

The Understanding the Early Years Initiative is funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. For further information, visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca

Contact Laurie Lafortune, Project Coordinator, at Family Services of Central Alberta (403-343-6400) for more information about the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) project in Red Deer. Or visit www.fsca.ca

Written by Donna Morrison

Remember that play is FUNdamental!



Encouraging Your Child's Development Through Play

- Children love to help. Involve them in sorting laundry, matching socks, setting the table, folding towels, and putting things away.
- Cardboard boxes are the best toys ever. Paint, colour, and draw on them, and make them into boats, trucks, houses... This activity encourages problem solving.
- Explore the city with your child. Take along some paints or markers and encourage the children to create pictures of what they see.
- Get active with your children. Red Deer has great playgrounds and walking trails. Explore and develop physical skills.
- Put together a box of old jewellery. Talk about the types, sort them, try them on and play dress up. Try this with buttons too!
- Simple things can present new learning opportunities. Go for a bus ride on the public transit and talk about what you see and hear. Encourage curiosity.
- Messy play can be encouraged by doing it with the children.
- Homemade play dough is easy to make. Try finger painting with pudding or playing with set jello in your fingers.
- Cutting and pasting is always fun and children never tire of this – add buttons, glitter, string and the kids will show their creativity.
- Stuff old socks and make them into puppets. Involve the child in pretend play, creating characters and using voices.
- There are few opportunities with more potential for learning than cooking with your child. Read, measure, pour, stir... and eat! Children are more likely to try new foods if they have been involved in the preparation of their snacks and meals. And they love it!
- Use opportunities to show children "talk can be written down." Make grocery lists, develop greeting cards, and read books to your child for at least 15 minutes each day.

Information Sheet Child Development in The Early Years

Why Are the first 5 Years so Important?

- From the moment of conception, development is taking place. All later learning is based on a firm foundation.
- At birth the child has about 100 billion nerve cells in the brain!
- Research on brain development tells us that the child's capacity to learn, to create, to love, to trust, and to develop a strong sense of self are determined during the first five years of life.
- Adults have a critical role in nurturing, supporting, and interacting with children to stimulate their growth and development.

Explore, Play and Learn Together

Think about your child's abilities and accomplishments as you review the child development chart. Also keep in mind the personality of your child as you consider his/her skills.

We have presented some ideas to support your child in these developmental areas.

There are many natural opportunities throughout the day to promote development. You can create a world of interesting and fun learning experiences for your child in the home and in the community.

Putting the Pieces Together

Child development has different areas that can be looked at separately but also put together to make up the whole child.

- **Physical:** how children use both large muscles and small muscles to do many things
- **Self-help:** learning to do things on their own and become independent
- **Social:** interacting with others, having relationships, and responding to others' feelings
- **Emotional:** developing and using a full range of appropriate emotions
- **Intellectual:** developing problem solving skills and communicating through listening and speaking



What is Child Development?

Child development refers to how children become able to do more complex things as they get older.

Development is different than growth. Growth only refers to the child getting bigger in size, but development is more about how they are developing skills.

Developmental milestones are a set of skills or age-related tasks that most children can do at a certain age range.

Remember, every child is an individual and develops at his or her own rate.

Every child is unique!



Child Development Chart – The First Five Years

Children develop at different rates within these general guidelines. If you have concerns about your child's development, contact a health professional.

Age	Physical: Large Muscle	Small Muscle	Self-Help	Social	Emotional	Intellectual: Thinking	Communicating
Birth to 6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifts head and chest up when lying on tummy Rolls over Kicks legs alternatively Will take weight on legs when held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picks up toy with one hand Moves toy from hand to mouth Reaches for faces and toys Bangs spoon placed in hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comforts self with thumb or pacifier Reacts to sight of bottle or breast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguishes mother from others Social smile Tries to imitate facial expressions and gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expresses many emotions: sadness, anger, happiness Rapid mood changes Holds hands up to be held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoys examining and banging objects Remains alert 2 hours at a time Plays with hands – presses palms and clasps hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocalizes spontaneously: coos and chuckles Reacts to voices Turns head to sound
6 Months to 12 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walks around furniture or crib when holding on Sits up from lying down Crawls well Sits alone unsupported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picks up small objects with thumb and finger grasp Transfers toy from one hand to other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picks up spoon by handle Able to manage and eat small finger foods such as toddler cookies and small cereal pieces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plays patty-cake and peek-a-boo Imitates others Pushes away things not liked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May have temper tantrums Enjoys picture books Shows affection Greets familiar adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to stand and look out the window Throws toys on purpose Realizes a thing still exists when it is out of sight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands words like “no”, “stop”, “all gone” Makes word sounds like “mama” and “dada” Responds to name – turns and looks
12 Months to 18 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walks without holding on to something Runs Throws a ball Dances to music Rides on small wheeled toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scribbles with crayon Picks up small toys with one hand Stacks two or more blocks Fills and empties containers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks for food or drink with words or sounds Follows simple directions, e.g. “bring me the cup” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greets people with “hi” or similar words Gives hugs and kisses Does not share well Fights limit setting Egocentric – thinks world exists for self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becomes more of an individual Displays curiosity and gets into things Tries everything out without a sense of danger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notifies very small objects and points to them when asked Points to body parts Chooses own toys and desired activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks for food or drink with words Talks in single words Understands simple directions
18 Months to 2 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pulls toys on a string Runs easily Kicks a ball forward Walks upstairs, alternating feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turns pages of picture books, one at a time Builds towers of six or more blocks Takes lids off jars Completes simple inset puzzle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Puts on hats, scarves, shoes Follows 2 part instructions, e.g. “bring me the cup and sit in your chair” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plays alongside another child Might get frustrated and hit, bite, pull hair Usually responds to correction – stops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very curious Wants a lot of attention Wants needs met right away Reluctant to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names parts of the body Understands “today” and “soon”, but not “yesterday” Identifies self in a photograph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaks 10 – 20 words and understands many more words Understands and follows more complex directions
2 Years to 3 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balances on one foot for a moment Uses pedals on a trike and steers well Climbs on play equipment, ladders and slides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuts with small scissors Copies vertical lines or circles Builds a tower of nine or more blocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dresses self with some help Washed and dries hands Opens door by turning knob 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoys being in a play group Plays a role in pretend Helps with simple household tasks Shows empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affectionate to others Will wait a bit for needs to be met Shows fears but is able to be settled down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sorts objects Classifies objects by purpose Counts three objects Says name and age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands four prepositions, e.g. in, on, under, beside Speech is understandable Talks in phrases or sentences
3 Years to 4 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throws, catches, kicks and bounces a ball Sits cross-legged Hops on one foot Gets up from a squatting position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuts across a paper with small scissors Draws a complete circle Folds paper Draws a person with three parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dresses and undresses without help except for tying and buttons Washes face without help Toilet trained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to understand concept of sharing Takes turns Gives directions to other children Protective towards younger children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plays independently Uses humour more in play and conversation Controls frustration and anger better Shows persistence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matches simple pictures Recalls events in the past Understands concepts like nearest and longest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands concepts, e.g. size, number, shape Combines sentences with words “and” or “but”
4 Years to 5 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balances on either foot easily for about 10 seconds Walks along a thin line Skips or makes broad jumps Swings, pumping self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prints first name Draws recognizable pictures using lines and basic shapes Holds pencil between thumb and forefinger Cuts and pastes Consistently uses one hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dresses self independently Feeds self using fork and spoon Goes to toilet without help Buttons one or more buttons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plays cooperatively with 2-5 children Makes friends easily Follows simple game rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrious – enjoys making things Shows confidence and independence Reassures friends when they are upset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinks out a plan before doing it Can count to 10 Names five colors Remembers stories and songs Sorts objects by shape, color, size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tells meaning of familiar words Reads about 5 letters Can attend and focus for up to 20 minutes