

Parenting Together

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The Importance of the Early Years

One of the topics that has become so important in parenting is children's physical and cognitive development. While no two children develop on the same timeline or in the same way, there are sensitive time periods in which major developmental milestones are reached by many children. One of the most critical time periods in child development and learning is from birth to age five. These early years form the foundation that shapes children's future health, happiness, growth, and their ability to learn at home, in the community, and at school.

Understanding the basics of early development can help parents and caregivers know what to expect and how to best support a child as they grow and change.

Physical Development

A keyword that is often used in regard to physical development is "milestones." Developmental milestones are defined as the abilities that most children are able to perform by a certain age. One of the very best ways that family and caregivers can help promote healthy physical development is through positive interactions and play. For babies, this means allowing for plenty of room to roll, crawl, and explore,



as well as safe toys or items nearby to practice grasping, shaking, and placing in their mouths (this is one of the ways that babies like to explore!).

As babies grow into toddlerhood, large motor skills can be encouraged when parents and caregivers provide opportunities for children to practice their newly emerging abilities. Giving them the space, time, and resources they need to run, jump, kick, climb, and

balance will do wonders for their development. Fostering the development of their fine-motor skills happens in the same way.

Here are some additional ways to help children practice fine-motor skills and hand-eye coordination:

- singing songs with finger plays,
- stacking blocks,
- putting together puzzles,
- scribbling and drawing, and
- stringing large beads.

The Book Nook

Dreamers / Soñadores
By Yuyi Morales

The Wonderful Things you Will Be
by Emily Winfield Martin

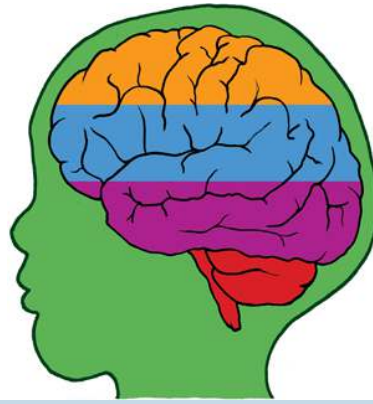
I Like Me
by Nancy Carlson



Cognitive Development & Learning

Data compiled by the Rauch Foundation found that a child's brain grows to 85 percent of the size of an adult's brain by the time they are five years old, and the first three years are especially critical in shaping a child's brain architecture. Early experiences provide the base for pathways in the brain that help children develop learning skills as well as social and emotional abilities. As with physical development, cognitive milestones represent important steps forward in a child's development.

One of the primary ways that babies, toddlers, and young children learn is through play and positive interactions with parents and caregivers. It is through simple, everyday moments that parents and caregivers can help children's cognitive development. Even singing, talking, and reading with your child beginning at the earliest ages will build a child's brain and reap lifelong benefits.



BRAIN BUILDING

Whether it's mealtime, bath time, or anytime in between, there are so many ways to help build your child's brain. Here are a few fun ways:

- Ages 0-1: Don't be afraid to babble. When your child starts to make noises, treat it like a real conversation and mimic those sounds right back. Talk with your child and make space in the conversation for their babbles as well as listening.
- Ages 1-2: Read everything out loud from signs, recipes, or ads in a magazine and be sure to point out what you see!
- Ages 2-3: Use your child's time in the tub to talk about the weather. Sprinkle water on their arms and talk about rain.
- Ages 3-4: Turn bedtime into a reflection of your child's day. Ask them if they got dressed or ate breakfast first.
- Ages 4-5: When you're doing laundry, have your child help you match socks. Ask them to help you match by size and then match by color.

Brain Building with Vroom!

Looking for more brain building tips to use at home or in your early childhood learning setting? Download the free Vroom app at www.vroom.org to receive free tips and activity ideas for your child based on their age and developmental stage!



To learn more about development in the first 5 years, check out this article: <https://www.all4kids.org/2018/09/25/why-the-first-5-years-of-child-development-are-so-important/>

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For over 1,000 free brain-building games and activities, visit <https://www.vroom.org>



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