

Activity Sheets for Kids of All Abilities: Motor Development in the First Year

MOTOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIRST YEAR

There are key developmental motor milestones that infants are expected to achieve during their first year of life. This is an exciting time for parents as they watch these new skills unfold but it can also create anxiety wondering, “is my child on track?” It is important to remember that although there are general guidelines for motor milestone development, there is a broad range for what is considered typical. This handout is certainly not all-inclusive, but it does provide you with key developmental milestones to look for in your baby’s first year. If you have concerns about your baby’s motor development, contact your pediatrician to see if a physical therapy or occupational therapy assessment may be indicated.

NEWBORNS

- Initially, a newborn’s movement consists primarily of involuntary or reflexive movement patterns. Examples of these are the sucking reflex and the startle reflex as well as uncontrolled movements of both the legs and arms that can appear “jerky” at times. Over time, babies develop both their gross motor and fine motor skills allowing for mobility, play, object exploration, and even self-feeding skills all in the first year of life!

BY 3 MONTHS

- Beginning to prop on arms while on tummy
- Holds head upright even when head is unsupported
- Visually tracks moving objects but not yet in large planes of movement
- When lying on back, begins to swat at objects that are suspended above
- Grasps a rattle and begins to move/shake it

BY 5-6 MONTHS

- Reaches with intention toward object and grasps it
- Begins to roll from tummy to back and from back to tummy (emerging if not mastered)
- Can place arms to front and sides from supported sitting if tilted off of midline (protective reactions)
- Pushes up on extended arms when on tummy
- Prop sits (uses arms to support self in floor sitting)
- Bears weight through legs when held in supported stand
- Transfers objects from hand to hand

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(continued)

BY 8-10 MONTHS

- Rolls well in both directions (back to tummy and tummy to back)
- Sits independently
- Crawls
- Transitions self from floor to sitting position and from sitting back to floor
- Uses wrist rotation to explore all sides of an object held in hand
- May stand with support such as holding onto a low table or couch
- Pincer grasp emerging (thumb pad and fingertip together to retrieve small objects)
- Simple imitative games such as peek-a-boo emerge
- Bangs objects together at midline

BY 12 MONTHS

- Walks with hand held support
- May stand alone
- May take initial first steps
- Stacks large blocks
- Holds spoon but not typically scooping food independently
- Finger feeds small items such as dry cereals or puffs