

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Each child develops at his or her own pace. The information that follows outlines some of the general characteristics children demonstrate at various age levels. Not all children will progress at the same pace or rate. Also listed are suggested toys and equipment for each age grouping. Remember that these are only suggestions. Keep in mind that each child is an individual and will have his or her own likes, dislikes, strengths and interests. Get to know the children in your care and have age-appropriate toys and equipment available based on your knowledge.

BIRTH TO 18 MONTHS

Characteristics:

- Grasps objects
- Mouths objects
- Reacts to sound
- Reacts to movement
- Needs to be held, hugged
- Kicks, creeps, crawls, rolls
- Recognizes familiar persons
- Reacts to facial expressions and other body language
- Imitates
- By 18 months is climbing and walking
- Coos, babbles, laughs, jabbers, imitates words

Suggested Toys and Equipment:

- Rattles
- Nursery mobiles
- Soft animals
- Crib-gym exercisers
- Nested boxes or cups
- Picture books
- Push-pull toys
- Musical toys
- Pounding toys
- Shatter-proof mirrors

Required Equipment:

- Cribs
- Diapering area
- Car seats
- Age appropriate seating for:
 - feeding
 - play

All items used must be larger than 1½ inches in diameter to avoid risk of choking.

18 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS

Characteristics:

- Picks up and carries objects
- Throws
- Climbs, runs, jumps
- Mouths objects
- Points to and names items
- Jumps, hops, skips, runs
- Uses two or more words in sentences
- Assembles simple puzzles
- Builds with blocks
- Scribbles, draws
- Follows simple directions
- Aware of emotions
- Easily frustrated
- Capable of self-help skills

Suggested Toys and Equipment:

- Riding toy to straddle
- Wagon to climb into
- Child-sized play furniture
- Blocks
- Dress-up clothes
- Stuffed animals
- Dolls and doll furniture
- Simple puzzles with large pieces
- Large crayons
- Simple musical instruments
- Push-pull toys
- Snap together-pull apart toys

All items must be larger than 1½ inches in diameter to avoid the possibility of choking.

3 YEARS TO 6 YEARS

Characteristics:

- Socializes
- Independent
- Follows two or more step directions
- Cooperates
- Draws, colors, writes
- Jumps, hops, skips, runs
- Throws and catches balls
- Pretends, acts out
- Communicates verbally and non-verbally
- Shares
- Longer attention span
- Questions
- Able to identify emotions
- Capable of self-help skills
- Understands simple jokes

Suggested Toys and Equipment:

- Puppets
- Creative and dramatic play clothes and props
- Transportation toys
- Puzzles
- Blocks
- Large crayons and paper
- Books
- Records, musical instruments
- Peg-boards, large pegs, and beads
- Art materials
- Stacking and interlocking blocks and toys
- Sports equipment
- Riding toys
- Dolls and doll furniture

Supervise children closely when they play with small toys to avoid the possibility of choking.

6 YEARS TO 9 YEARS

Characteristics:

- Develops hand-eye coordination
- Problem solving skills
- Masters muscle control
- Able to express self through complete sentences
- Constructs complex structures
- Understands consequences of actions
- Understands simple concepts
- Draws complex pictures
- Recognizes and writes symbols
- Able to control emotions
- Able to work independently
- Increased attention span

Suggested Toys and Equipment:

- Board games
- Tabletop games
- Fashion dolls
- Doll house
- Typewriter/computer
- Transportation toys
- Construction sets
- Puzzles
- Marbles
- Handicraft items
- Art materials
- Books
- Sports equipment
- Riding toys
- Dramatic and creative play clothes and props
- Puppets

9 YEARS OLD AND UP

Characteristics:

- Advanced communication skills
- Developed problem solving skills
- Creative and imaginative
- Independent
- Recognizes social responsibilities
- Curious
- Able to follow complex directions
- Increased attention span and ability to concentrate
- Able to think abstractly
- Capable of reading for content and pleasure
- Ready to be part of the community

Suggested Toys and Equipment:

- Model kits
- Dramatic and creative play clothes and props
- Sports equipment
- Art materials
- Board games
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Handicrafts
- Puppets
- Books
- Items for experiments in:
 - Planting
 - Science
 - Cooking
- Card games
- Collectibles
 - Cards
 - Dolls
 - Stamps