

Child development (5) - one to two years

It is in the course of this year that your toddler understands they are a completely separate person from you. This not only causes them to worry about the possibility of you leaving them, but also causes the much repeated words 'me' and 'mine'.

Social and emotional development

Although they can understand many words, children in their second year can't grasp abstract concepts; they are strictly concrete thinkers. They often do not respond to spoken commands and need to be moved, lifted down or distracted very often. They seem to understand 'no', but are unable to control their impulses. Developmental characteristics include:

- Your child is curious and energetic, but depends on adults for reassurance and attention.
- Your child is very dependant and attached, and is likely to be afraid of separation.
- They enjoy playing games with adults, especially repetitive games.
- They show an interest in other children, but usually play alone or alongside. There is no concept of sharing yet.
- They imitate others - for example, by 'chatting' on a toy phone.
- They may be more cooperative in dressing because of the desires to copy and 'do it myself'.
- They may want to do things 'right' and experience unbearable frustration if thwarted.
- The ability to feed themselves is improving, and they are likely to be choosy about foods.

Developing understanding

Concepts of time, distance and speed are beyond your child's grasp. However, they are working hard on categories, sorting the objects they see into understandable groups. Other developmental characteristics include:

- Improving memory
- The ability to work out which objects go together - for example, crayons and paper
- Ability to do simple puzzles
- Ability to remember and copy past events
- Enjoyment of simple make-believe, such as pretending to talk to someone on their toy telephone
- No understanding of size and space - they may, for example, be afraid of slipping down the plughole in the bath.

Physical skills

Your child's rapid increase in movement can mean a major reorganisation of the house. Move breakables and dangerous items out of reach - it is not good for you (or your toddler) to be saying 'no' or 'don't touch' every five minutes. Developmental characteristics include:

- One year olds can scoot along on a four-wheeled riding toy.
- By 15 months, they can walk alone with feet wide apart and arms held high.
- At 15 months, they get to their feet using their hands, but can get up without using hands by two years.
- By two years, they can run without bumping into things and stop when necessary.
- By two years, most toddlers can go down stairs while holding on, but will put both feet on the step before moving to the next.
- By two, your child can push buttons and turn knobs.

Language development

Developmental characteristics include:

- Your child averages 10 spoken words at 15 months.
- Your child averages 50 words or more between the ages of 18 months and two years.
- By two years, they can tell you most of what they want with words.
- By two years, sentences become longer and more accurate.
- Their language understanding is improving, so they can remember two things at once - for example, 'Get the ball and bring it to Daddy'.
- They may stammer or hesitate over particular words when excited.

Suggested activities

Suggestions on encouraging and supporting your child's development include:

- Give them toys with knobs and buttons to press (to spare the television and other appliances).
- Give them simple puzzles to play with.
- They enjoy toys that link together, such as stacking toys and hammer and peg sets.
- Your child will love to look at picture books, especially if you name the pictures and let them turn the pages sometimes.
- Play games where the child has lots of opportunities to say no, such as 'Is Daddy under the bed?'
- Young children love to copy others, so provide items for dress-up and role play.
- Allow your child to sometimes play by themselves, without interference, so that they learn to entertain themselves. They will ask for help if they need it.

Signs that suggest a developmental problem

All children are different and develop at different rates, so if your toddler doesn't do all the things listed in this article, it may be because they are working on some different area of learning and development. However, if your toddler is very different from other children, or if you are worried about their development or it seems to go backwards, seek the advice of a health professional. Signs that could suggest a developmental problem include:

- Doesn't show awareness of different people
- Doesn't show a preference for familiar people
- Doesn't show separation anxiety
- Isn't yet walking
- Not walking steadily, especially if the child has a limp
- Isn't babbling often
- Isn't starting to use some meaningful words
- Doesn't listen when others are talking to them
- Is still mostly silent when playing
- Doesn't respond when others talk to them
- Isn't able to point to objects when they are named
- Uses signs, grunts or gestures only when they want something.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Maternal and child health nurse.
- Maternal and Child Health Line, Victoria (24 hour) Te. 132 229

Things to remember

- Your toddler understands they are a completely separate person from you.

- Although they can understand many words, children in their second year can't grasp abstract concepts; they are strictly concrete thinkers.
- By two years, they can run without bumping into things and stop when necessary.

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Better Health Channel

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