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Stages of Development: Unrecognized Milestones You Don't Want to Miss



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You know the big marks of development -- walking, talking, crawling -- but what about the ones that sometimes fly under the radar?



With so many milestones to be on the lookout for, sometimes one slips by unnoticed -- until years later, when you realize you should have snapped that photo or added an entry to the baby book. These experts weigh in on the stages of development from birth to age 10 that often go unrecognized but are definitely worth celebrating. Have your camera ready!

2 to 3 Years Old

- **Recognizes and Articulates Feelings**

This wonderful stage of development takes place between 2 and 3 years of age, says Jessica Damon, a pediatric speech-language pathologist and expert at [Please and Carrots](#). "Your child is beginning to relate to other children and show concern for them. He is developing empathy and sympathy. He is identifying with the feelings of others. This is a great time to expand his vocabulary," she says. Use words like "happy," "sad," "excited," "surprised" and "disappointed" when you talk to your child. You will know your child has reached this milestone when he points out that his friend is feeling sad or his dog is happy from his treat.

- **Hangs On to Teddy**

Your child may develop an attachment to a teddy bear or blanket and may not want to go anywhere without it. That's OK -- it gives your child a sense of security and comfort as he learns to self-soothe, says [Kirsten Li-Barber](#), who holds a doctorate in developmental psychology and is an assistant professor of psychology at High Point University in North

Carolina.

3 to 4 Years Old

- **Seeks Out New Things**

As a baby, he liked to do the same thing over and over -- but now your toddler seeks out new games, new toys and even new friends. He'd rather play with others than play by himself. Encourage this by having playdates with new kids, and watch his social skills grow!

- **Forms Interests and Passions**

This is the time when little ones get excited about new interests -- maybe it's dinosaurs or Legos. Make sure to take him to children's museums and on trips. Not only does this make for fabulous photo ops, but it exposes him to lots of new ideas.

- **Draws**

Prep the fridge for your budding artist. Whether he's drawing with crayons with painting with his fingers, his artwork takes on really nice shapes and creative forms. You might even start to recognize yourself in some of his masterpieces.

4 to 5 Years Old

- **Develops His/Her Personality**

Don't be surprised if he likes to ham it up by singing, dancing or making you laugh. You might discover you have a future stand-up comedian or an actor destined for the stage.

- **Hones His/Her Manners and Etiquette.**

Your little gentleman is practicing taking turns, listening and following the rules. And he's so proud when he does!

- **Distinguishes Fantasy From Reality**

He can tell the difference between make-believe and reality, but he still enjoys imaginative play. He'll get a kick out of dressing as his favorite character, and you might take a few trips to the grocery store with a miniature Spider-Man.

6 to 8 Years Old

- **Reads and Writes**

Your little one's creative juices are flowing. Encourage this by telling lots of stories -- about your own childhood or when your grade-schooler was little -- and encourage him to tell you stories.

- **Becomes a Student**

The early years of school encompass several important stages of development. To encourage a love of school, ask about his favorite subjects and cool projects. Encourage his

interests at home with DIY science experiments, story time or math games.

8 to 10 Years Old

- **Learn Responsibility**

Your child may be doing chores, helping with younger siblings or volunteering. Encourage this by teaching cooperation, helping others and promoting a sense of togetherness (as opposed to entitlement), says [Dr. Charlotte Reznick](#), a child educational psychologist and author of "The Power of Your Child's Imagination."

- **Understands Money**

This is the age when allowance and explaining the cost of items really sinks in. It's a good idea to give your child some chores and then reward them (via allowance), notes consumer finance expert Andrew Houser. "Babysitting, taking care of a neighbor's pets while they are on vacation, mowing lawns or shoveling snow are all good options," says Houser. Taking a photo of the process will make your child proud of his accomplishments -- and even prouder of the toy he purchases with his hard-earned cash.

And read [our guide to developmental milestones for kids](#) .

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