

The Importance of Tracking Your Baby's Development

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Tracking your baby's growth is more than just monitoring their height and weight gain in the early months. Even though babies develop at their own pace, every baby should meet the infant milestones by a certain age, or early intervention is needed. Knowing the physical, speech, cognitive, and play milestones for your baby and checking to be sure they are reaching them on time is crucial to ensure that any signs of delay are evaluated by your healthcare provider.

Parents do not anticipate that their child will have a developmental delay, however, in the current climate of 1 in 10 children having ADHD, 1 in 20 having a learning disability, 1 in 88 falling within the autistic spectrum, and with over 500,000 premature babies born annually; parents need to monitor their child's developmental milestones more than ever. Early detection with early intervention is the key to minimizing or eliminating any issues that may arise.

An informed parent or caregiver is the best advocate for their child and will have a better understanding of their child's overall growth and development. All stages of development are important and should not be skipped if you want your child to progress in a normal sequence. If your child is struggling in a certain area, you can give that area a little more focus and attention until you see the emergence of the required skills. When that skill is acquired, the stage of development is reached. Various play activities and exercises should be provided to the child on a daily basis for optimal skill development.

If your toddler is 24 months (2 years of age) and you are working on 24 month old skills when they are developmentally at a 15-month old level, you are setting your toddler up for failure. The activities and exercises will be too hard, and may cause frustration and avoidance of the activities. For example, if your child's hand movements are not developed or they are not processing through their eyes efficiently, they will have difficulty with coloring, drawing, cutting, and completing simple shape puzzles.

A secret to achieving higher proficiency levels is to focus on building a strong foundation of sensory integration skills. This is done through stimulation of the vestibular system, which regulates the integration all of our senses. The vestibular system can be enhanced by the following activities:

- Rocking
- Swinging
- Jumping
- Bouncing
- Balancing
- Dancing
- Walking
- Running

Sensory Integration (also called Sensory Processing) is the brain's ability to interpret, organize, and respond to the information that it receives through our senses for functional behavior. Our sensory system is made up of seven basic senses: smell, touch, taste, vision/visual perception, hearing/auditory processing, movement/balance, and kinesthesia/muscle tone. Our brain receives sensory messages and turns them into responses. This helps us orient to the world around us. It helps us relax, concentrate, and move safely throughout our day. The more effective our nervous system processes the information it receives, the better our responses to the stimulus, and more coordinated, or "in sync," we become with our environment.

Paula Tarver, OTR/L and Jeanne Martin, OTR/L are co-authors of *Advance My Baby*. Babies are not born with a how-to manual, but this is what you have with *Advance My Baby*. You can now put into place the building blocks that lead to academic success, athletic prowess, emotional balance and social acceptance. For the first time, instruction is provided for the first 36 months of life that create the ultimate foundation for your baby.

Advance My Baby, is the first parent-friendly manual to address all areas of development. Each chapter covers developmental areas of gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, language, emotional/social, and self-care skills with color photos, graphics, and activities/exercises for your baby. It is a self-help manual for parents that will empower and equip them with the developmental knowledge necessary for their child to reach their full potential. **AMB On-Line Assessment** is designed to track your baby's development from birth to 36 months. It will measure your baby's progress of developmental milestones in six categories: Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Cognitive, Language, Self-care, and Social/Emotional skills. Please visit our website at www.advancemybaby.com