

Developmental Milestones

2-Year-Olds

Physical Milestones

This year, children may not only grow by leaps and bounds, but also learn to leap and bound! Expect to see big things happening with the big muscles (gross motor skills), as well as development in small muscle movement (fine motor skills).

Most 2-year-olds learn to do things like these by the end of their third year:

Gross Motor Skills

- Walk, run, and start learning to jump with both feet
- Pull or carry toys while walking
- Throw and kick a ball; try to catch with both hands
- Stand on tiptoes and balance on one foot
- Climb on furniture and playground equipment
- Walk upstairs while holding the railing; may alternate feet

At-home connection: Balloons, bubbles, and bouncing! Try some ways to help build gross motor skills.

Fine Motor Skills

- Start brushing own teeth and hair
 - May pull pants up and down
 - Turn on the faucet and wash hands
 - Build a block tower of at least four blocks
 - Start practicing snaps and zipping up (if you start the zip)
 - Hold utensils and crayons with fingers instead of a fist, although at this age the grasp still may not be quite right
- At-home connection:** Play-dough, putty, and painting! Try some ways to help build fine motor skills.

Cognitive Milestones

Toddlers start thinking in new ways, learning new skills, finding new techniques to solve problems, and showing their independence. By the end of this year, kids typically:

- Enjoy more complicated pretend play, like pretending that a box is a spaceship or assigning people characters when playing
- Remember and talk about things that happened in the past, using phrases like “the other day” or “a long time ago”

- Do three- to four-piece puzzles
- Group toys by type, size, or color
- Recite favorite books and nursery rhymes with you
- May follow two-step directions, such as “take off your coat and hang it up”

At-home connection: Be Batman! Explore how pretend play can help kids begin to manage their thoughts, actions, and emotions.

Language Milestones

By the end of the third year, children usually understand much of what you say to them. They're also talking more. At this age, children can typically:

- Understand the words for familiar people, everyday objects, and body parts
- Use a variety of single words by 18 months and speak in sentences of two to four words by 24 months (may combine nouns and verbs, like “mommy eat”); have a vocabulary of 200+ words by 36 months
- Repeat words they hear
- Start asking “what’s that?” and “why?”
- Begin using plurals (*dogs*) and basic pronouns (*me, you*)

At-home connection: What’s a ‘puter? Learn why some young kids have trouble pronouncing words.

Social and Emotional Milestones

Two-year-olds typically start to be more independent and more interested in other kids. But not having the words to express themselves can be frustrating. By the end of this year, kids will likely do things like this:

- Mimic what other kids and adults do and say, as well as *how* they say it
- Be happy to play near, if not with, other kids
- Start to realize they can do things without your help
- Disobey more than before, doing things they’re told not to do, just to test what happens
- Have tantrums when frustrated
- Show increasing separation anxiety by 18 months, which typically eases a lot by 24 months; become increasingly independent and aware of themselves as their own person between 24 and 36 months