

12 to 18 months

Concentration and listening

By now they should get involved in playing for short periods but still be easily distracted by something else that's happening. They should be able to look at you when you call their name. They will enjoy doing songs and action rhymes with you and want to do them again and again and they will show anticipation of what comes next in familiar games, eg tickling, peek a boo and bubbles.

Understanding words

They are still using some clues from the situation but starting to understand the meaning of some words. By 12 months your baby will probably understand very familiar words such as 'byebye' and 'up' and by 18 months they should be able to follow simple instructions eg "Get your shoes, where's daddy?"

They can point to parts of their body or find everyday objects when you ask them (eg "Where's your nose? Find your cup")

Using sounds and words

By now they are really good at getting their message across and they'll use a mix of gestures, noises, body language and sometimes words (those these will probably only be recognisable by people who know them well). They should be using gestures like waving, or putting their hands up to show they want to be picked up. They are also likely to point to something and make a noise to show they want it

By 18 months they may use 10 – 20 words – these may not be clear. They will also start to look at something if you point and will start to point at things for you to look.

Speech Sounds

They will often use speech like sounds while playing which might sound like 'talk' even though there may not be any real words (jargon talk) – you should hear sounds like p,b,t,d and m.

Any first words are not likely to be clear. All children leave sounds out or use different sounds when they are learning to make the words easier to say eg "boo" for spoon or "taktak" for tractor.

Big muscles and Movement skills (gross motor skills)

By 18 months most babies can walk alone with feet wide apart, but frequently fall or bump into furniture. They can get to standing unaided and enjoy walking with push along toys such as a brick trolley.

They can crawl upstairs and may attempt to step up them.

Hand and finger skills (fine motor skills)

By 18 months most infants are curious and exploring.

They may like to poke their fingers in holes and put things in and out of containers or cupboards.

They can stack two or three blocks, make marks on paper with crayons. They can pull off shoes, socks and gloves and can feed themselves with a spoon.

Making sense of what you're looking at (visual perception)

By 18 months most infants can point to and name body part and familiar objects. They can recognise basic shapes and colours. They will point to a correct picture in a book when it is named.

Social and emotional development

During their first year, the most important social and emotional development for babies is to build feelings of safety, security and trust in other people. These relationships, particularly, with their parents and carers, help the baby to develop mentally, physically and emotionally.

Trust – babies are working very hard to understand the world around them. Having adults who are consistently available to them will help them develop trust.

Emotional Needs – Babies thrive when their emotional needs are met and they find comfort in faces, touch and 'snuggling in'. Babies are interested in people and enjoy the company of others from birth. They show a range of emotions and, from about seven months, fear, anger and pain show more strongly.

Separation anxiety – babies have a tendency to become more 'clingy' at around 8 to 10 months.

They may seem nervous of strangers and cry more when their parent and carer leaves the room.

This is often referred to as "separation anxiety" and it comes and goes, usually peaking at around 18 months. This is a key time for babies to learn about trust. They need those short separations from their parent or carer in order to learn that they do always come back. It is not until about 18 – 24 months that toddlers can carry a picture of their loved ones in their mind.

Behaviour Management

Babies and toddlers have a short attention span and their behaviour is best managed by distracting them.

Concerns? Check out the following advice:

Carry out activities on the **Sensory Processing sheet** if your toddler:

- Shows extreme distress at some self-care activities such as hair brushing, clothing textures
- Shows extreme distress at loud noises

Carry out activities on the **Standing and walking sheet** if your toddler:

- Is not yet walking by holding onto furniture

Carry out activities on the **Dressing skills sheet** if your toddler:

- Doesn't help you when getting dressed

Carry out activities on the **First words sheet** if your toddler:

- Is not yet communicating their needs or wants by sound, gesture or words
- Is not yet showing that they understand words in very familiar situations or when used on their own
- Is not using sounds regularly when they are playing
- Is not using any consistent sounds, e.g. animal noises

Contact your Health Visitor if your toddler:

- Is not yet following a point, i.e. looking in the direction you point
- Is not yet pointing to draw your attention to something
- Is not yet babbling or beginning to use single words