

Levels of Development Reference Tool

Prime and Specific areas of Learning 0 to 4 years

This reference tool has been created to support early years providers, practitioners and childminders to make decisions on children's levels of development and to support identification of progress in their learning. The tool includes the Development Matters checkpoints and the additional considerations have been added to enhance these. All children develop differently, this document is a guide only - for further detail and depth within the aspects of children's learning and development you should refer to additional guidance and assessment tools that you have available, some examples: Birth to 5 matters, Portage SEND Best Practice Assessment Checklist and Wellcomm.

PRIME AREAS				
AofL	Aspect of Learning	Age	Development Matters Checkpoints	Additional Considerations
Communication and Language	Listening, Attention and Understanding	Around 6 months	Does the baby respond to familiar voices, turn to their own name and 'take turns' in conversations with babbling?	Does the baby react by smiling, looking, and moving? Starts to show an understanding of familiar gestures/sounds/words?
	Speaking		Is the baby using speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults?	Does the baby lift their arm in anticipation of being picked up? Does the baby make their own sounds responding to talk with familiar adults?
	Listening, Attention and Understanding	Around 12 months	Can the baby choose between 2 objects: "Do you want the ball or the car?" Does the baby point to things and use gestures to show things to adults and share interests?	Does the baby enjoys listening and moving to music? Does the baby enjoys being playful and laughing? Does the baby respond to simple gestures and questions – such as 'where is your nose?'
	Speaking		Does the baby 'take turns' by babbling and using single words? Is the baby beginning to use single words like mummum, dada, tete (teddy)?	Does the baby use sound in their play? E.g., brrrm
	Listening, Attention and Understanding	Around 18 months	Is the toddler listening and responding to a simple instruction like: "Adam, put on your shoes?" Does the toddler understand lots of different single words and some two-word phrases, such as "give me" or "shoes on"?	Does the toddler try to join in with actions in songs and repetitive stories?
	Speaking		Is the toddler using a range of adult like speech patterns (jargon) and at least 20 clear words?	Does the toddler copy expressions such as 'oh dear'? Does the toddler use gestures with some limited talk?
	Listening, Attention and Understanding	By around 2 years of age	Is the child showing an interest in what other children are playing and sometimes joins in? Can the child understand many more words than they can say – between 200–500 words?	Can the child recognise simple names and descriptions of objects – Katie's coat, blue car Are they able to listen to simple stories with the help of pictures and props?

		Can the child understand simple questions and instructions like: "Where's your hat?" or "What's the boy in the picture doing?"	Can they pay attention if focused, use of name?
Speaking		Can the child use up to 50 words? Is the child beginning to put two or three words together: "more milk"? Is the child frequently asking questions, such as the names of people and objects?	Is the child beginning to talk about people not present? E.g. 'mummy gone' Is the child beginning to use word endings? Such as 'going', 'cars'.
Listening, Attention and Understanding	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Can the child shift from one task to another if you get their attention? Using the child's name can help: "Jason, can you stop now? We're tidying up". Can the child follow instructions with three key words like: "Can you wash dolly's face?" Can the child show that they understand action words by pointing to the right picture in a book. For example: "Who's jumping?"	Does the child understand simple questions? who, what, where
Speaking		Can the child use around 300 words? Including descriptive language including words for time (for example, 'now' and 'later'), space (for example, 'over there') and function (for example, they can tell you a sponge is for washing). Is the child linking up to 5 words together? Is the child using pronouns ('me', 'him', 'she'), and using plurals and prepositions ('in', 'on', 'under') - these may not always be used correctly to start with.	Does the child learn and use new words rapidly? Can the child hold a short conversation?
Note: watch out for children whose speech is not easily understood by unfamiliar adults. Monitor their progress and consider whether a hearing test might be needed.			
Listening, Attention and Understanding	Around 3-4 years of age	Around the age of 3, can the child shift from one task to another if you fully obtain their attention, for example, by using their name?	Does the child, listen attentively and join in with stories? Is the child able to follow simple directions/instructions? Does the child conduct conversations, listening to their partner and taking several responsive turns?
Speaking		Around the age of 4, is the child using sentences of four to six words – "I want to play with cars" or "What's that thing called?" Can the child use sentences joined up with words like 'because', 'or', 'and'? For example: "I like ice cream because it makes my tongue shiver". Is the child using the future and past tense: "I am going to the park" and "I went to the shop"? Can the child answer simple 'why' questions?	Does the child use talk in role play/small world situations to pretend objects are something else? Does the child talk in detail about things that interest them? Can the child talk about what is happening or what may happen next?

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Personal, Social and Emotional	Self Regulation	Around 6 months	Does the baby respond to their name and respond to the emotions in your voice?	Does the baby seek physical and emotion comfort? Is the baby communicating their emotions, such as crying and smiling?
	Managing Self			Is the baby developing the ability to express their needs, for example for comfort or hunger?
	Building Relationships			Is the baby forming close attachments to familiar adults such as family members, and is soothed by seeing/hearing them? Is the baby beginning to move body, change facial expressions in response to others?
	Self Regulation	Around 12 months	Does the baby start to be shy around strangers and show preferences for certain people and toys?	Does the baby participate and cooperate with familiar routines?
	Managing Self			Is the baby expressing emerging preferences such as pushing away food they don't like?
	Building Relationships			Does the child enjoy social interactions, by smiling, laughing, moving their arms/legs? Is the baby beginning to explore when they feel secure with a familiar adult?
	Self Regulation	Around 18 months	Is the toddler increasingly curious about their world and wanting to explore it and be noticed by you?	Is the toddler exploring behaviour boundaries and becoming aware of basic rules/expectations?
	Managing Self			Is the toddler experimenting/exploring what their body can do, such as pushing a heavy item?
	Building Relationships			Does the toddler enjoy playing alone and alongside other children? Is the toddler interested in other children's play- watching, following and/or imitating other children?
	Self Regulation	By around 2 years of age	Does the child start to see themselves as a separate person? For example, do they decide what to play with, what to eat, what to wear?	Can the child recognise feelings? sad, happy, cross Are they aware that their actions can cause upset?
	Managing Self			Can the child help with dressing and feed and drink competently? Does the child communicate needs for the toilet?
	Building Relationships			Is the child showing an interest in others' play and starting to join in? Does the child seek out others to share their experiences?
	Self Regulation	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child start to enjoy the company of other children and want to play with them?	Can the child inhibit own actions and distract themselves from upset? Can they talk, indicate how they are feeling?
	Managing Self			Is the child beginning to be independent in self-care with some help? Have they developed a desire to do things independently?
	Building Relationships			Does the child show affection and concern for people who are special to them? Are they beginning to get to know other children beyond family or close contacts?

<p>Note: watch out for children who get extremely upset by certain sounds, smells or tastes, and cannot be calmed. Or children who seem worried, sad or angry for much of the time. You will need to work closely with parents and other agencies to find out more about these developmental difficulties.</p>					
Self Regulation		Around 3-4 years of age	<p>Around the age of 3, can the child sometimes manage to share or take turns with others, with adult guidance and understanding 'yours' and 'mine'? Can the child settle to some activities for a while?</p> <p>Around the age of 4, does the child play alongside others or do they always want to play alone? Does the child take part in pretend play (for example, being 'mummy' or 'daddy'?) Does the child take part in other pretend play with different roles – being the Gruffalo, for example? Can the child generally negotiate solutions to conflicts in their play?</p>	<p>Is the child building confidence in express their ideas and opinions?</p> <p>Is the child developing a growing sense of focus and determination with self-chosen activities/play?</p>	
Managing Self			<p>Is the child willing/confident to try new things?</p> <p>Is the child beginning to understand the impact of their choices on others?</p>		
Building Relationships			<p>Is the child beginning to practise negotiating and compromising with peers?</p>		
<p>Note: watch out for children who seem worried, sad, or angry for much of the time, children who seem to flit from one thing to the next or children who seem to stay for over-long periods doing the same thing and become distressed if they are encouraged to do something different. You will need to work closely with parents and other agencies to find out more about these developmental difficulties.</p>					
<p>Look out for children who appear to be overweight or to have poor dental health, where this has not been picked up and acted on at an earlier health check. Discuss this sensitively with parents and involve the child's health visitor. Adapt activities to suit their particular needs, so all children feel confident to move and take part in physical play.</p> <p>Most, but not all, children are reliably dry during the day by the age of 4. Support children who are struggling with toilet training, in partnership with their parents. Seek medical advice, if necessary, from a health visitor or GP.</p>					
AofL	Aspect of Learning	Age	Development Matters Checkpoints	Additional Considerations	
Physical Development	Fine Motor Skills	Around 6 months	Does the baby move with ease and enjoyment?	Does the child pick up objects and hold them to their mouth?	
	Gross Motor Skills			Does the child enjoy 'tummy time' and tries to move forward/backward using arms and legs?	
	Fine Motor Skills	Around 12 months	Can the baby pick up something small with their first finger and thumb (such as a piece of string)?	Does the baby pick up objects to shakes, bang, tap?	
	Gross Motor Skills		Can the baby pull to stand from a sitting position and sit down?	Does the child sit unsupported on the floor and starting to walk independently?	
	<p>Note: look out for babies and young toddlers who appear underweight, overweight or to have poor dental health. You will need to work closely with parents and health visitors to help improve the child's health.</p>				
	Fine Motor Skills	Around 18 months		Does the child explore making marks and connects their movements with the marks they make?	
	Gross Motor Skills			Can the toddler squat steadily to play steadily change to standing position?	
	Fine Motor Skills	By around 2 years of age		Does the child finger paint, use spoons, brushes and picks up small objects?	
Gross Motor Skills	Can the toddler run well, kick a ball, and jump with both feet off the ground at the same time?		Can the child pours drinks and manage finger food? Can the child climb and crawl through obstacles? Can move large blocks and resources.		

	Fine Motor Skills	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age		Does the child try buttons and zips with help? Can they use simple one-handed tools? glue sticks, brushes
	Gross Motor Skills		Can the child climb confidently, catch a large ball and pedal a tricycle?	Can the child manoeuvre/ control scooters, trikes, bikes? Can the child run and jump safely?
	Look out for children who find it difficult to sit comfortably on chairs. They may need help to develop their core muscles. You can help them by encouraging them to scoot on sit-down trikes without pedals and jump on soft-play equipment.			
	Fine Motor Skills	Around 3-4 years of age		Can the child manipulate and use a range of one handed tools and equipment? This could include scissors, toothbrush, or ribbons. Does the child create lines and circles when making marks?
	Gross Motor Skills			Can the child throw and catch using 2 hands? Can the child climb and balance when using steps, stairs and climbing equipment?

SPECIFIC AREAS				
AofL	Aspect of Learning	Age	Considerations	
Literacy	Comprehension	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child have favourite stories, songs and poems? Can the child repeat familiar words and retell, sing these? Can the child fill in missing parts of stories, poems and rhymes? Is the child starting to show that they understand that print carries meaning?	
		Around 3-4 years of age	Does the child understand that print has meaning? Has the child started to build a collection of stories, joining in and recalling them? Is the child able to read their own name label, logos, signs, choosing books/materials to read independently? Is the child starting to read familiar words? Does the child use story characters, names, the setting and the story in their role play?	
	Word Reading	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child notice and recognise logos of interest – football team, fast food outlet Is the child starting to identify and notice print – first letter of name, a bus/ door number Can the child recognise their name in print?	
		Around 3-4 years of age	Does the child fill in missing words from rhymes/songs? Can the child clap words/syllables in rhymes? Does the child follow text from left to right? Is the child able to hear sounds that are the same – such as first sound of own name?	
	Writing	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child deliberately make different kinds of marks? Does the child draw and paint pictures? Are they starting to give meaning to their marks - 'that says ...	
		Around 3-4 years of age	Is the child giving regular meaning to their marks? Does the child use different kinds of marks for writing and for drawing/painting? Is the child starting to write some letters correctly, for example from their own name? (This could be using a range of different materials, for example sand tray, paint, pencil)	

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Mathematics	Number	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child recite some numbers in sequence in context? Is the child able to identify some important numbers? – age, house number Does the child recite numbers and use numbers randomly in songs and games?
		Around 3-4 years of age	Can the child recite numbers confidently? Can the child subitise to 3? Is the child counting accurately to 5 in practical contexts? Is the child beginning to use mathematical mark making?
	Numerical Patterns	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child notice patterns and have they started to arrange objects/resources in patterns? Can the child notice things that are the same and those that are different?
		Around 3-4 years of age	Is the child able to recognise numerals which are the same – as their age, house number, phone number? Does the child recognise number patterns in stories and songs – The enormous turnip, five green bottles, The hungry caterpillar? Is the child able to recognise the same number of objects / more / fewer?
	Shape, Space and Measures	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child notice simple shapes and patterns in pictures and the environment? Is the child beginning to categorise objects according to properties, eg shape or size? Is the child showing they are aware of time-based events (mealtimes) and understands some time language (before, later, soon, in a minute)? Does the child recognise similar shapes, put away equipment – matches the shadow/photo?
		Around 3-4 years of age	During construction, building, junk modelling activities is the child able to manipulate 2D & 3D shapes and use some names and descriptive language – round, straight, corners, sides? Does the child respond to positional and time language – eg Bear Hunt, shape language – round, big, small, days of week, late, early, first, next, after? Can the child make comparisons of weight, capacity, height, length by eye and feel?
AofL	Aspect of Learning	Age	Considerations
Understanding the World	Past and Present	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child have an awareness of own family life and activities – meals, religious places, clothing? Does the child have an awareness of differences and similarities with peers – family life, religious places, food? Is the child showing an interest in the lives of people who are familiar to them?
		Around 3-4 years of age	Does the child show interest in the lives of people who are familiar to them? Does the child show interest in different occupations and ways of life through role play, visitors and stories? Does the child comment on photographs, pictures in books? Is the child noticing and commenting on differences between now and then, drawing on their own family experiences?
	People, Cultures and Communities	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child show awareness of own family and relations? Is the child showing awareness of the world through small world play – farm, garage, train track, dolls' house? Is the child able to recognise details of the built environment – roads, shops, houses? Is the child starting to talk about special times or events for family?
		Around 3-4 years of age	Does the child show interest in the special times or events of friends? Does the child notice and comment on differences between their family cultures and those of others? Is the child able to share knowledge about their own environment and other places/countries through visits, pictures and family experiences?

	The Natural World	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child have a sense of what is a plant and different kinds of animals? Is the child showing awareness of the natural world through small world play, growing plants, being in the garden? Is the child noticing details of natural objects and living things? Does the child explore natural objects, plants, creatures and materials in the environment?
		Around 3-4 years of age	Does the child talk about things they have seen and explored such as plants, animals, natural objects and materials? Is the child commenting and asking questions about the natural world, seasons and talks about why things happen? Has the child developed an understanding of the cycle: growth, decay and changes? Does the child show care and concern for living things and environment?
AofL	Aspect of Learning	Age	Considerations
Expressive Arts and Design	Creating with Materials	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child explore different materials using their senses to investigate them? Does the child deliberately make different kinds of marks? Does the child experiment with blocks, colours, marks? Has the child started to explore with colour, textures and constructions using range of materials?
		Around 3-4 years of age	Does the child use materials, tools and techniques to express own ideas? Is the child participating in pretend play using pretend objects? Can the child talk about what is created and how?
	Being Imaginative and Expressive	By around 2.5 to 3 years of age	Does the child join in singing favourite action songs? Does the child explore sounds by banging, shaking, tapping or blowing? Does the child play with toys creating own storyline, pretending? Does the child participate in action songs and rhymes, dancing, and music making?
		Around 3-4 years of age	Is the child beginning to develop complex narratives in small world and role play? Can the child create their own movements, role play, songs, music? Does the child play, share and performs songs, music and dance?