

FIRST TEACHER:

a Parent's Guide to
Growing and Learning



8 MONTHS - 18 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 eight to eighteen 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

8 Months to 18 Months

You did it! You have made it through the first eight months of your baby's life. Now your baby is becoming a toddler. In the next 10 months, you will see many changes in him. He will begin depending less on you because he can easily move on his own. When he wants something, he may be able to crawl or walk to it. This newfound freedom is an opportunity for him to learn and grow. Now is the best time to make sure the house is "baby proofed" and safe for him to explore.

You will notice that your baby cries less and is better able to communicate with you. He will begin pointing and grunting and will use single words to tell you his wants and needs. Also during this age, your baby will begin walking, climbing and using his thumb and pointer finger to pick up items. He will begin feeding himself and become more independent, giving you some well-deserved breaks.

At this age your baby's large muscles are developing fast, and so are his talking and listening skills. Be prepared for frustration as he is experiencing new abilities, some harder to master than others.

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 baby's muscles are developing, which will help him to move and explore his world. Your baby will soon begin pulling up to a standing position and begin taking his first steps. Your baby will also be able to pick up objects with his thumb and finger. Give your baby chances to safely explore his surroundings now that he can move on his own. Place toys and books a little out of your baby's reach so he can use his muscles to move to them.

Once your baby becomes an expert at walking, let him practice carrying things such as his toys when it's clean up time. Soon after walking, the running starts! To avoid many "boo boos," remove or put away things from your house and yard that may hurt your baby. Open spaces are great for running and jumping.

As your baby grows

Your baby's growth and development will go through many changes. He will:

- see and point to things that attract his attention
- crawl on his hands and knees
- hold small objects with his thumb and forefinger
- feed himself
- walk without help
- eat solid foods
- repeat words and sounds
- use a spoon while eating

Playing and learning

Help your baby's development by trying these activities:

- Give him finger foods when he is ready. Let your child practice using a spoon and a sippy cup during meals.
- Give him a big toy, box or wagon to push or pull around to help practice walking and balance.
- Scatter cotton balls on the floor and give your baby a small basket. Play a game of pick up the cotton balls. Make sure all of them go in the basket and none of them go in his mouth!

Taking care of baby

With your baby's new skills, your baby will begin climbing and reaching for objects that may not be safe. This is a good time to begin thinking about "baby proofing" your home, like ensuring electrical outlets have appropriate safety plugs. Make sure you look at your house at your baby's eye level when baby proofing. You will be able to see what is dangerous to a baby his size.

At this age, babies put almost everything in their mouths. This helps them learn about objects. As you baby proof your home, keep this in mind. Keep small objects that your baby can put in his mouth out of reach. These can cause him to choke. Babies will chew on objects during this time because of teething and sore gums. Give your baby a clean, cold, damp washcloth to help with cleaning his gums and relieving teething pain.



LEARNING STYLES

It starts with you

Your baby will begin to have an increased interest in his surroundings. Older infants are curious and actively start exploring. Your baby will become more active and alert to what is going on at home, in child care and even at the grocery store. As his senses develop, he will discover more about his world. Introducing new sounds, colors, textures and experiences will support your baby's growth and learning.

As your baby grows

Your baby will show his learning as he:

- moves or reacts to music
- imitates familiar activities, such as putting a pretend telephone to his ear, or playing peek-a-boo
- attempts to repeat new skills such as putting the correct shape into a shape sorter
- uncovers an object that has been shown to him and then covered

Playing and learning

Help your baby's development by trying these activities:

- Mix sand with washable, non-toxic finger paints. Let your child paint and talk about the texture.
- Place a pillow or blanket between your baby and a toy he wants and see how your baby works to get that toy.
- Introduce different toys, games and sounds, such as snapping your fingers or clapping your hands to a special beat to encourage curiosity and creativity.

Taking care of baby

Everyday activities can provide great ways to bond with your baby. Bath time is one activity to help your baby learn and build your relationship. If your baby can sit up or has a sturdy bath seat, put a straw in the tub and lightly blow bubbles around your baby's tummy and feet. Watch your baby's reaction and allow him to try catching the bubbles.



FEELINGS, BEHAVIORS & RELATIONSHIPS

It starts with you

Relationships play an important role in your baby's ability to develop his sense of self. Your baby will look to you and other important caregivers for clues about himself and his surroundings. Secure relationships provide a safe emotional base for your baby to feel safe while he explores his surroundings. This is an important time to show your love and affection. Babies who have secure feelings of attachment to their parents will feel more comfortable and develop self-confidence. Remember to be patient with your little one as he can easily become frustrated when trying to tell you his wants and needs.

As your baby grows

Your baby will show development in forming relationships as he:

- shows affection such as hugs and kisses
- becomes upset when someone unfamiliar comes between him and a loved one
- becomes familiar with his surroundings, like splashing in the water at bath time
- smiles and claps when he sees his favorite toy
- makes different sounds such as crying, grunting or whining to get attention
- points to a toy that he wants

Playing and learning

Help your baby's development by trying these activities:

- Plan enough time to say good-bye to your baby as you leave him to go to work. Promise him that you will be back soon.
- Make a photo album for your baby and include group and individual pictures of family members.

Taking care of baby

Your baby may soon start going through what is called separation anxiety. It is very common for babies this age to cry when left with a caregiver. But this is a good sign! It means he is well attached to you and can remember you when you are gone. His brain and emotions are developing. This can be a hard stage, but you can help your baby get through it. When leaving your child, tell him good-bye and that you will be back soon. Leave with an upbeat attitude. Your baby will grow out of this, and goodbyes will not always be so difficult.



TALKING & LISTENING

It starts with you

Hearing your baby's first word is amazing. It's a word you will not soon forget. Your baby will begin repeating sounds and connect meanings to the sounds she hears. For example, when you ask her if she wants milk, she will know that milk is what she is usually drinking.

Your baby is beginning to use sounds and words to tell you a need or a want. These words may be hard to understand at first, but encourage her to keep talking. Your baby's language will expand quickly, and you will both be less frustrated. You will be able to understand her "words." Soon, your baby's request for "muk" will begin to sound like what she tried to say: "milk."

As baby grows

Your baby will show her early talking and listening skills as she:

- lifts her arms when she wants to be picked up
- uses gestures such as waving and shaking her head “no”
- picks out her favorite book
- uses sounds to name people, such as “mama” and “dada”
- uses one word phrases, such as “mine” and “no”
- holds a crayon and makes a mark on paper

Playing and learning

Help your baby’s development by trying these activities:

- Help your baby put into words what she wants. If she is reaching for a stuffed frog, ask her, “Do you want to hold the stuffed frog? Here is your Froggy.”
- Sing songs again and again with her. Songs such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” use repeated phrases that she can practice saying.

Taking care of baby

Help your baby develop a love for books. Make sure reading is part of her daily routine. Reading before bedtime can help her “wind down” and get ready for sleep. Reading two or three short books a night is one of the best ways to help her speaking and listening skills grow. Even at this young age, exposure to children’s books and stories lays the foundation for later reading success. Always have a book or two in your baby bag so you can read with her when you are waiting in the doctor’s office.



THINKING & REASONING

It starts with you

Older babies have increased memory, language and muscle skills. They use these skills to explore and learn. At this age, babies enjoy the cause and effect of their actions. They will drop their bottle or sippy cup to see what happens. They also enjoy filling a bucket or container and dumping it out, and building block towers to knock over. These are important activities that help your baby develop his thinking and problem-solving skills.

As your baby grows

Your baby will show his thinking and reasoning skills as he:

- smiles in response to an adult's smile
- holds a toy phone to his ear and pretends to talk
- fills and dumps toys and blocks
- drops a toy and watches it fall
- finds a hidden toy
- plays for a brief period of time with another child
- follows one-step directions, such as "bring me your shoes"

Playing and learning

Help your baby's development by trying these:

- Give your baby different sized cups and containers he can use to fill and dump during bath time.
- Fill a cup with cool water while he is in a warm bath and let him feel the difference in the water temperatures.
- Place a toy underneath a clear plastic cup or bowl and encourage him to figure out how to get the toy.
- Read and sing with him daily.

Taking care of baby

Your baby loves to play games. Knocking over a wall of plastic cups will help him learn cause and effect. Hiding a toy and asking your baby to find it will encourage both language and problem-solving skills. He will also enjoy singing and trying to follow you when you do simple finger plays, such as "Itsy Bitsy Spider." When reading his favorite picture book, leave out a word and let him say the missing word.



THE POWER OF FAMILY

Family life is very busy. Having a set routine early in your baby's life will help you and your baby know what to expect each day, which can reduce stress. Routines can also help young children adapt to change and are very helpful when moving from one activity to the next. For example, you can read three books to your baby each night before bed, or every night give him a bath right after dinner.

Setting a routine for your child can help you meet your needs as well. Sleep is not only essential for your baby, but also for you. Getting the right amount of sleep will help your health and wellbeing. Sleep is linked to your mood, weight gain or loss, heart health and how your body fights disease. Adults should try to get seven to eight hours of sleep a night.

These ideas can help you get a good night's sleep:

- Go to sleep around the same time each night.
- Avoid caffeine before bed.
- Get regular exercise.

- Take a warm bath or shower before bedtime.
- Make yourself as comfortable as possible.
- Ask your spouse or partner to help when your baby wakes up in the middle of the night.
- Ask a relative or friend to watch your baby overnight so you can catch up on much-needed sleep.

With today's busy schedules, it may be hard for family members to spend time together. Make a point to schedule a time when the whole family can be together and have fun at least once a week. Enjoying each other's company will help your family stay connected. When you are busy, you may forget to share or remember things that your baby does. Write down your baby's first words and phrases in a special book. One day you can look back with your child at all the funny things he used to say. For example, your baby may have called chicken "chicky chicky" until he could fully say chicken. It will be fun to share family stories about this special time in your child's life.

Being a parent is not easy. There are times when parents may become angry and may even lose their temper with their baby. You may feel overwhelmed and stressed. Know that you are not alone. Check your local community for parent groups for support. It can be helpful to discuss your issues with someone who is going through the same thing. Don't be afraid to ask family or friends to help. Although it may be hard right now, it will get easier.

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