

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD

# 1-2 YEARS

MILESTONES OF  
DEVELOPMENT

Big muscle movement  
Small muscle movement  
Talking and understanding  
Social  
Thinking



**Act for kids**

[actforkids.com.au](http://actforkids.com.au)



## Introduction

Parenting a child through this second year of life you will witness their transition from baby to toddler. With walking and running, dancing and jumping – keeping fit is a natural side effect. Communication through sounds, gestures and words is clearer. Potty training also presents a whole new opportunity for self-awareness in your little one.

This is a time of great learning as they assert independent thoughts and want to express those thoughts and desires vocally. Meal times may become longer and messier, as your child wants to drink and eat without help.

This booklet is part of the *Understanding your child* series, published by Act for Kids.

For more information about child development, or to get additional copies, use the contact details on the back of this booklet.

Copyright © 2003 Child Development Network. Reproduced with permission. The milestone checklists provided in this booklet are to assist with monitoring your child's development. The majority of children will achieve these milestones by the time they reach the age mentioned. All children develop at different rates. Some children are slower than others (developmentally delayed) but catch up with time. Other children, however, may have an underlying problem that causes their delayed development, and they may not catch up. It is important for these children to get as much treatment (early intervention) as possible. So if you are concerned about any aspect of your child's development, see your doctor. If in doubt, it is better to have your concerns checked than to 'wait and see'.

# Big muscle movement

## By 18 months

### ✓ An average child can:

- stand and walk well on their own.
- bend or crouch to pick up an object.
- climb a ledge or up stairs.
- push a pram/push cart.
- walk backwards a few steps.
- kick a ball.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- unable to stand alone or walk.
- unsteady or uneven gait (walking pattern).
- they can't kick a ball.

## By 2 years

### ✓ An average child can:

- run.
- throw a ball.
- walk up and down steps, holding on.
- jump with two feet together.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- unable to run.
- unable to throw (depending on experience).
- unable to use stairs.
- unable to jump.
- poor quality gait (walking pattern) - falling over, clumsy.

# Small muscle movement

## By 18 months

### ✓ An average child can:

- stack two or three blocks into a tower.
- scribble with a pencil on paper.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- they can't stack blocks.
- they show no understanding of using a pencil.

## By 2 years

### ✓ An average child can:

- build a tower of four to eight blocks.
- copy drawing of a vertical line.
- scribble in circles with crayon/pencil.
- help with dressing and undressing.
- line up three blocks to make a train.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- they're clumsy with stacking blocks.
- they're unable to copy drawing of a vertical line.
- they're not interested in using a pencil: no scribbling.



# Talking and understanding

## By 18 months

### ✓ An average child can:

- try to sing.
- say four to eight clear words.
- babble long sentences with some clear words.
- point to named pictures.
- follow single instructions.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- no clear words.
- no babbling.
- they don't try to interact using language.
- they can't understand a single, short request like "Where is the ball?"
- they don't know their own name.

## By 2 years

### ✓ An average child can:

- say 20 to 50 clear words.
- say clear, two-word sentences.
- name pictures and objects when asked.
- follow two-step commands.
- show a broad understanding (receptive vocabulary) of 50 or more objects and pictures.
- show interest in books and stories.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- limited vocabulary (fewer than 10 words).
- no combination of words into sentences.
- most of what is said is not easily understood.
- confused by short sentences.
- can't understand more than 10 to 20 words.
- no interest in stories and books.

# Social

## By 18 months

### ✓ An average child can:

- start to show a sense of self by saying words like 'no', 'mine'.
- play games with other people.
- manage to drink from a cup (half full).
- enjoy sitting looking at books.
- point to body parts, clothing and objects.
- help with dressing.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- they prefer to play alone rather than socially.
- lack of interest in learning to feed themselves.
- lack of interest in books.
- lack of interest in body parts, clothing and objects.
- lack of interest in dressing.

## By 2 years

### ✓ An average child can:

- play side-by-side with a same age friend.
- identify many body parts.
- help with dressing or undressing.
- help around the house with very simple tasks.
- use a spoon.
- show early imaginative play.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- no interest in personal skills like dressing or undressing.
- no interest in helping in social/household activities.
- no interest in learning to feed themselves.
- play is not representative or imaginative – just pushing, dropping, hitting toys/objects.
- no sense of who they are.





# Thinking

## By 18 months

### ✓ An average child can:

- search for objects not only where they were last seen, but also in other places.
- play correctly with toys, such as pushing a car around, making an airplane fly.
- complete simple puzzles, like placing one or two shapes in holes.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- they don't search for objects out of view.
- toy play is random – just banging, dropping, etc.
- no understanding of what to do with puzzles.

## By 2 years

### ✓ An average child can:

- open a screw toy.
- do puzzles with three items or shapes.
- copy familiar or recent experiences in play (like playing teddy goes to the doctor).
- use one object to stand for another, like a block for a car.

### ✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- no success or persistence to complete simple puzzles (one to three pieces).
- play is physical and repetitive, with little pretending.
- limited range of interest and activities in play.



Act for Kids is a for-purpose organisation that delivers evidence-led professional therapy and support services to young people and their families.

We help keep kids safe, heal from trauma and lead happy lives through professional counselling, parenting programs, resources and advocacy.

For more information, visit **actforkids.com.au** or phone **1300 228 000**.

## Child development resources

[www.bubhub.com.au](http://www.bubhub.com.au)

[www.cd.net.au](http://www.cd.net.au)

[www.cyh.com](http://www.cyh.com)

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

For more information please call 1300 228 000  
or visit our website [actforkids.com.au](http://actforkids.com.au)



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