

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (NOTICING & PLAYING WITH OTHERS)

This area of development involves learning to interact with other people and to understand and control your own emotions. Babies start to develop relationships with the people around them right from birth, but the process of learning to communicate, share, and interact with others takes many years to develop. Developing the ability to control your emotions and behavior is also a long process. Children continue to develop their social-emotional skills well into their teenage years, or even young adulthood.

Please also see [communication skills](#) for more information about early development because speech and language skills are so important for effective social development.

INFANT DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

Between the ages of 0-3 months, your baby will:

- See clearly within 13 inches from her face
- Be comforted by a familiar adult
- Respond positively to touch
- Quiet when picked up
- Listen to voices
- Smile and show pleasure in response to social stimulation

Between the ages of 3-6 months, your baby will:

- Give warm smiles and laughs
- Recognize faces
- Cry when upset and seek comfort
- Show excitement by waving arms and legs
- Notice a difference between two people based on the way they look, sound, or feel
- Smile at herself in the mirror
- Enjoy looking at other babies
- Pay attention to her own name
- Laugh aloud

Between the ages of 6-9 months, your baby will:

- Express several different clear emotions
- Play games like Peek-a-boo
- Show displeasure at the loss of a toy
- Respond to you when you talk to her or make gestures
- Start to understand your different emotions (for example, your baby might frown when you speak in an angry tone of voice)
- Show more comfort around familiar people, and anxiety around strangers
- Possibly comfort herself by sucking thumb, or holding a special toy or blanket

Red Flags for Social-Emotional Development (9 months)

If you notice some of the following things by the time your baby is 8-9 months old, you may want to talk to your doctor, or to another health professional such as a [speech-language pathologist](#), an [occupational therapist](#), or a psychologist.

- Your child is not responding to sounds
- Your child is not smiling or responding to you the way you expect
- Your child avoids close contact or cuddling
- Your child is inconsolable at night
- Your child can't seem to self-soothe or calm herself
- Your child has no interest in games like peek-a-boo

Between the ages of 9-12 months, your baby will:

- Show happiness to see her parents' face, her toys, or a mirror
- Know strangers from his family, and cry when his parent goes away
- Give affection and love
- Pay attention to simple commands such as "no" and "give it to me"
- Respond by turning to look when you call her name
- Imitate some of your actions (e.g. waving, pretending to talk on the phone)
- Have fear with new situations
- Understand the word "no", but will not always obey

Red Flags for Social-Emotional Development (12 months)

If you notice some of the following things by the time your baby is 12 months old, you may want to talk to your doctor or to another health professional such as a mental health clinician, a [speech-language pathologist](#), an [occupational therapist](#), or a psychologist.

- He is not showing interest in other children his age
- She does not respond to you the way you expect her to
- He has extreme difficulty waiting for something he wants
- She is very rigid about her routine, food items, clothing, etc
- He has limited or fleeting eye contact with others
- She does not imitate any of your actions
- She does not respond when you call her name
- He does not follow your point when you try to show something, or bring attention to something
- She doesn't take turns in a simple turn-taking game like chase or peek-a-boo

TODDLER DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

Between the ages of 1-2 years, your child will:

- Recognize herself in the mirror or photograph and smile or make faces at herself
- Begin to say 'no' to bedtime and other requests
- Imitate adults' actions and words (e.g. chores)
- Understand words and commands, and respond to them
- Hug and kiss parents, familiar people and pets
- Bring things to "show" other people
- Begin to be helpful around the house
- Begin to feel jealousy when she is not the centre of attention
- Show frustration easily

- May play next to another child, but will not really share until 3 or 4 years of age
- Be able to play alone for a few minutes
- React to changes in daily routines
- Share a piece of food
- Develop a range of emotions (may have tantrums, show aggression by biting, etc)
- Start to assert independence by preferring to try do things “by myself”, without help

Red Flags for Social-Emotional Development (2 years)

If you notice some of the following things by the time your child is 18-24 months old (2 years), you may want to talk to your doctor, or to another health professional such as a mental health clinician, a [speech-language pathologist](#), an [occupational therapist](#), or a psychologist.

- Doesn't imitate other people
- Constantly moves from one activity to another and is not able to stay at an activity for brief periods
- Requires constant attention to stay at an activity
- Doesn't show any interest in other children
- Doesn't “show” things to other people
- Extremely “rigid” about routines, becoming extremely upset when they are changed
- Too passive, and doesn't want to try things other children her age are doing
- Has extreme difficulty waiting for items he wants

Between the ages of 2-3 years, your child will:

- Be assertive about what he wants, and say no to adult requests
- Start to show awareness of her own feelings and others' feelings
- Have rapid mood shifts
- Show more fear in certain situations (e.g the dark)
- Become shy, and may start to whine
- Possibly become aggressive and frustrated easily
- Not like change
- Want independence, but still need security of parents
- Need an ordered, predictable routine (ie: when saying good-bye to parents)
- Watch other children in play, and join them briefly
- Defend his possessions
- Begin to play “house”
- Begin to separate more easily from parents
- Begin to show empathy to other children (respond to their feelings)

Red Flags for Social-Emotional Development (3 years)

If you notice some of the following things by the time your child is 3 years old, you may want to talk to your doctor, or to another health professional such as a mental health clinician, a [speech-language pathologist](#), an [occupational therapist](#), or a psychologist.

- She is not interested in pretend play
- She has extreme difficulty separating from you
- He is not starting or responding to simple interactions with other children
- She is showing abnormal aggression
- He shows extreme fears that interfere with daily activities
- She is extremely “rigid” about routines

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

Between the ages of 3-4 years, your child will:

- Share toys, taking turns with help
- Initiate or join in play with other children and make up games
- Follow simple rules in games, but will always want to win
- Begin dramatic play, acting out whole scenes such as travelling or pretending to be animals
- Might be bossy and defiant
- Show more independence
- Experience a broad range of emotions (ie: jealousy, excitement, fear, happiness, anger)
- Become less egocentric
- Be more even-tempered and cooperative with parents
- May show attachment to one friend

Red Flags for Social-Emotional Development (4 years)

If you notice some of the following things by the time your child is 4 years old, you may want to talk to your doctor, or to another health professional such as a mental health clinician, a [speech-language pathologist](#), an [occupational therapist](#), or a psychologist.

- He is not able to initiate or join in play with other children
- She is not able to share at all with other children
- She wants to be dependent on her caregivers for everything
- He is extremely “rigid” about routines, and becomes extremely upset when things are changed
- She has extreme difficulty separating from you
- He is too passive or fearful, and does not want to try things other children his age are doing
- She has extreme fears that interfere with daily activities

Between the ages of 4-5 years, your child will:

- Show some awareness of moral reasoning, such as “fairness”, and good or bad behavior
- Develop friendships
- Express more awareness of other people’s feelings
- Enjoy imaginative play with other children, such as dress up or house
- Get better at sharing and taking turns with other children
- Enjoy playing games, but might change the rules as he goes
- Stick with a difficult task for longer period (controlling frustration or anger better)
- Show an understanding of right and wrong
- Listen while others are speaking
- Play games with simple rules

Red Flags for Social-Emotional Development (5 years)

If you notice some of the following things by the time your child is 5 years old, you may want to ask for help from your doctor, or from another health professional such as a mental health clinician, a [speech-language pathologist](#), an [occupational therapist](#), or a psychologist.

- He is not interested in playing with other children
- She is not able to share or take turns with other children
- She wants to be dependent on her caregivers for everything
- He is extremely “rigid” about routines, and becomes extremely upset when things are changed
- She has extreme difficulty separating from you
- He is too passive or fearful, and does not want to try things other children his age are doing
- She has extreme fears that interfere with daily activities

From Children's Therapy and Family Resource Centre in Kamloops, BC

- See more at: <http://www.kamloopschildrenstherapy.org/social-emotional-preschool-milestones>