



# Wee Learn



## Wee Explorers (18 months - 3 years): Child Development: The First Five Years

Development means changes in your child's physical growth. It's also the changes in your child's social, emotional, behavioural, thinking and communication skills. In the first five years of life, experiences and relationships stimulate children's development.

**Relationships: the foundation of child development.** Children's relationships affect all areas and stages of their development. In fact, relationships are the foundation of child development. Through relationships, your child learns vital information about their world (i.e., your child learns whether the world is safe/secure).

This learning is the foundation for the development of your child's communication, behavioural, social and other skills.

**Play: how child development and learning happen.** In the early years, play is children's main way of learning and developing. Play is fun for your child, but it also gives your child opportunities to explore, observe, experiment, and solve problems. Lots of time spent playing, talking, listening and interacting with you helps your child learn key life skills, such as communicating, thinking, and being with other people and children.

**Other things that shape child development.** Other factors like healthy eating, physical activity, health and the neighbourhood you live in also influence your child's development and wellbeing.

- **Healthy eating.** Healthy food gives your child the energy and nutrients they need to grow and develop, and also helps develop their sense of taste.
- **Physical activity.** Being physically active is vital to your child's health. It gets your child moving, develops motor skills, helps your child think and gives your child an opportunity to explore their world.
- **Health.** Minor childhood illnesses like colds, ear aches and gastroenteritis generally won't have any long-term effects on development, but disability, developmental delay and chronic or long-term conditions can affect development.
- **Neighbourhood and local community.** Your child's development is supported by positive relationships with friends and neighbours, and access to playgrounds, parks, shops and local services like childcare, playgroups, kindergartens, schools, health centres and libraries.

**Child development: differences among children.** In general, development happens in the same order in most children, but skills might develop at different ages or times. For example, children usually learn to stand first, and then learn to walk. But this development can happen any time between 8 and 18 months.

**Being a parent.** Whether you are a parent, grandparent or foster parent raising a child, you are always learning. It is okay to feel confident about what you know, and it is also okay to admit you don't know something and ask questions or get help.

When you are focusing on looking after a baby or child, you might forget or run out of time to look after yourself. Looking after yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally will also help your child grow and thrive.

**Source:** <https://bit.ly/3aJV4em>

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