

Early Years

Child Development Tool

Practitioners can use this tool to assess a child's development. If applicable, you can then use it to identify small next steps that you can support with their developmental progress.



Child's name	
Child's DOB	
Name of Key Person	
Other settings attending	
Known allergies, Medical or additional needs	
Child's start date	

Early Years Child Development Tracking Tool

In using this child development tracking tool, you may find that it enables you to:

- Identify areas of strength and/or weakness in provision
- Identify patterns of uneven development and consequent areas for intervention
- Support referral processes, e.g. by clarifying and pinpointing gaps and issues
- Identifying smaller steps for planning
- Track and reflect on the progress of different cohorts.
- Share information with other professionals using common child development language
- Support parents in their understanding of developmental norms
- Support practitioners in their conversations with parents

Procedure for Completing the Early Years Tracking Tool

1. Fill in the child's personal details on the front page.
2. Work out the child's chronological age (in months).
3. Find the child's chronological stage in the left-hand column of the assessment tool.
4. Start your assessment from the chronological age stage.
5. Starting at this stage, take each point in turn and highlight if child can do.
6. If the child can do-all of the items described at the starting point, we can assume that they will be able to do all of the chronological stages before, so highlight all of these too. (This will help you when you complete the scoring).
7. If the child is unable to do 1 (or more) items in the starting point stage, go back a stage until they can complete all items at a stage.
8. Move to the next stage, and again take each point in turn and highlight if child can do.
9. Complete each stage, but do not progress to the next stage if you do not highlight all items in your current stage.
10. Do this for all of the development areas.

Highlighting key

Colour highlighter	Term it relates to
	September
	December
	March
	June

Additional information and updates

Development reports

Termly tracking

AGE	Communication and Language Listening and Attention
At 3 Months	Recognises familiar voice (e.g. parent, sibling, key person)
	Responds to environmental sounds e.g. doorbell, favourite rattle, other children
At 6 Months	Responds to rhyme / rhythm e.g. turns to practitioner singing
	Watches persons face when they talk
At 9 Months	Repeats actions that have an effect e.g. shaking a rattle
	Looks around the room with interest, visually scanning for interesting objects or events
	Able to locate a sound accurately e.g. someone's voice
	Respond to familiar voices
At 12 Months	Stops playing if they hear a noise or adult talking
	Closely observes what animals or people are doing
	Maintains attention on an activity for a few minutes
At 15 Months	Concentrates on an activity or object of their choice for short periods of time
	Engages in music and singing with a familiar person
	Begins to make marks
	Fleeting attention (Moves between activities frequently, not staying in one place for long)
	Can follow some simple instructions e.g. 'Put your shoes on'

At 18 Months	Looks for dropped objects
	Enjoys nursery rhymes and will try to sing along
At 2 years	Rigid attention (so focussed on play or an activity that they seem not to hear you)
	Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories
	Recognises and responds to familiar sounds e.g. doorbell
	Can attend to an activity of their choosing for 5-10 minutes
	Completes simple jigsaws / puzzles
At 3 years	Single channelled attention (can focus on and an activity with an adult supporting their focus)
	Listens to others one to one or in a small group, when the subject interests them
	Listens to stories with increased attention and recall
	Can follow instructions
	Can join in with repeated phrases in stories
At 4 years	Focusing attention (shifts own attention in play and activities)
At 5 years	Two channelled attention (can play and hold a conversation at the same time)
	Enjoys books and beginning to read words
	Concentration span increases, shows greater persistence in activities

AGE	Communication and Language Understanding
At 3 Months	Recognises carers voice
	Is calmed by a familiar voice
At 6 Months	Laughs, chuckles and squeals in play
	Shows excitement at the sounds of approaching voices
At 9 Months	Responds to own name, understands simple words e.g. 'no', 'bye bye'
	Will point to objects of interest e.g. favourite toy on the table
	Starts to understand some gestures, words and sounds
At 12 Months	Looks for out of sight objects
	Beginning to understand cause and effect e.g. shakes toy to make a noise
	Beginning to understand important words (drink, sleep)
	Stops and looks when they hear their name
At 15 Months	Understands simple instructions (although they may not follow the instruction)
	Understands a range of single words and some 2-word phrases
At 18 Months	Gives an adult a familiar object when asked
	Understands about 4 times more words than they can say (usually between 200-500)
At 2 years	Will name objects on sight

	Beginning to understand actions have consequences
	Understands action words e.g. I'm jumping
	Understands phrases and instructions that are part of their everyday routine e.g. its 'snack time'
	Understands simple stories with pictures
At 3 years	Understands and asks simple 'why' and 'what' questions
	Can match and sort items into simple sets
	Understands more complex sentences e.g. find your lunchbox then sit at the table
	Responds to simple instructions
At 4 years	Can give accounts of recent events / experiences, retell stories and repeat nursery rhymes
	Enjoys jokes and playing with words
	Can work out a possible solution to a problem
	Understands and asks 'where' questions
	Shows an understanding of prepositions (under, on top, next to)
At 5 years	Able to follow a story without props or pictures
	Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others in conversation

AGE	Communication and Language Speaking
At 3 Months	Vocalises when spoken to, beginning conversations
	Communicates needs and feelings by crying, gurgling or babbling
At 6 Months	Makes simple babbling noises
	Makes vocal sounds to get attention
At 9 Months	Childs babble is more complex, and makes louder and more tuneful sounds
	Imitates sounds e.g. coughing or laughing
	Lifts arms in anticipation of being picked up
	Waves and points to communicate
At 12 Months	May use some single words
	Joins in with some songs
	Uses pointing or leading as a form of communication
	Makes sounds when reaching or pointing to something they want
At 15 Months	Uses some single words although may not be clear
	Uses pitch and volume to express different emotions and communicate in different situations
At 18 Months	Makes speech like sounds to self in play
	Uses between 6 and 20 words but understand many more
	Makes demands known by pointing, with vocalisations
	Uses familiar expressions e.g. 'oh dear'

At 2 years	Vocabulary increases approx. 50 words expressed and understands many more
	Will join two words
	Short sentences by 2 ½ years, sometimes grammatically incorrect
	Begins to ask simple questions
At 3 years	Uses language for thinking and saying what's happened or what they have done/doing
	Increased and mainly accurate vocabulary
	Holds a conversation but often jumps from topic to topic
	Can link 3-5 words together
	Can use future and past tenses e.g. 'I'm going shopping' or 'I walked home'
At 4 years	Speech is grammatically correct and intelligible though some immaturities in pronunciation likely
	Uses a variety of questions
	Can retell past events
	Questions why things are happening
	Introduces a storyline to their play and will share this with their peers
At 5 years	Uses language to share opinions, thinking
	Hears and says initial sounds in words
	Speech is clear and easily understood by others

AGE	Personal, Social and Emotional development - Making relationships
At 3 Months	Smiling at carer or key person
	Gazes at faces and copies some facial movements
	Enjoys being held and having cuddles
At 6 Months	Cries in different ways to express needs
	Beginning to demonstrate preference for familiar people e.g. their key person
At 9 Months	Clear preference for familiar people e.g. mum, dad, grandparent etc.
	Seeks attention in a variety of ways
	Babbles to communicate
At 12 Months	Waves 'bye-bye'
	Repeats actions when laughed at
	Affectionate to familiar people
	Plays with key person e.g. peek a boo
	Notices the presence of other children
At 18 Months	Plays alongside others
	Enjoys simple pretend play e.g. drinking from an empty cup or putting a toy phone to their ear
	Points to objects that interest them to share with others e.g. a plane in the sky
	Imitates everyday activities e.g. feeding doll, wiping tables, changing nappies

At 2 years	Interested in others play and may join in
	Expresses emotions towards adults and peers e.g. cuddles and adult randomly
At 3 years	Beginning to empathise with feelings of others
	Enjoys company of other children and beginning to make friends
	Initiates play with friends
At 4 years	Friendship with other children is increasingly valued. More confident socially away from practitioners
	Can play in a group, offering their own ideas and responding to others' ideas
	Initiates conversations
At 5 years	Explains own knowledge and understanding
	Friends are important but lots of falling out
	Engages in play with other children (co-operative play)

AGE	Personal, Social and Emotional development Self-confidence and self-awareness
At 9 Months	Establish their sense of self and bodily awareness
At 12 Months	Uses pointing to with eye gaze to make requests or share interests
	Learns that own voice and actions have effects on others
	Show an interest in books and other printed materials
	Looks to adult for clues about how to respond to something
	Plays with increasing confidence on their own.
	Begin to be shy around strangers
	Show preferences for certain people and toys
At 15 Months	Explores their environment but needs practitioners close for reassurance
	Feels confident enough to express a range of emotions
	Thrive as they develop self-assurance
	Finds ways of managing transitions for example from parent to key person
At 18 Months	Plays contently alone but likes security of being near family / practitioner
	Separates from main carer with support from a familiar adult
	Energetic and eager to explore the environment but has no sense of danger
At 2 years	Demonstrates a sense of self as an individual e.g. will want to do things by themselves instead of accepting help
	Defends own possessions and doesn't tend to share toys or adult attention

At 3 years	Welcomes and values praise
	Enjoys the responsibility of carrying out small tasks
	Confident to talk to other children during play
At 4 years	Confident to speak to others about their own needs and interests
	Shows an awareness of danger
At 5 years	Keen to fit in with others – approval sought from other children and adults
	Can describe and talk about their own abilities or achievements

AGE	Personal, Social and Emotional development Managing feelings and behaviour
At 3 Months	Beginning to show emotion
	Calms when held / rocked
At 6 Months	Reacts to noises and sounds emotionally
At 9 Months	Stiffens body in annoyance, resistance with vocal protest
	Responds appropriately to the tones and emotions in adults voices and facial expressions
At 12 months	Beginning to understand yes / no boundaries
At 15 Months	Uses engagement to achieve a goal
At 18 Months	Can be clingy but at other times will resist practitioners' presence
	Seeks comfort from a familiar adult when needed
	Gets to know daily routines such as mealtimes
At 2 years	Demanding of parent / practitioners' attention
	Tantrums when upset but is usually easily distracted
	Responds to some boundaries with support

At 3 years	Can express feelings to practitioners
	Beginning to understand the concept of upsetting others and making it up to them
	Tries to help or give comfort when others are upset
At 4 years	Can wait to have needs met (and understands the needs of others)
	Beginning to understand the importance of rules and tries to follow them
	Vivid imagination can lead to fears
	Becoming increasingly able to talk about and manage their emotions
At 5 years	Understands rules but sometimes has difficulty in accepting them, may question the rules
	Safely explore emotions beyond their normal range through play and stories
	Beginning to be able to negotiate and solve problems without aggression

AGE	Physical Development Moving and handling
At 3 Months	Lifts head and chest from floor when lying on tummy
	Brings their hands together, some finger play
	Kicks vigorously, sometimes alternating their legs
At 6 Months	Can roll over – back to front and front to back
	Can sit with support, holding head and back straight
	Uses whole hand in palmar grasp and passes an object from one hand to the other
At 9 Months	Sits unsupported, leaning forward to maintain their balance
	Covers the floor area by crawling, rolling, and wriggling
	Pulls to standing, holding on furniture for support
	Beginning to pick up small objects with pincer grasp but cannot yet 'place'
At 12 Months	Cruises around using furniture for support
	Enjoys the sensory experience or making marks in messy play resources
	Stands alone, may walk a few steps
At 15 Months	May walk independently with uneven steps using arms to assist their balance
	Crawls upstairs and comes downstairs feet first (or up and down on soft play equipment or on something similar)
	Pincer grasp better developed. Will pick up small objects, can place with precision e.g. one block on top of another
	Walks well and no longer uses arms to balance and can run but finds it difficult to negotiate obstacles

At 18 Months	Will push or pull large boxes, toys or resources
	Can walk up steps holding hands (usually crawls down backwards) e.g. on soft play cubes, or steps to the garden area etc.
	Can kneel and squat steadily
	Will use mark making tools and beginning to show preference for one hand but still uses both
	Can turn pages in a book but not usually one-by-one
At 2 years	Runs competently with more control when negotiating obstacles
	Walks up and down stairs or steps holding on for support
	Can join and separate interlocking toys (e.g. Duplo and Knex)
	Draws circles, lines and dots
At 3 years	Moves in a range of ways
	Can climb and slide on equipment
	Can kick a ball
	Turns the pages of a book one by one
	Can jump off a surface and land appropriately
At 4 years	Can change direction while running
	Can walk in a straight line
	Confident on climbing and sliding equipment
	Increasing control when kicking a ball
	Learning to use scissors and can cut out simple shapes
	Can draw a face and attempts letters now using their preferred hand
	Makes marks and letters, demonstrating their understanding that print carries a meaning e.g. their marks represent their mummy's name
At 5 years	Has good ball control and can play ball games with rules

	Balance is good – e.g. on balancing beams or on wobble boards etc.
	Sense of rhythm demonstrated in dance and movement activities
	Good control in mark making and can form letters accurately
	Drawings are more detailed and representative e.g. their car drawing looks like a car

AGE	Physical development Health and self care
At 3 Months	Makes needs known through a range of different cries
At 6 Months	Reaches out purposefully to grasp chosen object e.g. rattle, comforter etc.
	May take hold of their bottle /cup if offered
	Removes their socks
At 9 Months	Begins to feed themselves e.g. with finger food
	Co-operates with dressing e.g. puts their arms up when the practitioner takes off their T-shirt
At 12 Months	Drinks from a cup or beaker independently
	Feeds themselves with a spoon or fork (but may be very messy)
	May undress themselves e.g. removes hats, gloves, and socks etc.
At 15 Months	More skillful with spoon and cup but may still requires some assistance
	Helps more constructively with dressing e.g. points their toes when a practitioner puts their shoes on
At 18 Months	More competent with spoon and cup
	Can take clothes off but not yet able to put them on again
	Can find things in a familiar environment and help with tidying away
At 2 years	Attempts to verbalise toilet needs but often unreliable
	Feeds self well with spoon or fork and handles drinks without spilling

	Puts on hat and shoes independently, and may attempt other clothing with help e.g. coat and dressing up clothes (but not using any fastenings)
At 3 years	Handles mealtimes competently using fork and spoon
	Manages own clothes when using the toilet and can wash and dry their hands
	Understands that equipment and tools need to be used safely
	Can put on and remove coat with 'easy' fastenings
At 4 years	Can manage most personal care tasks independently (and may resent adult help)
	Will find things for themselves and can put things back
At 5 years	Will be competent in all aspects of self-care e.g. at mealtimes, toileting and for their personal hygiene
	Shows some understanding that good practices of exercise, eating and hygiene can contribute to good health
	Can take care of own possessions where there are designated places for storage e.g. their coat and bag on their coat peg

AGE	Literacy Reading
At 2 years	Interested in books and may have favourites
	Fills in missing words and phrases from familiar stories
	Looks at books independently
At 3 years	Handles books carefully and correctly
	Joins in with repeated phrases and anticipates key events in familiar stories
	Listens with increased attention and may recall the story
	Recognises familiar words and logos, may recognise their own name
At 4 years	Beginning to be aware of how stories are structured,
	Beginning to recognise rhyme in spoken words
	Links sounds to letters, naming and sounding out letters of the alphabet
At 5 years	Can segment the sounds in some simple words and blend them together, will know which letters represent some sounds.
	Begins to read some words and simple sentences
	Enjoys an increased range of books

AGE	Literacy Writing
At 2 years	Concentrates on early mark making
	Imitates drawing simple shapes such as lines and circles
At 3 years	Keeps marks on the page
	Draws a recognisable image
	Distinguishes between the marks they make
At 4 years	Can copy some letters
	Gives meaning to the marks they make as they draw
	Draws diagonal/ vertical/ horizontal lines
	Uses some clearly identifiable letters
At 5 years	Writes their own name
	Attempts to write short sentences

AGE	Maths Numbers
At 2 years	Says some counting words randomly
	Can select a small number of objects when objects
	Recites some numbers in sequence
At 3 years	Uses some language of quantities (more, lots, a little bit)
	Beginning to represent numbers using fingers, marks on paper
	Shows an interest in numbers in the environment
	Uses some number names accurately in play
	Recites numbers up to 10 in order
At 4 years	Can count beyond 10
	Knows that numbers identify how many objects are in a set
	Sometimes matches numerals to quantity correctly
At 5 years	Selects the correct number to represent 1-10 objects
	Says the number that is one more or one less than the given number
	In practical activities and discussion, can now use language involved in addition and subtracting

AGE	Maths shape, space and measure
At 2 years	Uses blocks to create their own structures and arrangements
	Beginning to understand the daily routine and anticipate events, associating a sequence of actions
	Understands some time-based talk e.g. soon, later
At 3 years	Notices simple shapes and patterns in pictures
	Shows interest in shape by playing with shapes and making arrangements with objects
	Beginning to categorize objects according to properties such as size or shape
	Beginning to use language of size
At 4 years	Shows awareness of similar shapes in the environment
	Uses positional language (in, under, on, next to)
	Uses shapes appropriately for tasks
	Beginning to use mathematical names for 2D and 3D shapes
	Can select a particular named shape
At 5 years	Orders a small number of objects by length, height or weight
	Uses language related to time
	Orders and sequences familiar events e.g. the daily routine

AGE	Understanding the world People and communities
At 2 years	Enjoys pictures of themselves or people familiar to them
	In pretend play, imitates everyday actions and routines from culture or family background
At 3 years	Shows an interest in lives of people familiar to them
	Learns they have similarities and differences that's connect them to and distinguish them from others
	Remembers and talks about significant events in their experiences
At 4 years	Shows an interest in different occupations and ways of life
At 5 years	Knows some things that make them unique and can talk about some of the similarities and difference in relation to friends and family

AGE	The world
At 2 years	Explores objects by linking together different approaches, shaking, hitting, feeling, tasting etc.
	Remembers where objects belong
	Enjoys play with small world models such as a farm, garage or train track
At 3 years	Comments and asks questions about aspects of familiar places or the natural world
	Shows care and concern for living things and the environment
At 4 years	Can talk about things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural or found objects
	Develops a understanding or growth, decay and changes over time
At 5 years	Looks closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change

AGE	Technology
At 2 years	Anticipates repeated sounds, sights and actions in toys
	Shows and interest in toys with buttons, flaps and mechanisms and begins to learn how to operate them
	Shows curiosity about operating mechanical and technological toys
At 3 years	Knows how to operate simple technology equipment
At 4 years	Knows that information can be retrieved from electronical devices
	Completes a simple program on a device

AGE	Expressive art and design Exploring and using media and materials
At 2 years	Dances to music they enjoy
	Begins to join in singing favourite songs
	Shows an interest in the way musical instruments sound
	Experiments with blocks, colours and marks
	Joins construction pieces together
At 3 years	Sings a few familiar songs
	Begins to build with purpose using construction toys
	Realises tools can be used for purpose e.g. will use a rolling pin with playdough
At 4 years	Can follow basic instructions or copy an adult to build with purpose
	Begins to understand and describe textures
	Explores how sounds and colours can be changed
At 5 years	Taps out repeated rhythms
	Builds a repertoire of songs and dances

AGE	Being imaginative
At 2 years	Pretends one object represents another especially when objects look similar
	Beginning to engage in pretend play
At 3 years	Notices what adults do, imitating them during their play
	Plays alongside other children who are engaged in the same theme
	Sings to self during play, may make up songs
At 4 years	Engages in imaginative play, usually based on first hand experiences
	Builds stories around toys (using available toys as props in the play)
	Chooses colours to use for a purpose
At 5 years	Introduces a storyline or narrative to their play

Learning story observations

Fun at preschool