



Active Minds Active Bodies



Development of Key Motor Skills for Young Children

Over the years, toddlers and preschoolers master basic skills as they gain muscle control, balance, and coordination. Each new skill mastered allows a toddler or preschooler to progress to the next one. Motor skills such as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing and catching are the building blocks for more complex movements.

Key Milestones for Motor Skill Development

Although children follow a set pattern of development, each child will develop at their own pace. The actual age when a normally developing child reaches a certain milestone can vary quite a bit. Every child is unique!

Below are some examples of activities that are key milestones for motor skill development.

Early Toddler Skills (12-24 months)

- Walks independently
- Pulls toys while walking
- Stoops and gets back up
- Begins to run
- Kicks a ball
- Holds railing up/down stairs
- Walks backward

Older Toddler Skills (24-36 Months)

- Balances one to two seconds on one foot
- Climbs well
- Throws ball overhand
- Bends over easily without falling
- Runs and jumps well
- Kicks ball forward
- Alternates feet up and down stairs
- Pedals tricycle

Preschooler (by the end of 4 years)

- Hops and stands on one foot up to five seconds
- Goes upstairs and downstairs without support
- Kicks ball forward
- Throws ball overhand
- Catches bounced ball most of the time
- Moves forward and backward with agility

Kindergarten (by the end of 5 years)

- Stands on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- Hops, somersaults
- Swings, climbs
- May be able to skip

References:

Moving and Growing: Physical Activities for Twos, Threes, and Fours
Canadian Child Care Federation and Canadian Institute of Child Health; 2004.

Fit Kids: A practical Guide to Raising Healthy and Active Children from Birth to Teens
Mary Gavin, MD, Steven Dowson, MD & Neil Izenberg, MD; Heart and Stroke
Foundation of Canada; 2004.

American Academy of Paediatrics <http://www.aap.org>