

## Developmental Milestones – DD Domains

The following is a description of each of the five domains required for an evaluation for Developmental Delay. Also included are a few of the typical developmental milestones<sup>1</sup> in each of the five domains for children between the ages of three to five. Familiarization with the developmental milestones, typically found in each domain, helps to enhance early identification of possible Developmental Delays. Caution should be taken, however, when considering “typical developmental milestones”, as all children will develop differently in each domain.

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The ability to use small and large muscles effectively

- fine motor: the use of small muscle groups of the arms and hands to eat, drink, dress, and write, etc.
- gross motor: the use of large muscle groups of the neck, trunk, arms, and legs for ambulation, etc.

The determination of significant delay in the domain of physical development should be a combined or cluster score from the evaluation of both fine motor and gross motor skills.

#### Typical developmental milestones in the area of fine motor development include:

- **36-42 months**
  - builds a 9-block tower
  - strings 1” beads
  - stirs liquid with spoon
  - draws a circle
- **42-48 months**
  - cuts paper into two pieces
- **48-54 months**
  - draws a 3-part person
  - colors within lines
  - cuts along a line
- **54-60 months**
  - laces shoes
  - cuts along thick curved line

#### Typical developmental milestones in the area of gross motor development include:

- **36-42 months**
  - catches 6-8 inch ball with arms
  - throws a ball 6 feet
  - jumps down from a low object

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<sup>1</sup> The outline below provides a general summary of the developmental sequence of speech, language, and motor skills in normal children. Because children develop at different rates, avoid strictly applying the age approximations. The time intervals are provided only as a general guideline for age appropriateness. This information was compiled from a variety of sources, which included the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (1983); Boone (1987); Gard, Gilman, and Gorman (1980); Hegde (1991); Kunz and Finkel (1987); Lane and Molyneux (1992); and Lenneberg (1969).

- **42-48 months**
  - walks up and down stairs, one foot per step, with no help
- **48-54 months**
  - catches a ball with hands
  - gallops
- **54-60 months**
  - skips
  - throws ball with close accuracy

### **COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

The ability to comprehend, remember, and make sense out of experience, including:

- attending skills
- abstract thinking or reasoning
- capacity to acquire knowledge
- problem solving skills

**Typical developmental milestones in the area of cognitive development include:**

- **36-42 months**
  - recalls familiar objects or events from past experience
  - rote counts from 1-10
  - same and different
  - classifies objects
- **42-48 months**
  - matches objects and pictures
  - knows the concept of empty (“all done”)
- **48-54 months**
  - completes an open-ended sentence
  - completes a puzzle of 2 to 12 pieces
- **54-60 months**
  - names shapes – circle, triangle, square
  - knows difference between daytime/nighttime activities

### **COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT**

The ability to use and comprehend language effectively – vocabulary, grammar, and speech sounds. Communication skills are found in hearing, symbolic play, social, motor, and cognitive skills, including:

- **Preverbal Skills** – the use of nonverbal behaviors such as body movements, grimaces, and vocalizations that are unclear signals,
- **Pragmatics** – functional communication that includes intentions and discourse,
- **Receptive Language** – the comprehension of linguistic and non-linguistic communications, and
- **Expressive Language** – the expression of language, including phonology, syntax, and semantics.

The determination of significant delay in the domain of communication should be a combined or cluster score from the evaluation of both expressive and receptive language skills.

**Typical developmental milestones in the area of communication include:**

- **12 months**
  - recognizes his or her name
  - understands simple instructions
  - initiates familiar words, gestures, and sounds
  - uses "mama", "dada", and other common nouns
  
- **18 months**
  - uses 10 to 20 words, including names
  - recognizes pictures of familiar persons and objects
  - combines two words, such as "all gone"
  - uses words to make wants known, such as *more* and *up*
  - points and gestures to call attention to an event and to show wants
  - follows simple commands
  - imitates simple actions
  - hums, may sing simple tunes
  - distinguishes print from non-print
  
- **24 months**
  - understands simple questions and commands
  - identifies body parts
  - carries on conversation with self and dolls
  - asks "what" and "where"
  - has sentence length of two to three words
  - refers to self by name
  - names pictures
  - uses two-word negative phrases, such as "no want"
  - forms some plurals by adding "s"
  - has about a 300-word vocabulary
  - asks for food and drink
  - stays with one activity for six to seven minutes
  - knows how to interact with books (right side up, page turning from left to right)
  
- **30 months**
  - has about a 450-word vocabulary
  - gives first name
  - uses past tense and plurals; combines some nouns and verbs
  - understands simple time concepts, such as "last night" or "tomorrow"
  - refers to self as "me" rather than name
  - tries to get adult attention with "watch me"
  - likes to hear same story repeated
  - uses "no" or "not" in speech
  - answers "where" questions
  - uses short sentences, such as "me do it"
  - holds up fingers to tell age
  - talks to other children and adults
  - plays with sounds of language

- **36 months**
  - matches primary colors
  - names one color
  - knows night and day
  - begins to understand prepositional phrases (i.e., "Please put the block *under the chair.*")
  - practices by talking to self
  - knows last name, sex, street name, and several nursery rhymes
  - tells a story or relays an idea
  - has sentence length of three to four words
  - has vocabulary of nearly 1,000 words
  - consistently uses m, n, ng, p, f, h, and w
  - draws circle and vertical line
  - sings songs
  - stays with one activity for eight to nine minutes
  - asks and answers variety of questions
  - names actions, pictures, and tells stories
  - sings songs
  
- **48 months**
  - points to red, blue, yellow, and green
  - identifies crosses, triangles, circles, and squares
  - knows "next month", "next year", and "noon"
  - has sentence length of four to five words
  - asks "who" and "why"
  - begins to use complex sentences
  - correctly uses m, n, ng, p, f, h, w, y, k, b, d, and g
  - stays with activity for 11 to 12 minutes
  - plays with language (e.g., word substitutions)
  
- **60 months**
  - defines objects by use and identifies the material from which each is made
  - knows address
  - identifies penny, nickel, and dime
  - has sentence length of five to six words
  - has vocabulary of about 2,000 words
  - uses speech sounds correctly, with the possible exceptions being y, th, j, s/z, zh, and knows common opposites
  - understands "same" and "different"
  - counts ten objects
  - uses future, present, and past tenses
  - stays with one activity for 12 to 13 minutes
  - questions for information
  - identifies left and right hand on self
  - uses all types of sentences
  - shows interest and appreciation for printed materials

## **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Social-emotional development is the ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships and to demonstrate age-appropriate social-emotional behaviors. Social-emotional development assessment should include the following areas:

Adult/Caregiver Interaction – includes positive styles of interaction and secure attachment relationships

- Peer Interaction Skills – includes positive interactions and social relationships,
- Self-concept,
- Coping Skills,
- Social Competence – includes the effective and appropriate use of social behaviors, and
- Functional Behavior.

**Typical developmental milestones in the area of social-emotional development (socialization) include:**

- **36-42 months**
  - enjoys simple songs and games with others
  - greets without reminders
  - initiates activities with parents
  - can attend to short stories
  - enjoys simple songs and games with others
  - initiates activities with parents
- **42-48 months**
  - plays cooperatively
  - interacts with adults more appropriately
- **48-54 months**
  - can attend to a story for 15 minutes
  - beginning cooperative play
  - asks for assistance
- **54-60 months**
  - developing relationships with peers
  - plays cooperatively with others
  - has conversations at mealtime
  - play is constructive

## **ADAPTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

The ability to engage in age appropriate activities in daily life skills:

- Self-care,
- Community Self-sufficiency,
- Personal/social Responsibility, and
- Social Adjustment.

**Typical developmental milestones in the area of adaptive development for socialization include:**

- **36-42 months**
  - attends to a learning task or story in a small group
  - focuses his/her attention on one task while being aware of, but not distracted by, another activity
  - uses napkin, with reminders
  - uses straw
  - puts on jacket, shirt, pants
  - snaps and unsnaps
  - sleeps through the night without wetting the bed
  - indicates needs for toilet
  - toilets and attempts to wipe
  - opens bottle
  - uses fork in fist to feed
  
- **42-48 months**
  - demonstrates caution and avoids common dangers
  - eats well with fork and spoon
  - uses toilet independently when told
  - washes and dries hands
  - unbuttons and buttons
  - unbuckles belt
  
- **48-54 months**
  - puts on socks
  - dresses and undresses self except for laces and back buttons
  - puts shoes on correctly
  - zips
  - laces shoes
  - buckles belt
  - brushes teeth
  
- **54-60 months**
  - washes and dries face
  - wipes self independently
  - threads belt
  - spreads food with knife
  - uses fork, knife, and spoon competently
  - ties shoes
  - brushes and combs hair
  - blows nose