

Stages of Child Development

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(A concise, easy-to-read overview for students, teachers, or anyone interested in how children grow physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially.)

1. Overview of Developmental Domains

Domain	What It Covers	Typical Milestones
Physical	Growth of body, brain, motor skills	Height/weight gain, crawling, walking, fine motor control
Cognitive	Thinking, problem-solving, language	Object permanence, symbolic play, logical reasoning
Language	Understanding & producing speech	Babbling → single words → complex sentences
Social/Emotional	Relationships, self-concept, regulation	Attachment, peer play, empathy, identity formation

All domains interact; progress in one often supports growth in another.

2. Major Developmental Periods

Stage	Age Range	Key Physical Changes	Core Cognitive/Linguistic Gains	Social/Emotional Highlights
Prenatal	Conception – birth	Organ formation, rapid brain growth	Begins to respond to sounds, light	Begins forming attachment bonds (via maternal hormones)
Infancy	0-12 mo	Gross motor: lift head, roll, sit, crawl, walk	Sensorimotor (Piaget): object permanence, babbling → first words	Strong attachment to caregiver; stranger anxiety emerges

Stages of Child Development

Stage	Age Range	Key Physical Changes	Core Cognitive/Linguistic Gains	Social?Emotional Highlights
Toddlerhood	1?3?yr	Walking, running, climbing; fine motor: stacking, scribbling	Symbolic play, basic problem solving; rapid vocabulary expansion (?200–1000 words)	Autonomy vs. shame (Erikson); “no” phase, emerging self? control
Early Childhood	3?6?yr	Improved coordination, drawing, dressing	Preoperational (Piaget): pretend play, egocentric thought, basic classification	Initiative vs. guilt; cooperative play, early friendships
Middle Childhood	6?12?yr	Steady growth, refined motor skills (sports, writing)	Concrete operational (Piaget): logical reasoning about concrete events, conservation, reading fluency	Industry vs. inferiority; peer groups, sense of competence
Adolescence	12?18?yr	Puberty: growth spurt, sexual maturation	Formal operational (Piaget): abstract reasoning, hypothetical thinking	Identity vs. role confusion; stronger peer influence, developing intimacy

3. Detailed Look at Each Stage

3.1 Infancy (0?12 months)

- **Physical:**
 - 0?3?mo: lifts head, reflexes dominate.
 - 4?6?mo: rolls, sits with support.
 - 7?9?mo: crawls, pulls to stand.
 - 10?12?mo: walks independently.
- **Cognitive:**
 - Sensorimotor stage ? learning through senses & actions.
 - Object permanence (around 8?12?mo).
- **Language:**

Stages of Child Development

- Cooing ? babbling ? first words (?12?mo).

- **Social?Emotional:**

- Secure attachment (Strange Situation test).
- Social smile, joint attention (pointing).

3.2 Toddlerhood (1?3 years)

- **Physical:**

- Mastery of walking, running, climbing.
- Fine motor: stacking blocks, turning pages.

- **Cognitive:**

- Symbolic thought emerges (pretend play).