores away from you while checking that you are nearby.

What I also notice

I look at comfort moving between the floor and standing. Keep close supervision around climbing, stairs, and furniture.

My notes / questions: _____

By 2 Years

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Runs and kicks a ball.
- ☐ Walks up several steps, with support if needed.
- ☐ Uses a spoon to eat.
- ☐ Uses one hand to hold an object while the other works.

Words & connection

- ☐ Combines at least two words in a phrase.
- ☐ Identifies at least two body parts when asked.
- ☐ Points to a named picture in a book.

Play & learning

- ☐ Experiments with toy buttons, switches, or knobs.
- ☐ Combines toys in play, such as a dish and pretend food.
- ☐ Notices another person's distress and checks your face in unfamiliar situations.

What I also notice

I notice how my child slows down, turns, and recovers balance. Frequent falls, persistent toe walking, or avoiding movement deserve discussion.

My notes / questions: _____

By 30 Months

Child: _____ Date: _____

Movement & hands

- ☐ Leaves the ground with both feet in a jump.
- ☐ Twists lids or other objects with their hands.
- ☐ Removes some simple clothing independently.
- ☐ Separates book pages to turn them individually.

Words & connection

- ☐ Uses approximately 50 words.
- ☐ Combines words with an action word.
- ☐ Names pictured objects when asked.

Play & learning

- ☐ Uses an object to represent something else in pretend play.
- ☐ Follows a direction with two parts.
- ☐ Plays beside peers and sometimes together with them.

What I also notice

I look for opportunities to run, stop, squat, climb, and jump during play. Confidence grows when the challenge feels manageable.

My notes / questions: _____

By 3 Years

Child: _____ Date: _____

Hands & independence

- ☐ Threads large objects onto a string during supervised play.
- ☐ Puts on some simple clothing.
- ☐ Manages a fork during meals.

Words & connection

- ☐ Shares a conversation with at least two back-and-forth turns.
- ☐ Asks questions about people, places, or reasons.
- ☐ Tells you their first name when asked.
- ☐ Is understood by other people most of the time.

Play & learning

- ☐ Copies a circle after you demonstrate.
- ☐ Notices peers and joins their play.
- ☐ Usually settles within about 10 minutes of a familiar drop-off.

What I also notice

I also watch playground participation, running, climbing, and balance. These are clinical observations, not extra CDC three-year checklist items.

My notes / questions: _____

Look Beyond the Checklist

How movement happens matters.

I look for variety, comfort, and participation from both sides. Share persistent stiffness, unusual floppiness, a head tilt, or noticeably uneven movement with your pediatrician. Take note of patterns rather than judging a single attempt.

Keep floor movement in the picture.

Rolling, transitions, and crawling give babies ways to explore. Crawling is not a current CDC checklist item, but I still observe how a baby travels on the floor and uses both sides. Discuss limited exploration or a persistent one-sided pattern rather than waiting for walking.

Bring concerns forward early.

If an age-listed skill is missing, you are concerned, or your child loses a skill, speak with your pediatrician and ask about screening. Loss of skills or a new decrease in movement needs prompt attention. A pediatric therapist can collaborate with your care team.

You know your child. Your observations can turn a question into a useful next step.

Let's Get Started!

1:1 VIRTUAL CONSULTATION SESSIONS

Have questions about movement and development? We can look beyond the checklist together and explore practical ways to support comfortable movement, purposeful play, and growing confidence.

EXPLORE CONSULTATION OPTIONS

I offer virtual baby wellness consultations and in-home pediatric physical therapy in NYC and the Hamptons. Whether you have a specific concern or want ideas for everyday play, we can discuss which option best fits your family.

A little space to move.
A familiar face nearby.
Another chance to discover.

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Milestone source: CDC, Learn the Signs. Act Early., age-specific checklists from 2 months through 3 years: [cdc.gov/act-early/milestones](https://www.cdc.gov/act-early/milestones). Selected milestones paraphrased; clinical observations listed separately. AAP corrected-age guidance: [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org). Read: Dr. Tara Liddle, Why Motor Skills Matter. Checked October 2026.