

Fact Sheet #1: Skills to Expect from 0 to 18 months

Mental Skills

Children:

- Remember people and objects that are not present
- Imitate other people's facial expressions, sounds, and actions
- Imitate what they see on TV, even if they don't understand what they are doing
- Understand what they hear before they can speak
- Make noises to communicate with others and to show satisfaction or displeasure
- Recognize their own name
- Begin to explore the environment, touch and manipulate objects

- Learn by imitating and observing other people
- Show understanding of words for highly familiar objects
- Understand about a dozen common phrases
- Begin to use me, I, you
- Understand and can follow very simple instructions
- Have very short attention spans



Social Skills

Children:

- Cry, flail arms and legs when in pain, tired, hungry, cold, thirsty, wet, lonely or in a new situation and/or with new people
- Smile, babble, and coo to show pleasure, joy, and excitement
- Recognize the difference between familiar people and strangers
- Develop strong bonds with people regularly caring for them, a parent or other adult and show anxiety when separated
- Are friendly to familiar people and afraid of strangers

- Recognize distress of others by showing distress and crying
- Enjoy audience and applause
- Can play alone for brief periods of time
- Become angry when frustrated
- Are afraid of strangers and are wary of unexpected situations



Tips for Parents

- If your baby is distressed and cries, comfort him or her. This will not spoil your child. When babies cry, they need warm and gentle responses to feel secure and safe. This trust forms the foundation for your future relationship with your child.
- Don't punish a crying baby. Be patient; your baby is just trying to tell you that something is wrong. Harsh responses will frighten a baby and make things worse.
- Play with your child every day. Make fun playtime part of your time together.
- Provide toys that are designed for your child's age and are safe.
- Talk frequently to your child, use simple direct words, and give positive instructions (Say "Let's play with the rattle" instead of "Don't play with the fork!")
- Read simple books to your child every day; those with familiar objects to stimulate language and communication.
- If possible, reduce separations or always have a familiar person caring for your child.
- Create and maintain daily routines to help your baby feel secure and build trust.



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