

USING HANDS: typical development

Children develop at different rates in different spheres of development; this list shows the typical order of development of hand and body skills. The use of the hands develops within the overall basic motor pattern.

0 – 3 months: Child watches own hands moving. Swipes at hanging object, may hit it. Lying face down (prone) may lift head and chest, resting on forearms. On back (supine) lies straight with 4 limbs symmetrical. Supports own head when carried at 12 weeks. Limbs move independently in space, baby may seem surprised by own movements. Brings hands together.

3 – 6m: Reaches swiftly and accurately for objects, including own feet. Brings objects to mouth, usually two handed approach. Drops first object if given another. Cannot release objects voluntarily. Uses fingers and palm to hold. Explores objects with hands.

6 – 9m: Begins to take symmetrical crawling movements when lying prone. Rolls in both directions. Sits independently. When sitting, reaches out for things on either side of the body. Transfers objects from hand to hand. Kicks strongly with alternating leg movements.

9 – 12m: Uses thumb and first finger in opposition to pick things up. Can throw and push things away. Uses string to pull a toy. Pulls self to standing. Copies scribbling with crayon, held in fist. Fills and empties small containers. Crawls around on the floor. Able to point with index finger. Bangs with an object. Bangs bricks together.

12 – 15m: Cruises around furniture, may take a few steps independently. Enjoys putting things in and out of containers. Bodily actions more integrated. Transfers objects across midline. Complimentary use of limbs. Continuant or ongoing repetitive behaviours. Can use spoon, rake. Puts one brick on another.

15 – 18m: Squats and returns to stand, walks unaided, gets upstairs on hands and knees. Picks up small objects with finger and thumb, places large peg in hole. Can do large, simple shape inset puzzle. Builds tower of 3 bricks. Enjoys hammer bench toy.

18 – 21m: Posts shapes in a shape sorter. Attempts to kick a ball. Runs and jumps – upper body held still and toddler gait. Pushes and pulls toys while walking. Walks upstairs 2 feet to a step. Climbs on adult chair, turns and sits. Uses spoon well.

21 – 24m: Circular scribble. Dominant hand preference more than 50% of the time throws ball – 2 hands. Jumps off step. Threads large beads on stiff string – using two hands in complimentary way. Enjoys messy play. Puts lid on a box.

24 – 27m: Unscrews lid. Draws vertical line in imitation. Builds tower of 6 – 7 bricks and fits Duplo together. Walks downstairs with help. Can pair, pile separate, objects; can sequence objects (big, middle, small); can scribble on paper. Turns pages of a book singly. Enjoys using a paintbrush. Puts on shoes, socks, pants: take off shoes, socks. Runs. Kicks ball without overbalancing. Turns door knob.

27 – 33m: Attempts to use scissors. Stand on one foot momentarily. Can remember accurately. Builds tower of 8 bricks.

33 – 36 m: Catches large ball against chest with two hands. Kicks moving ball. Can put features on a pre-drawn face.

36 – 42m: Walks upstairs alternating feet. Walks on tiptoe. Rises from kneeling without using hands. Draws circle in imitation. Dresses and undresses fully, except shoe laces. Builds tower of 9 bricks, copies a bridge shape with bricks.

42 – 48m: Pedals trike. Hops 3 steps on one foot. Screws toy nuts and bolts together – assembles screw toy. Uses knife and fork together. Can complete/copy a sequence of brick, or beds. Builds tower of 10 bricks.

48 – 54m: Runs fluently with complimentary arm movements, changing direction easily. Draws cross in imitation. Can draw a human figure, may be inaccurate. Cuts along curved line. Can fold paper twice in imitation. Can thread beads of adult threads the needle.

54 – 60m: Walks along a bench with good balance. Skips on alternate feet, moves rhythmically to music. Can stand on either foot for 10 seconds – can stand on one foot with arms folded. Can thread needle with large eye and make stitches. Tripod pencil grip, can copy letter. Drawings of human figure recognisable, has details like hair, ears. Can copy a pattern of bricks.

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