

Early Childhood Developmental and Learning Milestones

Each developmental or learning milestone integrates the use of several abilities. This means that a given milestone needs to be considered in whichever domains are involved. This table highlights the domains that typically need to be considered for a specific milestone activity. However, it is important to consider that, for a particular child, abilities in other domains may be involved for these milestones depending on the unique effects of his or her impairment (or combination of impairments).

Timely achievement of a milestone suggests that the domains involved in that activity are more likely to be intact and uncompromised, although it is critically important that all relevant evidence be considered before coming to any such conclusion. Conversely, failure to achieve a milestone suggests that there may be limitations in one, several, or all of the domains involved in that activity. Again, all the relevant evidence must be evaluated to decide which domains involved in an activity are limited, and to what degree.

This table does not include the sixth domain, Health and Physical Well-being, since it does not focus on the progressive development and acquisition of skills. Instead, it focuses on the cumulative physical effects of impairments across a range of activities.

More detailed information about developmental milestones can be found in the student material from the IVT sessions on adaptive behavior. The document, Adaptive Function From A Developmental Perspective can be located in the file named "reference040803.doc" at:

<ftp://training.ba.ssa.gov/Public/IVTStudentMaterials/Disability/EvaluatingChildrenwithDisabilities/>

KEY: **A&UI** – Acquiring and Using Information;
A&CT – Attending and Completing Tasks;
I&RWO – Interacting and Relating With Others;
MA&MO – Moving About and Manipulating Objects;
CFY – Caring For Yourself

Early Childhood Developmental and Learning Milestones

	A&UI	A&CT	I&RWO	MA&MO	CFY
Newborns and Young Infants Birth to Age 1					
Establishes basic communication - goes from cooing to babbling to jargon to first words by 14 months; uses and coordinates gestures (e.g., to express want, infant points and gazes at caregiver)	X	X	X		X
Engages in purposeful actions (e.g., looks for hidden objects)	X	X		X	
Is talking or getting ready to talk	X		X		
Shows interest in and sensitivity to people, environment	X	X	X	X	
Explores faces, objects, spaces	X	X	X	X	X
Plays for short periods	X	X		X	X
Plays early interactive games (peek-a-boo)	X	X	X	X	
Claps hands, waves bye-bye			X	X	
Initiates communication with gestures, sounds		X	X	X	
Rolls, creeps, crawls, cruises				X	
Is preparing to walk				X	
Pokes with index finger				X	
Is developing pincer grasp (thumb and forefinger)				X	
Signals needs to caregivers			X		X
Shows beginning ability to self-soothe (e.g., sucks fingers)					X

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Older Infants and Toddlers Age 1 to Age 3					
Goes from first words around age 1 to 2-3 word sentences by age 2	X		X		
Speaks in full sentences and understands many rules of grammar (such as adding –s to the end of a word to show more than one) by age 3	X		X		
Uses and coordinates gestures along with language	X		X	X	
Corrects others when they misinterpret (“No, I want <i>that</i> ”)			X		X
Uses problem-solving skills (builds, solves simple puzzles, figures out how to “get into things”)	X	X		X	
Develops captive interest in older children			X		X
Loves to explore, gets mad when thwarted	X	X	X	X	X
May be easily frustrated but returns to task		X			X
Has short attention span for some activities (books, coloring) and much longer for others (television)	X	X			X
Likes to play games (early hide-and-seek)	X	X	X	X	X
Initiates communication			X		
Shows affection			X		X
Seeks comfort from caregivers			X		X
Becomes hesitant with strangers, upset at separation			X		X
Plays alongside other children but can be possessive and demanding			X	X	X
Walks smoothly, uses stairs				X	
Uses writing instruments (crayon, pencil)	X			X	
Can feed self using spoon				X	X
Drinks from sippy cup, uses straw				X	X
Tries to use words to signal needs	X		X		X
Indicates when uncomfortable (cold, wet)			X		X
Shows interest in bathing, dressing self				X	X

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Preschoolers Age 3 to Age 6					
Has large vocabulary, uses plurals, prepositions, pronouns, past and future tense	X		X		
Understands rules and directions	X	X	X		X
Speaks with increasing intelligibility			X		
Plays "pretend" using dolls, figures, friends; sorts and matches	X		X	X	X
Counts and writes some letters in name by age 5	X	X		X	
Demonstrates early reading and writing skills (simple sentences) by age 6	X	X		X	
Recognizes common signs and high frequency words	X	X			
Can retell simple stories (e.g., <i>Goldilocks</i> , <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> , <i>Where the Wild Things Are</i>)	X	X	X		
Plays simple interactive games and board games	X	X	X	X	
Plans, initiates, and executes activities of interest (e.g., coloring, finding favorite toys)	X	X		X	X
Tolerates enough frustration by age 6 to recover and complete tasks		X			X
Seeks support and assistance from others			X		X
Knows and can express basic emotions			X		X
Imitates others	X		X		
Responds to limits			X		X
Initiates conversation with children and adults			X		
Likes to tell stories	X		X		
Knows rules for home and community	X	X	X		X
Walks, runs smoothly				X	
Climbs easily				X	
Draws simple forms (people); uses scissors; writes letters of alphabet clearly	X			X	
Self-feeds with fork, spoon				X	X
Asks for help			X		X
Bathes, dresses and undresses (by age 6, including shoes) with supervision/support	X		X	X	X
Is fully potty trained by around age 4				X	X
Sleeps through night					X
Rarely has tantrums			X		X
Shows growing ability to self-soothe (at age 3, seeks comfort; by age 6, sometimes handles alone)					X

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LEARNING MILESTONES FOR CHILDREN FROM AGE 6 TO 18

	READING	WRITING	MATHEMATICS
<p>Ages 6 – 10: Elementary Gr. 1 through 5</p>	<p><u>Learning to read:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands that letters present sounds ▪ Sounds out unfamiliar words when reading ▪ Reads aloud with fluency & comprehension ▪ Reads text designed for grade level <p>Importance of Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forms basis for learning across areas ▪ Child moves from pre-reading in kindergarten to fluent, independent reading by 3rd grade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses letter awareness to spell ▪ Starts out simple (writing name) but can take message ▪ Writes stories by 3rd grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands numbers, quantity (e.g., which is more), fractions ▪ Shows consistent mastery of math facts that are taught at his/her grade level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1st grade: addition, subtraction, single digits, early fractions ▪ 2nd grade: addition, subtraction, double digits, fractions ▪ 3rd grade: multiplication, division ▪ 4th grade and older: skills and demands more complex, including word problems

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	READING	WRITING	MATHEMATICS
Ages 11 – 13: Elementary Gr. 6 through 8	<u>Reading to Learn:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads independently with good comprehension Reads chapter books, novels Learns new vocabulary words and follows instructions through reading Uses reading to learn about interests, hobbies, school subjects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writes compositions, consulting references such as books Writes using proper grammar and spelling; writing is legible Uses computer for writing and other applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops higher math skills; beginning algebra and geometry Understands weights and measures; percentages Performs complex math problems with many steps; word problems
Ages 14 – 18: High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches adult-level proficiency & independence Fairly sophisticated listening & speaking skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very abstract math skills for college track Basic skills for others
	TRANSITION		
Ages 14 – 18: High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal/educational - (graduation, college entry, vocational planning) Informal/adaptive – skills for independent living and community participation (unique issues for special education students) <p>Requirements under IDEA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From age 14: IEP/team must address student’s transition needs From age 16: IEP/team must plan transition, including role of other agencies 		

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Red Flags

Red flags are indicators that a child’s development may be delayed or progressing in an atypical way. An activity (or range of activities) that is delayed or atypical may indicate limitations in more than one domain. This table highlights the domains that typically need to be considered if a particular red flag is noted. However, you may need to consider other domains for a particular child depending on the unique effects of his/her impairment (or combination of impairments).

The domain Health and Physical well-being is included in this chart because some red flags could indicate limitations related to the physical effects of impairments not evaluated in the domain Moving About and Manipulating Objects. Such limitations would be considered in the domain Health and Physical Well-being.

	A&UI	A&CT	I&RWO	MA&MO	CFY	H&PW
Birth to Age 6						
Does not use all senses to explore the environment in typical ways	R	R		R		R
Does not use language expected for age, cannot be understood, or uses words in strange or unusual ways	R		R			
Does not play with siblings, other children, especially if interest in others is limited			R		R	
Exhibits unusual features such as obsession with certain objects or parts of objects			R		R	
Is not keeping up with peers in terms of kindergarten readiness (counting, colors, ABCs), early reading and writing	R	R				

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Infant/toddler (birth to age 3): Does not play simple interactive games that are typical for age	☒	☒	☒	☒		
Preschooler (age 3 to age 6): Does not initiate and execute play or games typical for age	☒	☒	☒	☒		
Is described as: Out of control, very difficult to handle, too easily startled, in own world, cannot concentrate (even if child can watch TV for extended periods of time)		☒	☒		☒	
Needs intensive supervision		☒	☒		☒	☒
Frustrates very easily, and does not recover easily even with support		☒	☒		☒	
Is not able to control self; hits, kicks, or otherwise tries to harm others or property			☒		☒	
Does not respond to limits	☒		☒		☒	
Cannot follow home and community rules; has frequent tantrums	☒	☒	☒		☒	
Does not use and coordinate gesture with language			☒	☒		
Does not use nonverbal communication (gestures, other body language) or nonverbal communication is not well-coordinated	☒		☒	☒		
Behavior seems inconsistent with mood (laughing when situation would call for anger or sadness)					☒	
Does not walk or run smoothly enough for recreational activities				☒		☒

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Has difficulty with handwriting, using utensils, and other fine motor tasks as expected for age and culture (assuming exposure in own culture)	Ⓜ			Ⓜ		Ⓜ
Does not ask others for help when needed			Ⓜ		Ⓜ	
Does not feed, dress, toilet self, or do other, similar activities expected for age		Ⓜ		Ⓜ	Ⓜ	
Exhibits dangerous behavior, including running into road, suicidal behavior, injury to self or others			Ⓜ		Ⓜ	
School Age (Age 6 – 11) and Adolescent (Age 12 – 18)						
Has trouble remembering or applying information learned from one situation to the next	Ⓜ	Ⓜ				
Has limited conversational skills			Ⓜ			
Produces language (when speaking or writing) that is poor or overly simple	Ⓜ		Ⓜ			
Cannot comprehend written material at grade level	Ⓜ	Ⓜ				
Receives poor grades and/or teacher reports	Ⓜ	Ⓜ	Ⓜ		Ⓜ	
Does not attend or concentrate to finish things (school work, chores, etc.); distractible		Ⓜ				
Is easily frustrated or gives up easily		Ⓜ			Ⓜ	
Is described as: Out of control, very difficult to handle, too easily startled, in own world, cannot concentrate (even if child can watch TV for extended periods of time)		Ⓜ	Ⓜ		Ⓜ	
Needs intensive supervision		Ⓜ	Ⓜ		Ⓜ	Ⓜ

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Is not able to control self; hits, kicks, or otherwise tries to harm others or property			Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Makes no or limited response to limits			Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Cannot follow home and community rules	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Has frequent tantrums; is explosive		Ⓟ			Ⓟ	
Cannot identify or manage emotions (e.g., talk about feeling mad)			Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Is not in touch with reality	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Does not understand consequences of actions, or cannot control behavior despite understanding of consequences	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Is not walking or running smoothly enough for recreational activities				Ⓟ		Ⓟ
Has difficulty with handwriting, using utensils and tools				Ⓟ		Ⓟ
Does not ask others for help when needed			Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Cannot be left for even a short period without supervision		Ⓟ	Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Doesn't have any hobbies or interests	Ⓟ	Ⓟ	Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Exhibits dangerous behavior, including running into road, suicidal behavior; injury to self or others			Ⓟ		Ⓟ	
Cannot organize self to keep track of chores or homework, or plan time to take care of these		Ⓟ			Ⓟ	
Cannot manage money (e.g., by age 12 should be able to count change)	Ⓟ	Ⓟ			Ⓟ	

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Is not independent in keeping up grooming and other personal care (e.g., staying clean and well-groomed, dressing in anticipation of weather)					Ⓜ	
Additional Red Flags for Adolescents (Ages 14 – 18): Transition						
No work experience (if work-age)	Ⓜ	Ⓜ	Ⓜ		Ⓜ	Ⓜ
Poor work history	Ⓜ	Ⓜ	Ⓜ		Ⓜ	
Cannot handle workplace demands (compared to structured school situation)	Ⓜ	Ⓜ	Ⓜ		Ⓜ	
Academic skills and literacy marginal	Ⓜ	Ⓜ				
Cannot manage money	Ⓜ	Ⓜ			Ⓜ	

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