

FIRST TEACHER:

a Parent's Guide to
Growing and Learning



18 MONTHS - 24 MONTHS



The Office of Early Learning is proud to present you with *First Teacher: a Parent's Guide to Growing and Learning*. This booklet was created to give you information on your child's development and activities to use in your every day routines. These activities will help your child's development and provide the building blocks for your child's future school success and life.

This booklet is divided into five areas which are key indicators of your child's development and begin at birth. The information in this booklet will serve as a guideline for what your child should know and be able to do from 18 to 24 months of age. This information follows Florida's Early Learning and Developmental Standards which are used in early learning programs throughout the state.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING STYLES

FEELINGS, BEHAVIORS, AND RELATIONSHIPS

TALKING AND LISTENING

THINKING AND REASONING

Your relationship with your child and the time you spend together will help your child's development in every way. Each child is unique and may not master skills at the same rate. If you have concerns regarding your child's rate of development contact your child's doctor.

We hope the information in this booklet will help you make the most of your time with your child.

You are your child's first teacher.

FAMILY MATTERS

18 Months to 24 Months

Your baby is a toddler and becoming more independent. You may notice her saying “me do it” or “no” more often. This is the age when young children are developing and expressing their need for independence. This is a time when all parents need to be patient and allow their children to do things on their own. Although it is important to let this independence grow, it is critical that parents ensure their child’s safety.

You will notice big changes in your child. One-word phrases will begin to turn into two, three and four-word sentences. Walking will become steadier and your child will begin to run, walk on tiptoes and even jump. Your child may begin to be interested in crayons, markers, finger paint, water play, sand boxes and playdough.

As your child’s independence grows, at times she will seem like the boss. This is the time for you to set rules and limits to keep her safe and support healthy growth and development.

This booklet offers activities and strategies for you to use daily. The easy-to-follow activities will help you build a strong relationship and a foundation for your child’s learning and future success. All families are different. Remember to include stories, activities and languages from your own family.





GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

It starts with you

Your child's physical development continues at a fast pace. As your child begins moving around on her own more often, she will become more balanced. At this age she should be able to walk alone and climb on play equipment. Your child will fall less and less, and will begin running, if she hasn't already! Your child's hand-eye coordination will also improve, and she will begin learning to string beads on a piece of yarn, unzip a zipper and use a spoon.

As your baby grows

Your child's growth and development will go through many changes. She will:

- imitate hand motions to finger plays and songs
- push and pull large objects
- hold a book firmly with two hands and turn the pages of a cardboard book
- string large beads on a piece of yarn

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying these activities:

- Let her practice climbing in and out of your car before you buckle her in the car seat.
- Blow bubbles and let her chase and pop them.
- Push and toss a large rubber ball back and forth.
- Let her practice drinking water out of a small cup without a lid.

Taking care of baby

Good nutrition is important in helping your child grow and learn. Provide her with a variety of foods of different tastes, textures and colors. She will begin to develop her own sense of taste and will enjoy experimenting with her food.



LEARNING STYLES

It starts with you

Your child is like a little scientist. He learns from trying new things. Your child will begin to show more interest in objects and will show his desire to control these objects. He will look at, feel and probably taste the object. He may even bang the object on a hard surface. Your little scientist is using curiosity and creativity to discover different ways things can be used. For example, he may discover that he can use a hairbrush as a hammer and see what happens when he bangs it on the floor.

As your baby grows

Your child will show his learning as he:

- tries new materials that feel different to touch, such as playdough or finger paints
- asks to have the same book read over and over again
- demands to complete a task by himself, even when he needs help
- role plays everyday activities like pretending to be a mommy, daddy or baby

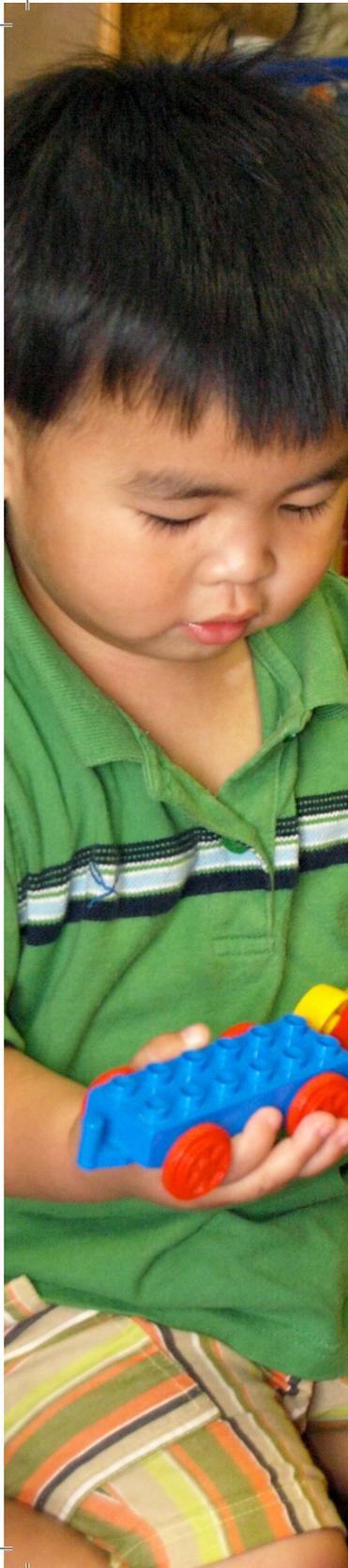
Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying these activities:

- Hand your child an unpeeled banana and watch how he uses it. Does he try to unpeel it? Does he become easily frustrated? Show him how to peel it himself.
- Let your child hold a box or bag of frozen vegetables while grocery shopping. See how he handles the box and what he does with it. Tell him about what he is holding. Talk about how cold it feels.

Taking care of baby

Give your child plenty of toys or objects that make new and exciting sounds. Watch how he reacts to these sounds and learns how to create them. Place him in front of a variety of empty pots, plastic containers, boxes or empty coffee cans. Give him a wooden spoon and show him how to make his own music.



FEELINGS, BEHAVIORS & RELATIONSHIPS

It starts with you

Your young toddler is beginning to recognize that you smile when you are happy. She is beginning to show empathy or understanding if another child is hurt or crying or if you are upset. She may also begin to use her own emotions as a way to communicate with you. She may do things like smile, cry or pout to tell you that she wants something. At this age it is normal for children to have temper tantrums. When this happens, it is important to acknowledge her feelings, name her feelings, remind her of how she should be acting and respond to her the same way each time. As your child continues to grow and become more independent, she will often look at her parents for encouragement and support.

As your baby grows

Your child will show development in forming relationships as she:

- shows understanding for others who seem to be sad or hurt
- uses emotions to express herself, such as whining, pouting and crying
- greets parents and caregivers with an excited, “Hi!”
- says “mine” to a child who takes her toy
- shows interest in a certain book
- pretends to care for a baby doll

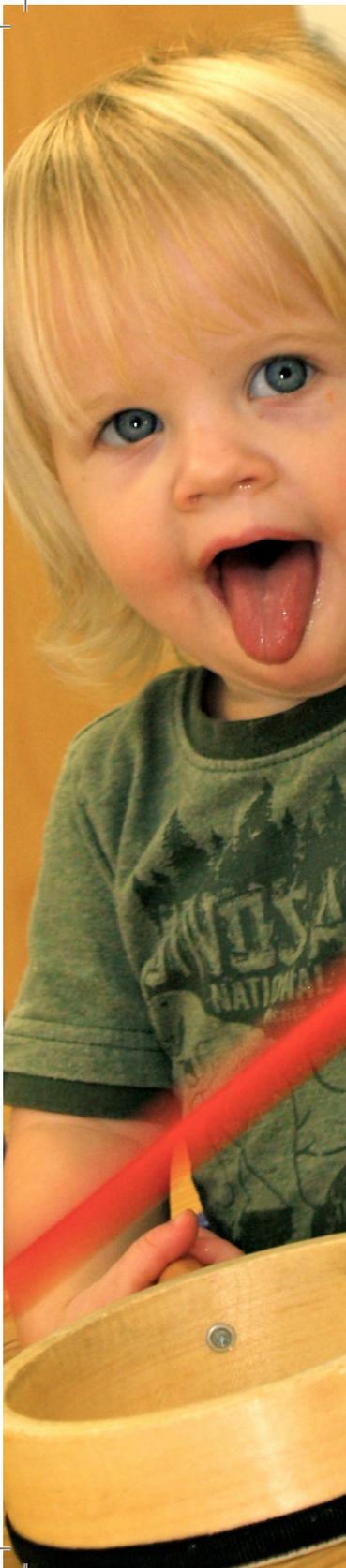
Playing and learning

Help your child’s development by trying some of the following activities:

- Ask her to do a task you know she can do and cheer when she completes it.
- Encourage the use of “please” and “thank you.”
- Rotate different toys and foods for your toddler to try; this helps her discover her likes and dislikes.
- Talk to her about her feelings. For example, “I see you are sad” or “That’s a happy face.”

Taking care of baby

Young children often respond well when parents talk with them about their good behavior. When your child is being good, be sure to describe her actions and give a positive comment. For example, when your child picks up her toys, say to her, “You put your toy away. Good for you!”



TALKING & LISTENING

It starts with you

Your child's language skills are getting better each day. The more words your child hears, the more words he learns. He will begin to show his newly-learned vocabulary by naming objects in books, such as dog or ball. He will also begin to use two-word sentences such as "all done" and "hold me."

Books are an important tool in your child's language development. He will listen as you read a children's book and ask questions about the stories. Point to the pictures and talk about what you see. Ask him questions about the stories. This helps toddlers to use language as a tool. Books for children this age include board books, cloth books and picture books.

As baby grows

Your child will show his beginning language skills as he:

- names pictures in a book
- uses two-word sentences, such as, “More juice” and “Go bye-bye.”
- points to body parts when asked questions like, “Where is your belly button?”
- makes marks on paper with a pencil, marker or crayon and tells you what it says
- pretends to be a dog or cat
- finds his shoes when it is time to get dressed

Playing and learning

Help your child’s development by trying these activities:

- Read children’s books every night at bedtime. This may help your child “wind down” while learning.
- Ask your child specific questions about his day on the car ride home from child care or a family trip to the park. Talk about what he did on the playground or what he had for lunch and ask questions to help him think of things to tell you about his day.

Taking care of baby

Take time to sit with your child each night and look at books. Children love simple picture books. You can use picture books to teach children about words. When looking at books, point to the words as you read. This will help your child begin to understand that words by the pictures have meaning.



THINKING & REASONING

It starts with you

Toddlers learn about the world through their experiences. Children will increase their thinking abilities if they have many different objects to explore. The world around them is very interesting! While in the car, describe the different things they see such as the trees, the clouds, cars on the road and different houses.

Your child's thinking abilities have greatly expanded since you brought her home from the hospital. Your child will begin to understand she causes things to happen, such as saying "uh-oh" when she knocks something over. She still enjoys dropping things on the floor to see what happens. She can understand putting a toy over and under another object, and is beginning to follow two-step directions, such as "pick up your shoes and bring them to me."

As your baby grows

Your child will show her thinking and reasoning skills as she:

- says “uh-oh” when milk is spilled
- pulls on your hand or arm to get your attention
- pokes, drops or squeezes things to see what will happen
- matches sounds to pictures of familiar animals
- follows two-step directions
- speaks in one, two and three-word sentences

Playing and learning

Help your child’s development by trying some of the following activities:

- Look through magazines or books with your child and ask her about what she sees. Talk about the colors, shapes, and different facial expressions she may see. This is a great activity to do while in a waiting room for a doctor’s visit or other appointment.
- Blow bubbles for your child; encourage her to try to pop the bubbles. Always watch your child closely when playing with bubbles to ensure she is playing safely.
- Let her try to do some of her personal care routines on her own, such as brushing her hair or teeth.

Taking care of baby

Messy play is a great way to help your child learn cause and effect. “Oobleck” is a mixture of cornstarch and water. It is a great way to let your child get messy and learn. Mix 1 1/2 cups corn starch and 1 cup water (you can also add a few drops of food coloring) and let your child feel the different textures and gooeyness. Have some fun!



THE POWER OF FAMILY

Do you ever think “what am I going to do with him today?” The toddler years offer many opportunities to help your child learn and grow. Parents can easily make everyday activities learning experiences without a lot of planning, preparation or expense. Taking time to talk to your child and explain how things work, or where you are going in the car, are simple ways to help him understand and develop a love for learning. Remember, your child is like a sponge – listening, watching, and learning from everything you do. Refrain from smoking, drinking or speaking unkind words to someone else in front of your child. Limit the use of “baby talk” and use words that you would use to describe objects, feelings or events to older children and adults. Words such as “frustrated” instead of “mad,” “condensation” instead of “water on the windows” and “chimpanzee” instead of “monkey.” You’ll be surprised at the vocabulary your child learns and it will help him feel happy and confident in his speaking skills.

As you are playing and talking with your child, remember each family has its own unique culture and background. You may want to ask other family members about

family traditions, customs and rituals and begin some of your own. Family members may also give tips to help with your child. An important member of the family is the father or the “father figure,” such as a grandfather, uncle, significant other or a good friend. Children thrive when they have a good relationship with their father or a positive male role model. Fathers should spend time with their children one-on-one. Studies have shown that when children spend quality time with their fathers, they will have more confidence and feel more secure. Fathers can take time to play a game of catch, read a book or even sit and color with their children. Every moment spent together will build a special memory.

Families should try to have dinner together most nights of the week. This is a great opportunity for the whole family to talk about what everyone did during the day and to find out about what will be happening soon so the family can prepare. You will even help your child develop her language and thinking/memory skills by the talks you will have.

Below are some conversation starters for your dinner:

- Tell me about the book you read today.
- What did you have for lunch?
- What was the best part of your day?
- What did you learn at school?
- What songs did you sing?

In addition to family members, parenting resources may help you. Below are some great online resources that offer information on a variety of different topics:

- Parenting.org
- zerotothree.org
- childcareaware.org
- familypartnership.org
- brightfutures.org
- childwellbeing.org
- naeyc.org
- actearly.org
- ounce.org/cappacket.asp

Remember, you are your child’s first teacher!

All babies develop differently and at different times. If you have questions or concerns about your baby’s development or behavior, it is important to take action early. Talk to a doctor, your child’s teacher or contact any of the resources listed in the back of this booklet.

PARENT RESOURCES

OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

Provides state-level support and direction for parents, teachers and early learning professionals. OEL administers three statewide programs including: the state child care subsidy program, School Readiness, the free Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program for four-year-olds, and the Child Care Resource and Referral program for all Florida families. 1-866-357-3239 (Toll-free), (TTY: 711)

2-1-1

24-hour hotline where parents can access national, state, and local information and referral services. 2-1-1 connects parents to information to assist families with food, housing, employment, health care and counseling services.

Dial 211

www.211.org

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

General ADA information is available including answers to specific technical questions, free ADA materials, and information about filing a complaint.

1-800-514-0301 (Toll-free), (TTY: 1-800-514-0383)

www.ada.gov

CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL NETWORK (CCR&R)

Helps families find local child care programs that fits their unique needs. CCR&R connects families to local resources and provides information on how parents can find, locate and afford quality child care.

1-866-357-3239 (Toll-free), (TTY: 711)

CHOOSE MY PLATE

Offers information and resources on healthy eating choices and habits for children and families.

www.choosemyplate.gov

**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES (DCF)
LICENSING WEBSITE**

Responsible for the administration of child care program licensing and training throughout Florida. DCF also administers programs addressing issues such as, adult and child protective services, homelessness, food stamps, refugee services, and adoption and foster care.

www.myflorida.com/childcare

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Department of Education/Office of Early Learning (DOE/OEL) for information on readiness rates of Voluntary Prekindergarten providers.

1-866-447-1159 (Toll-free)

www.fldoe.org/earlylearning

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH/CHILDREN'S MEDICAL
SERVICES/EARLY STEPS**

Provides services to infants and toddlers (birth to thirty-six months) with significant delays or a diagnosed physical or mental condition.

1-800-654-4440

www.cms-kids.com/families/early_steps

FLORIDA ABUSE HOTLINE

24-hour hotline that receives reports of abuse and exploitation of children, elderly, and adults with disabilities.

1-800-96-ABUSE or 1-800-962-2873 (Toll-free)

www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse

**FLORIDA'S CENTRAL DIRECTORY OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD SERVICES**

Provides information and referrals on disabilities and special health care needs for families, service coordinators, and other professionals who work with children with special needs.

1-800-654-4440 (Toll-free)

www.centraldirectory.org

FLORIDA CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Child support services that include locating missing parents, establishing legal paternity, and establishing, enforcing, and modifying support orders.

1-800-622-KIDS or 1-800-622-5437 (Toll-free)

www.myflorida.com/dor/childsupport/

FLORIDA KIDCARE

Health insurance program for uninsured children younger than age 19. The Florida KidCare program assesses eligibility based on age and family income.

1-888-540-5437 (Toll-free), (TTY: 1-877-316-8748)

www.floridakidcare.com

MYFLORIDA.COM

Florida's Government Website

www.myflorida.com

FLORIDA HEALTHY START

Ensures that all Florida families have access to a continuum of affordable and quality health and related services.

727-507-6330

www.healthystartflorida.com

HEAD START

Head Start is a national school readiness program that provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to children from low-income families. For Head Start programs in your area, visit the listed website.

www.floridaheadstart.org

PARENTS WITHOUT PARTNERS

Provides help to single parents through discussions, professional speakers, study groups, publications and social activities for families and adults.

1-800-637-7974 (Toll-free)

www.parentswithoutpartners.org

VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN

A free voluntary program designed to prepare four-year-olds for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success.

1-866-357-3239 (Toll-free), (TTY: 711)



For more information about what your child should know and be able to do visit the Early Learning and Developmental Standards at www.flbt5.com.



Office of Early Learning
866-357-3239