

FINE MOTOR AND ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING MILESTONES: 0 MONTHS – 6 YEARS

The following milestones can vary widely among children, and some children may develop certain skills earlier or later than expected. Regular monitoring, support and exposure to activities that help develop these milestones is essential for helping children achieve independence in fine motor skills and activities of daily living such as feeding and dressing. For more information, please see our fine motor and activities of daily living video resources along with our other handouts for recommendations.

First, let's define what are fine motor skills and activities of daily living skills!

- Fine motor skills refer to the ability to use the small muscles in the hands, fingers, and wrists to perform precise movements. These skills are necessary for tasks such as writing, drawing, buttoning, tying shoelaces, self-feeding or using utensils, and manipulating small objects. Fine motor skills develop over time, beginning as an infant and continuing to improve as a person matures.
- Activities of daily living (or ADLs) refer to the routine tasks or activities that children typically engage in throughout their day, which are essential for their independence, health, and well-being. For children, ADLs are broken down into various categories based on their age and developmental stage. These activities are important for children to learn in order to participate fully in family, school, and social environments. Examples of ADLs include self-care skills such as bathing, brushing teeth, grooming, dressing, toileting, along with feeding skills such as using utensils, drinking from a cup to name a few. When participating in ADLs, children use their fine motor, eye-hand coordination as well as their planning and problem-solving skills!

0-3 Months:

Fine Motor/Perceptual Milestones:

- Reflexive grasp (e.g., palmar grasp) on objects that touch the hand.
- Beginning to open and close fists.
- Starts to reach for dangling objects
- Focuses momentarily on face or soft light
- Follows a moving object horizontally, vertically, and through most of a circular path
- Developing head and neck control, leading to improved arm and hand movement.

Feeding Milestones:

- Primarily relies on breastfeeding or bottle-feeding. Mouth movements are reflexive.

Dressing Milestones:

- Assistance needed with all dressing tasks (e.g., being undressed and dressed).

3-6 Months:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Reflexive grasp becomes more purposeful; holds toys with a "raking" motion.
 - A raking grasp uses the fingers (but not yet fully coordinated) to "rake" or sweep objects toward the palm, rather than picking them up with a more refined pincer grasp (using the thumb and index finger). In this grasp, the child might use the whole hand or just the fingers in a sweeping motion to pull an object toward them. This is an early stage of fine motor development and gradually progresses to more controlled grasps as the child matures.
- Starts to explore toys and objects with hands (banging, shaking, and mouthing).
- Beginning to manipulate objects with both hands.
- Moves head to track objects
- Plays with own hands
- Continues to reach for dangling objects
- Transfers toy from hand to hand

Feeding Milestones:

- Can hold a bottle with support, begins to show interest in solid foods (solids may potentially be introduced later in this developmental phase).

Dressing Milestones:

- Assistance needed with all dressing tasks (e.g., being undressed and dressed).

6-9 Months:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Begins using a pincer grasp (thumb and index finger) to pick up small objects.
- Continues transferring toys from hand to hand.
- Pulls pegs out of pegboard.
- Grasps small items by "raking" accurately.
- Started pressing buttons to elicit cause and effect toys.

Feeding Milestones:

- Can feed themselves finger foods, may begin to drink from a cup with assistance.

Dressing Milestones:

- May begin to assist in undressing (pulling off hat). Able to hold up arms and legs for easier dressing.

9-12 Months:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Improved pincer grasp, able to pick up smaller items like peas or other small food pieces.
- Can point at objects with index finger or poke with isolated index finger.
- Attempts to scribble by holding a crayon to paper.
- Holds a crayon adaptively (not an efficient grasp).
- Able to interact with cause and effect toys by pressing a variety of buttons.
- Claps hands.
- Drops items with a voluntary release.

Feeding Milestones:

- Can hold and drink from a bottle or sippy cup.
- Begins to explore self-feeding with spoons (but may be messy).
- Able to bite through soft foods.

Dressing Milestones:

- Removes hat, removes socks.
- Attempts to put hat on.
- Assists with dressing by holding arm up for sleeve, pushing arm into sleeve, pushing leg into pants, holding foot up for shoe.

12-18 Months:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Place things into container and dumps the container.
- Turns the page of a cardboard book or opens a thick covered book.
- Places 6 pegs in pegboard.
- Places large rings on a large peg.
- Begins to hold and manipulate crayons, pencils, or markers with a "fisted" grip.
- Starts to build simple towers (2-3 blocks).
- Places round puzzle piece in shape sorting puzzle (when square, triangle and circle shapes are presented).
- Scribbles spontaneously and imitates a crayon stroke.
- Puts small item (such as a Cheerio) into a small opening (such as a bottle).

Feeding Milestones:

- Can feed self with a spoon messily.
- Drinks from an open cup with some spilling.
- Starts exploring the use of a straw for drinking.

Dressing Milestones:

- Removes hat, removes socks, removes shoes.
- Puts hat on.
- Assists with dressing by pushing arm into sleeve and leg into pants.
- Begins to pull up/down large zippers.

18-24 Months:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Uses a more mature grasp for utensils, such as holding a spoon with a more functional grip, using mostly fingers rather than fist.
- Stacks 6 blocks.
- Engages in simple puzzles (3-piece shape sorting puzzle with square, triangle and circle shapes).
- Imitates a vertical and circular scribble after seeing an adult draw these items.
- Able to pull apart resistive toys such as Velcro toys or pop beads.

Feeding Milestones:

- Eats a variety of finger foods, uses a spoon with increasing skill, and drinks from a cup independently.
- Able to use a straw.

Dressing Milestones:

- Removes some loose-fitting clothing independently and can help push pants down from standing for toileting practice.
- Removes shoes.
- May start to put on loose clothing (e.g., shoes, pants with elastic waistband) with minimal assistance.
- Can pull up zipper once fastened at the bottom, can pull zipper down.
- May remove coat with minimal assistance, especially for zipper.

Toileting Milestones:

- May indicate need to use the toilet.
- May start toilet training.

2-3 Years:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Draws vertical and horizontal strokes after demonstration. Scribbles with circular motion. Copies a circle after it's already drawn and they did not see how to draw the circle (close to 3 years old).
- Builds towers with 8+ blocks.
- Begins to manipulate smaller objects with wrist rotation, such as turning knobs, opening containers or bottles.

- Uses tongs to pick up small objects and move them to another location such as a bowl.
- Makes a single snip with scissors.
- Strings ½” beads on a shoelace.
- Hand preference begins to show.
- Matches colours and up to 4 shapes.
- Unbuttons 1 large button.

Feeding Milestones:

- Can feed themselves independently using a spoon and fork, with limited spills.

Dressing Milestones:

- Removes elastic waist pants independently.
- Puts on jacket, shirt, dress.
- Puts shoes on with minimal assistance.
- Attempts to put socks on.

Toileting Milestones:

- Gets on/off toilet.
- Indicates need to toilet and uses the toilet during the day with few accidents (may require some help with tighter clothing and to clean self).
- May require reminders and/or diapers at night or during naps.
- The following resource has some great information regarding toilet training:
[https://jmccentre.ca/ckuploads/files/AODA%2050 Toilet training.pdf](https://jmccentre.ca/ckuploads/files/AODA%2050%20Toilet%20training.pdf)

3-4 Years:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Pencil grasp begins to mature and a tripod or quadrupod grasp (thumb, index, and middle fingers) for writing and drawing is used some of the time or the majority of the time.
- Isolates the thumb to show “thumbs up”.
- Builds 10+ block tower.
- Can imitate simple block designs such as a train, bridge and wall with 3-4 blocks.
- Imitates drawing a cross after seeing how to draw the cross (3 years) then copies a cross (3.5 years).
- Screws and unscrews objects such as a bottle cap.
- Completes an 8-piece shape sorting puzzle, along with simple interlocking puzzles (4-6 pieces).
- Demonstrates a clear hand preference.
- Laces string into 3 holes of a lacing strip (3.5 years).
- Can cut across paper with forward movement, then will progress to cutting along a thick straight line. Once able to cut along a line, can cut along a thick curved and angled line with scissors.
- Able to unbutton regular-sized buttons.

Feeding Milestones:

- Can eat independently with minimal mess, and drinks from a regular cup.

Dressing Milestones:

- Puts on simple clothing with some assistance (e.g., shirts, shoes, pants with zippers or buttons).
- Pulls up pants or skirts independently.
- Puts shoes on independently.
- Puts jacket on independently, may need assistance with fastening zipper. Removes jacket independently.
- Removes all clothing independently.
- Can turn clothing right-side out.

Toileting Milestones:

- Uses the toilet during the day and night with almost no accidents.
- Still requires some help with wiping and with some clothing.

4-5 Years:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Uses a tripod or quadrupod grasp (thumb, index, and middle fingers) for writing and drawing.
- Can complete basic puzzles (10-20 pieces).
- Draws a person with 3 parts.
- Imitates and then copies a square (4-4.5 years). Able to copy diagonal lines.
- Cuts out simple shapes like circle and square with scissors.
- Prints name.
- Visual-motor integration continues improving, such as being able to draw within horizontal and vertical paths (like a maze).
- Able to lace using a shoelace to go in and out of holes with a running stitch.
- Connects dots (such as a dot-to-dot activity).
- Traces a square and triangle.
- Builds with Lego and other building-type toys.
- Able to touch each finger to thumb separately.
- Buttons and unbuttons independently.

Feeding Milestones:

- Can use a knife and fork with greater independence, though may still need assistance with cutting food.

Dressing Milestones:

- Dresses and undresses independently, though may need assistance with buttons, zippers, or laces. May be able to fasten basic buttons or zippers.

Toileting Milestones:

- Independent with toileting. May still require reminders to use the washroom throughout the day.
- Able to wash hands independently.

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5-6 Years:

Fine Motor Milestones:

- Ties a knot
- Draws a simple picture and a person with five parts.
- Colours a small picture, while filling in the white space and being aware of boundaries.
- Draws within angled and curved paths.
- Prints letters, numbers and simple words using efficient letter formations.
- Cuts out shapes and pictures with scissors.
- Hand dominance is well-established.

Feeding Milestones:

- Can prepare simple meals or snacks independently (e.g., spreading butter, pouring a drink).

Dressing:

- Dresses and undresses independently, including fasteners like buttons, zippers, and shoe laces.
Can tie shoes with help, or may be able to do so independently with practice.