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# **Introduction**



“We never know the love of a parent till we become parents ourselves.”

As the saying goes, being a parent is perhaps the most wonderful thing that happened to you.

You smile when you see your baby smile.

You laugh when you see your baby laugh.

And you’re happy when you know he’s happy.

You protect him, love him, and help him, all while watching him grow.

But growing isn’t just about getting bigger. It’s about many other things. Because as small and helpless he may seem now, the day will come when all of this will change.

Years will come and go, and in no time you’ll take him to kindergarten, you’ll bring him home from school, and you’ll see him graduate.

As he grows, so will his independence. And this is perfectly normal.

But there’s a catch, however.

The good parenting seeds that you plant today will come back in return later in life in the form of love, affection, and gratitude.

For that to happen, you need to safeguard his development in his early years. You’ll need to walk beside him and behind him – sometimes literally – on each and every step of his progress.

The first three years of life are crucial. This is when babies learn a great deal about everything, basically.

They learn to crawl, to walk, to smile, and talk. The world around them becomes larger, increasingly interesting, and at times, frightening.

For all these things – [and many more](.) – you need to be there. There to act and react to everything that might, may, could, or should happen.

Because your job as a parent boils down to two things: love and care.

Of course, there are many other things, but love and care make parenting what it truly is: a pleasurable activity that can be fun or hard at times, yet always rewarding.

For this reason, I have assembled this guidebook.

It is called Expert Parenting Tips, it’s written in an easy-to-read, and it’s here to help you along the way.

How? Simple. By answering any questions you might have regarding your baby’s developmental progress in his first three years of life.

From understanding each developmental phase to tips on how to get your baby to eat, sleep and play on schedule and tricks on how to discover your baby’s hidden language and his communication needs, this guide will let you discover, in a fast and efficient way, why a child develops the way he does, offering you practical and essential parenting tips.

You can even print it and take it anywhere you go. And the good news is, it only takes a short time to read. So why wait? Let’s start the journey together.

# **cHAPTER 1 – Child development: ages and stages**



Child development refers to how a child becomes able to do more complex things as he gets older.

For this reason, development is different than growth.

Children go through distinct periods of development as they move from infants to toddlers, preschoolers, and so forth.

During each stage, growth and development occur in the primary developmental domains including physical, mental, intellectual, language, and social-emotional.

In other words, multiple developmental changes are taking place during this period. And they’re all very important.

What occurs and approximately when these developments happen, though, is genetically determined.

However, environmental circumstances and essential exchanges with key individuals within that environment have significant influence on how each child benefits from each developmental event.

Those key individual are the parents, first and foremost.

My goal here is to help you understand what exactly is happening in your child’s brain and body during each period with the hope that you’ll be able to provide the necessary support and encouragement to enable your baby to progress through each stage as easily and successfully as possible.

Furthermore, I will give you tips and solutions for many of the most common problems you might encounter along the way.

# **cHAPTER 2 – from birth to 3 months**

Raising a baby, especially for the first time, is both exciting and challenging.

This is a period for developing the bonds that will last a lifetime providing the child with the inner resources to develop self-esteem and the ability to relate positively with others.

It is also the time for parents to start discovering who this new person really is. Each child is unique, and it is essential that parents learn to understand, respect, support, and encourage the unique characteristics and abilities of their child.

The first days with your newborn baby will be framed into an all-encompassing definition: A blurry mix of feeding, sleeping, diaper-changing and responding to a wide range of wails and cries.

The good news is that, within a few weeks, your baby will start to take more notice of your voice, face, and touch.

Keep in mind that at one month, your baby can’t focus farther than 8 to 12 inches away. His sense of hearing, however, is fully developed and he might turn toward familiar sounds, such as your voice.

He can lift his head briefly and turn it to the side when he’s on his stomach, but when he’s upright his head and neck still need support. And while his arms move jerkily, he can get his hands close to his mouth.

Your role at one month revolves primarily around several aspects. These are:

* **Knowing your baby**: Cuddle him, talk to him, and learn how he signals when he’s hungry or sleepy. Be careful and responsive. Always!
* **Tummy time**: Give him plenty of tummy time from the start when he’s awake so he can strengthen his developing muscles. Encourage him to look and reach for his toys.
* **Time outside**: Make sure he gets plenty of it. Go for walks with your baby and take him to the park or playground. He’ll enjoy being outdoors and around other children while relaxing with you.
* **Eye contact**: Get close and make eye contact with your baby when you talk, sing, or read to him.
* **Simple games**: Play simple games when he’s alert and in the mood, such as mimicking his sounds.
* **Signal learning**: Learn the signs that he had enough play and needs some down time.

At this age, a baby dines exclusively on breast milk, formula, or a combination of both, and exhibits a natural ability to root, suck, swallow, and gag. He instinctively pushes most solids out of his mouth using his tongue.

To put your baby on a feeding schedule, whether you are breastfeeding or bottle-feeding, your baby needs time to settle into his own rhythm of eating.

Flexibility will be key to your feeding success for the first few months, but there are a few things that you can do to help your baby move into a feeding schedule.

Newborns need to eat every two hours or so, and feeding on demand is justified during the first month of life. Some newborns take longer to eat, while others feed for shorter periods of time more frequently.

As your baby gets older, he will naturally eat more efficiently and be able to consume larger amounts at one time. [Just make sure it’s not too much.](..)

Usually around 4 weeks of age, your baby can comfortably space his feedings to every three hours or so. You can encourage him by making sure that he’s full at the end of each feeding, but burping him well, and by not letting him fall asleep in the middle of the feeding.

Do your best to plan feedings consistently. For instance, don’t schedule a trip to the grocery store at a usual feeding time. Keep in mind that even once your baby begins to develop a schedule, it is still very important to follow his hunger cues rather than make him stay on a set schedule. Babies may need to feed longer – or more frequently – when they’re going through growth spurts.

In regard to sleeping, newborns sleep a lot – generally up to 17 hours a day – but most babies don’t stay asleep for more than two to four hours at a time, day or night, during the first few weeks of life.

For this reason, your baby will indeed sleep a lot, but his sleeping patterns will be very irregular. As a new parent, you’ll probably be up several times during the night to change, feed, and soothe him.

Baby sleep cycles are shorter than those of adults, and babies spend more time in rapid eye movement sleep (REM), which is thought to be necessary for the extraordinary development happening in their brain.

To establish good baby sleep habits, you can follow some of these tips:

* **Give your baby the chance to nap frequently**: For the first six to eight weeks, most babies aren’t able to stay up much longer than two hours at a time. If you wait longer than that to put your baby down, he may already be overtired and have trouble falling asleep.
* **Day and night differentiation**: Once your baby is about 2 weeks old, you can start teaching him to distinguish between day and night.

When he’s alert and awake during the day, interact and play with him as much as you can, and keep the house and his room light and bright.

At night, don’t play with him when he wakes up. Keep the lights and noise level low, and don’t spend too much time talking to him. He’ll figure out that nighttime is for sleeping.

* **Look for signs that your baby’s tired**: Is he rubbing his eyes, pulling on his ear, or being more fussy than normal? If you spot these – or any other signs of sleepiness, try putting him down to sleep. You’ll soon start to “feel” your baby’s daily rhythms and patterns, and you’ll know instinctively when he’s ready for a nap.
* **Put your baby to bed drowsy but awake**: By the time he’s 6 to 8 weeks old, you can start giving your baby a chance to fall asleep on his own. To do this, you need to put him down when he’s drowsy but awake. Don’t rock or nurse him to sleep - babies are learning their sleep habits, and if you do this, don’t be surprised if your baby will stick to the habit.



# **CHAPTER 3 – 3 months to 7 months**

At 3 months of age, your baby will delight you with beautiful smiles. He actively enjoys playtime now, amusing you when he mimics your facial expressions.

In addition, he’s starting to babble and imitate the sounds you make.

Another important milestone at this age is your baby’s ability to fully support his head. When he’s on his stomach, he can lift his head and chest.

He can open and close his hands, shake toys, bring his hands to his mouth, and push down with his legs if you hold him in a standing position.

His hand-eye coordination is also improving. You’ll notice him closely tracking objects that interest him and focusing intently on faces. Your 3-month old is now able to recognize you from across the room!

You role at this age will revolve around responding to him promptly to help him feel secure and loved. You can help him learn to soothe himself by guiding his thumb to his mouth or offering him a pacifier.

Continue to make tummy time part of his daily routine so he can practice his new skills and strengthen his developing muscles.

When he’s on his tummy, give him safe toys and safe objects he can reach for, hold, and explore.

It is essential to offer your baby lots of loving attention. Talk to him throughout the day, describing what you’re doing and naming known objects.

Play games, share cuddles, and encourage his efforts to roll over, grab toys, and initiate “baby communication” with you. [You can try these.](.)

In regard to eating, your baby’s digestive tract is still in a developmental phase at this age, so solid food is off-limits for now.

As for sleeping, at 3 months most babies sleep a total of approximately 15 hours a day, including nighttime sleep and naps.

Generally, by 4 months or so, babies have started to develop more of a regular sleep/wake pattern and have dropped most of their nighttime feedings.

This, however, doesn’t mean you should impose a rigid sleep program on your baby. In fact, your baby may already have developed sleep patterns that fit in well with your family life.

But if you would like to help your baby sleep longer and keep more regular hours, now is a good time to try some form of sleep training.

Keep in mind that every baby is on a unique developmental schedule. Observe your child reacts to sleep training, and if he doesn’t seem ready, slow down and try again in a few weeks.

At some time between 4 and 6 months, most babies are capable of sleeping for several hours at a stretch at night, so you’ll be able to rest more.



At four months of age, your baby is fully engaged with world: visually, audibly, and vocally.

She smiles, laughs, and has babbling baby “conversations” with you.

And she’s clearly on the move. By 7 months she can probably roll to her tummy and back again, sit without your help, and support her weight with her legs well enough to bounce when you hold her.

Moreover, she uses her baby grasp to pull objects closer and can hold toys and move them from one hand to another.

Your baby is more sensitive to your tone of voice and may heed your warning when you tell her “no”. She also knows her name now and turns to look at you when you call her.

Peekaboo is a favorite game and she enjoys finding partially hidden objects. She views the world in full color now and can see farther. If you dangle a toy in front of her, she’ll follow it closely with her eyes.

Starting with this age, your baby thrives on the interactions she has with you, so include/integrate play into everything you do with her.

Cover her with smiles and cuddles, and reply swiftly when she babbles to encourage her communication skills.

Give her lots of opportunities to improve her new physical skills by helping her sit. [Before she can crawl, be sure to keep her environment safe for exploring.](.)

When it comes to eating habits, things slowly start to change at 4 months of age – solid foods incoming.

However, whether your baby is breast- or bottle-fed, there’s no rush to start solids. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed for about 6 months.

If your baby is ready to eat solid foods, her signs of readiness will confirm.

These are:

* **The ability to hold her head up**
* **The ability to sit well in highchair**
* **Makes chewing motions**
* **Shows significant weight gain & interest in food**
* **Can close mouth around a spoon**
* **Can move tongue back and forth**
* **No more tongue-thrust reflex (pushing food out with the tongue)**

Sleeping, as is with eating, is all about routine. Babies thrive on consistency.

Here are some tips for helping your baby sleep well at this age:

* **Establish a set bedtime and regular nap times** (and stick to them): Choose a reasonable bedtime that suits your family’s schedule and stick to it as much as possible. If your baby seems to want to stay up past bedtime, remember that energetic behavior late at night can be a sign that a child is tired.

You can start to plan naps for a specific time every day, too. Or you can just put your baby down about two hours after she last woke up. As long as she’s getting enough opportunities to sleep, either approach is okay.

* **Start developing a bedtime routine:** If you haven’t already done so, now’s a good time to start a bedtime routine.

This can include any – or all – of the following: a bath, getting her changed for bed, reading a bedtime story, singing a lullaby, and giving her a kiss goodnight.

* **Wake your child in the morning to set her daily clock:** Your baby needs to follow a regular sleep wake/pattern and recharge with naps throughout the day.

# **chapter 4 – 7 months to 12 months**

Your baby has become an explorer, and it might surprise you how quickly he can get around when he crawls.

He can sit on his own now and grabs anything he can to pull himself up. He might even take some steps on his own before his first birthday. Trust me, that’s a big accomplishment!

His babbling sounds more and more like real conversation. For this reason, at one point during this period, you’ll hear your baby’s first words – often “mama” or “dada”.

Soon, he’ll talk in simple phrases, but in the meantime, he uses gestures to indicate what he wants – or doesn’t want.

His hands are increasingly nimble. He amuses himself by putting things in containers and taking them out again.

He can use his thumb and finger in a pincer grasp to eat finger food. Your baby loves to imitate you by combing his own hair, drinking from a cup, and pretending to talk on the phone.

While he may seem outgoing, he’s probably reserved around strangers. And when you leave him, separation anxiety occurs. At this age, though, it is perfectly normal.

At this age, you need to keep talking to your baby. This is a critical time for his language development.

As he gets more active, it’s important to provide a safe space to explore. While he may not be walking quite yet, you can help him get ready by holding him in a way that puts weight on his legs or by propping him up against the sofa.

Don’t forget to pay attention to what he enjoys, and give him the freedom to use all his senses to play and discover.

Praise and reward good behavior. In fact, praising and rewarding your child when the situation demands it is a very good strategy to keep your child on a routine, as well as disrupting any bad habits – your reward the good, and ignore the bad.

Respect his separation anxiety. Build trust by giving him time to get used to new caregivers and always say goodbye before you leave.

By 7 months, your child has started eating solid foods. Consult with his pediatrician for recommendations.

Given the fact that by this age, your baby may be learning to sit up, crawl, or possibly even walk, it could come as no surprise that he may not want to stop practicing his new skills at bedtime.

Separation anxiety could also be the cause of your baby’s wake-up calls. Waking up and not finding you around may cause some distress. The good news is, he’ll calm down as soon as you enter the room and greet him.

Finally, teething pain can wake your baby up. Of course, you can’t know what’s causing your baby to wake, but there are a lot of good reasons at this age. Remember, however, that each child is different and some simply are better sleepers than others.

As he nears 9 months of age, your baby will sleep approximately 14 hours a day, including two naps for one to two hours at a time.

This is the perfect time to continue working on the techniques you and your baby learned in the first nine months of life, including:

* **Stick to a consistent bedtime routine:** I can’t stress this enough. Just remember that you and your baby will both benefit from a nightly bedtime ritual. Make sure your baby finds the routine soothing, and be sure to follow the same routine every night. Children thrive on consistency and feel more secure when they know what to expect
* **Ensure a regular schedule for your baby:** Bedtime may go smoothly if you make an effort to keep the rest of your baby’s daily schedule consistent, too.

If he naps, eats, plays, and gets ready for bed at about the same time every day, he’ll be much more likely to fall asleep without a struggle. That’s a win-win situation.

* **Give your child plenty of chances to fall asleep on his own:** If you want your baby to sleep independently, he needs the chance to practice this important skill.

Instead of nursing or rocking him to sleep, let him practice falling asleep on his own by putting him in bed when he’s relaxed and drowsy. Otherwise he’ll probably cry when he wakes up during the night and need your help to drop off again.

# **chapter 5 – 13 MONTHS to 24 months**



As you learn what milestones your toddler is likely to master this year, remember that this is only a guideline. In reality, [each child is unique and develops at his own pace.](.)

In his second year, your toddler will grow confident on his feet: those first wobbly steps set him on course to walk by himself, kick a ball, and maybe even run by the time he turns 2.

Alongside his physical skills, his language skills are also expanding, though he understands more than he can express.

By 18 months, he can say at least several single words, and by the time he turns 2, he’ll master the art of using words in short phrases and sentences.

Not surprising, he picks up new words at an astounding rate from the books you read to him and the conversations he’s hearing.

In addition, your toddler is starting to identify shapes and colors. He scribbles with a crayon, builds block towers, throws a ball, and enjoys filling and emptying containers. Also, you might notice the first signs that indicate whether he’ll be left- or right-handed.

Another characteristic of your toddler at this age is the desire to do everything himself: get his clothes on and off, feeding, washing, and so on.

A huge milestone will be his emerging interest in learning how to use a toilet.

Separation anxiety peaks midyear, and by 24 months he’ll be more comfortable playing alongside other children and spending time with other caregivers. He’ll also grow increasingly independent, and even defiant at times.

To further the work that you started back when your baby was born, you’ll need to foster his verbal skills by putting feelings into words, asking questions, talking about the books you read together, asking his opinion, and answering questions about the world around him.

You can even start teaching him letters and numbers. Just be careful not to scold him for incorrect word usage – just rephrase what he said correctly.

When he points to something he wants, prompt him to ask for it instead.

What you need to do as well is to encourage pretend play with dolls and play food. Ask your baby to help sort toys by putting them in similar categories, like color or texture.

Let him practice feeding himself with a cup and the appropriate utensils.

As he acquires new skills, take a careful look around your home and make sure every area in which your child goes is childproofed, so he can explore freely and safely.

Make sure gets – and enjoys – plenty of time outside. Take him to the playground, park, or zoo. He’ll undoubtedly enjoy every moment.

Continue to reinforce good behavior with praise and attention. Set simple, yet clear limits and follow through with consequences calmly and consistently.

Give your toddler clear options and allow him to make choices. And be patient – he’s only just beginning to learn how to control and express himself.

What you’ll also need to look after are signs that thing don’t go as they should. It is true that each child develops at his own pace, but talk to his pediatrician if your toddler:

* **Can’t walk by 18 months**
* **Doesn’t imitate words and actions**
* **Doesn’t follow simple instructions**
* **Doesn’t understand the use of everyday objects**
* **Doesn’t speak at least six words by 18 months**
* **Loses skills he previously had**

# **CHAPTER 6 – 25 MONTHS TO 36 MONTHS**

When your child takes the first step on his or her own, a new developmental phase begins.

At this stage children are now free to roam around their world. It is a time for active exploration of their environment. Language development takes major leaps which leads to learning the names of many things and the ability to ask for and about them.

As they discover their independent nature, they develop the ability to say “no”.

This is also a stage of rapid physical and intellectual development preparing, in which the road that leads to the school years is being built.

Parents are in this period, however, the primary teachers for the mastery of basic learning skills and need to encourage active discussion and experimentation of new concepts and skills.

During this period, your child’s imagination is taking off. Playing make-believe is a hallmark of this age, along with fears about imaginary monsters and more ordinary things such as the fear of the dark or the vacuum cleaner.

His speech is becoming clear enough that strangers can usually understand him. His vocabulary is increasing dramatically, and he’ll be using hundreds of words by the time he’s 3.

Manual dexterity is improving too – your preschooler is figuring out how to open doors and containers and can manipulate moving parts on toys.

On a social level, you’ll see him start to develop friendships, showing empathy and affection for her playmates – and even his toys.

He’s getting the hang of taking turns and sharing, but may struggle with tantrums when his emotions get the best of him.

Provide your child with many opportunities to play with kids his own age. Moreover, give him a chance to resolve any dispute with his friends, but be ready to step in and facilitate sharing or taking turns.

You need to do this because later on, he’ll need help figuring out how to solve and handle bigger problems and emotions.

To help him develop his creativity and improve his attention span, play learning games: count things together, ask him to find matching toys, and name body parts.

This type of play may also help him sort through emotions, but let him direct the play. Make sure he gets plenty of time outside to run and freely explore.

However, you also need to set some limits. Set simple, yet clear limits and follow through with consequences calmly and consistently. And don’t forget to praise him when he behaves well.

Near his third birthday, he might be ready to [move from his crib to a bed.](.)

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