

Early Learning Parents' Pages

February 2017



– “How many times do I have to **tell** you?” Sound familiar?

– Smiles can indicate dental health **and** social development.

Your child's social development timeline – the 1st year

The doctor places your newborn in your arms the first time.

You look down and he seems to look back at you. You feel the love and know you are connecting with him. During those first few weeks of your child's life, he is becoming a “social being.” He cannot talk but he is learning to communicate through sounds and expressions. This is the beginning of your child's social development.

During your child's first year, you will see your baby grow physically almost weekly. You can weigh and measure him to record his growth. How do you measure your child's social growth? What do you look for? Doctors and early childhood specialists look for social growth indicators to determine your child's social development. You can use these [milestones](#) to keep track of your child's progress and growth in social skills. During his first year, your child will learn to connect with people in his life and to communicate his needs and feelings.

From birth to 3 months, he will learn to make eye contact with others and coo or cry to let you know how he feels. He will begin to smile and may try to mimic some of your expressions.

From 3-6 months, he will smile when he sees you and will begin to laugh. He will interact with people and enjoys playing simple games like peek-a-boo or watch you hiding a toy and bringing it back out. He answers sounds with sounds, imitates

others' expressions and responds to their emotions. At this point, if your child does **not** smile for family members and caregivers, avoids eye contact and does not interact with you and other family members, you need to let his pediatrician know. From 6-9 months, your child will prefer to be with family members or caregivers and may begin to show [separation anxiety](#) when you leave. He may be interested in watching or touching other babies. He will respond to his name, copy sounds and gestures and make many different sounds like “mamama” and “dadada.” From 10-12 months, he will enjoy playing **near** other children but not **with** them. This is *parallel play*. He likes to watch other children and often imitates their actions. His separation anxiety may get worse. He has favorite things and people. He enjoys interacting with familiar people and plays games like pat-a-cake. He likes listening to you read him a story. He will respond to simple requests and waves “bye-bye.” He tries to repeat words he hears you say. In just 12 months, your child has become a little person who has developed his own unique set of social skills!



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Smile! It's National Dental Health Month

February is National Children's Dental Health Month – a perfect time to focus on healthy teeth and gums with your child. If you have a baby who is teething or has no teeth, wipe her gums daily with a soft, clean, damp washcloth or infant-sized toothbrush and water (no toothpaste). Brush her first tooth with water and a tiny amount of fluoride toothpaste as soon as it appears above the gums and replace her toothbrush every three months. As soon as she has two teeth starting

to touch, begin flossing them. Flossing her teeth and having



her watch you brush and floss **your** teeth are important so she gets used to flossing and brushing early. When your child's baby teeth come in, continue to brush her teeth at least twice daily. Never allow your baby to fall asleep with a bottle or sippy cup in her mouth. Tooth decay can result from milk or juice remaining in her mouth while she sleeps.

As she gets older, teach your child how to brush her teeth properly and to brush her teeth for two minutes twice a day, being careful to brush the front, sides and back of each tooth. Make sure she has a toothbrush with soft bristles designed for her age and replace it with a new one every three months. Have her use a pea-size amount or less of fluoride toothpaste when she brushes. Caution her not to swallow toothpaste or eat it out of the tube because fluoride can be harmful in large amounts.

The American Dental Association recommends children visit the dentist within six months of having their first tooth. The dentist will be able to see any potential problems and talk to you about the proper way to care

for your child's baby teeth.

The National Education Association sponsors dental health month and recommends parents have children brush their teeth twice a day and read or be read to 20 minutes a day. You can download their daily log, [My Brushing and Reading Log](#), for your child to keep track of her brushing and reading each day. If your child is too young to keep track, you can fill out the chart for her. NEA has a list of children's books about taking care of their teeth, [Oral Health Books for Kids](#). This year's campaign slogan, "Choose Tap Water for a Sparkling Smile," encourages having your child drink water instead of juice or sugary drinks throughout the day to help prevent tooth decay. For more activities and resources, visit the [ADA website](#) or the [NEA website](#). If your child is a preschooler, she may enjoy the video, [Sid the Science Kid - episode: A Brush with Teeth](#) or the [Teeth Investigation](#) from PBS.



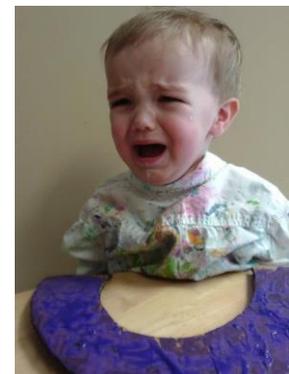
Your baby is teething

Your 6-month-old child is fussy and drooling. He wants to chew on any object he grasps. Your baby is probably teething and soon you may see his first tooth. During this phase of teething, you can give your child something safe to chew on such as a rubber teething ring or a clean, cool wet washcloth. This may soothe his swollen gums and satisfy his need to chew. Never put a teething ring or washcloth in the freezer because frozen objects may bruise your child's gums. Whatever object your child prefers to chew on should be large enough so the baby cannot get the whole object in his mouth and strong enough not to break into small pieces that he may swallow.



You can try rubbing a clean finger over his gums or feeding him cool foods such as refrigerated applesauce or baby food. If your child's discomfort is disrupting his sleeping or eating patterns, check with the pediatrician to see if you can give your child acetaminophen or

ibuprofen (if your child is older than 6 months) to help ease the pain of teething. If your child has a fever, you should call the doctor's office for advice. For more information on [teething](#) visit the [Kids Health website](#) or [Healthy Children .org](#).



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Valentine's Day

Children love Valentine's Day, the bright colors and sweet treats! Focus on the meaning, by making your child feel loved and appreciated and helping him show others kindness and love.

As a family, find ways for each member to express love and appreciation for each other. Get a plastic jar for each one to use as a "Love Bank." Write each family member's name on it. Have children in the family decorate the jars with markers or use stickers or glue pictures. Give each family member small hearts with each family member's name written on the front. Ask each one to write or draw on the back of the hearts what he or she loves about each family member and place the hearts in the jars. On Valentine's Day, each person will open their own "Love Bank" and read the messages on the hearts. You will have to help younger children write or draw on the hearts and read the messages to them. Family members can keep their "Love Banks" and read the messages when they feel sad or lonely.



Plan a Valentine's Day scavenger hunt. It can be fun and reinforce good habits you want your child to develop. Put clues on hearts placed around the house. Use special clues for each family member. Young children may need picture clues. Put the first clue on the family member's pillow or nightstand. Write clues that remind them of things they do well or need to do as part of the family. For example, "Thanks for remembering to brush your teeth after breakfast." Then place the second clue by the toothbrush holder. The second clue may be, "I love that you remember to bring your lunchbox home each day," and the third clue would be on the lunch box. That clue may be "You have a special treat in your lunchbox for lunch today" and you would have a special treat for snack for lunch in the lunchbox. Think of different clues for each family member.

Another way to show appreciation for others is to help your child make special Valentine's cards or treats and deliver them to the elderly, fire fighters or police officers in your community, or mail them to [veterans](#) or [men and women currently in the military](#). For more Valentines' Day ideas, visit <http://to.pbs.org/1Urib5J>.

Read across America



Reading to your child is one of the best ways to encourage her to read and helps her develop many early literacy skills. March 2 is [Read Across America Day](#) – a perfect way to celebrate reading as a family. Many schools and child care providers have special activities to encourage reading for the children that day and you can continue the fun at

home. We celebrate Read Across America on Dr. Seuss' birthday, so there are many [activities](#) related to his children's books. His character, the Cat in the Hat, is the "face" of the event.

Start the day off serving *Green Eggs and Ham* for breakfast and read the story to her while she eats. Use food coloring to make the eggs green. Give your child *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish* for her snack using colored Goldfish crackers and [fish treat sandwiches](#) for lunch. Read the book during snack and lunch. Serve [Who Hash](#) and [The Cat's Hat Kabobs](#) for dinner. Read *Horton Hears a Who* before dinner and *The Cat in the Hat* after dinner. End the day with a glass of [Pink Ink Yink Drink](#) like the yink in *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish* and have your child pick out her favorite book to read together at bedtime.

Make a habit of reading to your child every day. Take her to the library to get her own library card and let her help you pick out books she would like to read with you. Set aside a special reading time each day, such as before bedtime or before dinner. You may enjoy reading to her while she is playing in the bathtub.

Explore Dr. Seuss' books to find your child's favorites:

<http://www.seussville.com/#/books>

Tips for reading with your child:

<http://www.seussville.com/with-your-children>

Suggestions for raising a reader from the PBS show – *Between the Lions*:

<http://www.nea.org/grants/raising-a-reader.html>.



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Getting preschoolers to cooperate

You worry that your preschool child does not hear well. You have to call him numerous times before he answers. When he is in the same room with you, you tell him to stop playing with his blocks and get ready for bed. He does not respond and keeps on building. Then, you whisper something to another family member about going to a movie and he asks, "Can I go to the movie with you?" This means he **does** hear you, but chooses not to comply with your request.

In the book *The Top 10 Preschool Parenting Problems*, Rosalyn Duffy lists non-compliance as the #2 parenting problem for parents of preschoolers. She separates non-compliance issues into four categories: How Many Times Do I Have to Tell You?; Say It-Do It; the Car Seat Crisis and Cooperation Begins with Me.

Does this sound familiar? How many times do I have to tell you to

- Pick up your toys?
- Put on your shoes?
- Put your books on the shelf?

If you keep telling your child repeatedly to do something, what message are you sending? When you set rules or expectations and keep reminding him numerous times, then he is not taking responsibility for his behavior or his belongings. You are doing all of the

reminding and he does not have to remember what to do.

Come up with a plan to help him remember. Tell him, "When I say it is 10 minutes until bath time, you need to put away your toys and your books." Every night say, "It is 10 minutes until bath time. Show me what you need to do." Praise him when he starts picking up his toys and books and tell him he will get to play before bath time tomorrow because he put away his toys and books.



At first, you may have to help him put his things away, but soon he should be able to do this himself. If he refuses, tell him he may play with only one toy or book before bedtime tomorrow night and make sure to follow through. If he puts away the toy and book the next night, then allow him to have a few toys and books before bath time until he is in the habit of putting all of his things away in the 10 minutes before bath time. Sometimes changing the environment helps your child comply quicker. Labeling shelves or baskets with pictures will help your child know where his toys and books belong and make it easier for him to find them and easier to put them away.

Find more tips about getting your preschooler to cooperate on the Office of Early Learning website at this link: <http://bit.ly/2jUWPaf>.

March Upcoming Events

- March is National Read Aloud Month **and** National Nutrition Month
- St. Patrick's Day
- Earned Income Tax Credit
- Time to apply for Gardiner Scholarships for next year
- Social Development Timeline – Year Two



Rodney J. MacKinnon
Executive Director

OFFICE OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE

250 Marriott Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Toll-free 866-357-3239
www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com