

## What Is a Developmental Milestone?

By Kendra Cherry, About.com Guide

**Question:** What Is a Developmental Milestone?

**Answer:**

A developmental milestone is an ability that is achieved by most children by a certain age. Developmental milestones can involve physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communication skills such as walking, sharing with others, expressing emotions, recognizing familiar sounds and talking.

### Types of Developmental Milestones

There are four basic categories for developmental milestones:

1. **Physical milestones**<sup>1</sup> involve both large-motor skills and fine-motor skills. The large-motor skills are usually the first to develop and include sitting up, standing, crawling and walking. Fine-motor skills involve precise movements such as grasping a spoon, holding a crayon, drawing shapes and picking up small objects.
2. **Cognitive milestones**<sup>2</sup> are centered on a child's ability to think, learn and solve problems. An infant learning how to respond to facial expressions and a preschooler learning the alphabet are both examples of cognitive milestones.
3. **Social and emotional milestones**<sup>3</sup> are centered on children gaining a better understanding of their own emotions and the emotions of others. These milestones also involve learning how to interact and play with other people.
4. **Communication milestones** involve both language and nonverbal communication. A one-year old learning how to say his first words and a five year old learning some of the basic rules of grammar are examples of important communication milestones.

While most of these milestones typically take place during a certain window of time, parents and caregivers must remember that each child is unique. These developmental abilities also tend to build on one another. More advanced skills such as walking usually occur after simpler abilities such as crawling and sitting up have already been achieved.

Just because one child began to walk by eleven months of age does not mean that another child is "behind" if he still is not walking at 12 months. A child generally begins to walk anytime between the ages of 9 and 15 months, so anytime between those ages is considered normal.

If a child is over 15 months and still cannot walk, the parents might consider consulting with a doctor or developmental specialist to determine if some type of developmental issue is present.