

How I Understand

Children are sponges for knowledge. They learn through exploring the places, people, and things around them. They love to get messy, wander, and repeat things to gain a clear understanding. As a caregiver, you can create a secure, safe, and supportive relationship with your child. You can play with your child and give them information through your actions and reactions to their attempts at communication, experimentation, and activity. Below is a list of ways your baby is starting to understand the world around him or her.



Children from birth to 6 months old

- I watch, listen, touch, and hold.
- I like shiny and bright colors.
- I recognize familiar people and routines.
- I repeat actions that have an interesting effect.
- I am learning that I have an effect on other people and things.

Children from 6 to 12 months old

- I bang things together.
- I love containers and put things in them and take them out repeatedly.
- I search for hidden objects.
- I anticipate what is coming next.
- I know I can cause things to happen, and I know things can happen to me.

Children from 12 to 24 months old

- I like to explore everything and try new things ... over and over again.
- I try to categorize things.
- I try to involve others in my play.
- I am beginning to think before I act and plan out my actions.
- I like to imitate and pretend daily activities (e.g., sweeping, rocking babies).

Children from 24 to 36 months old

- I can play cooperatively with partners more advanced than I am (e.g., parents, siblings).
- I focus on one thing at a time.
- I treat objects as if they had human properties.
- I can see things only from my perspective.
- I pretend about nondaily events (e.g., doctor visit, vacation).

Adapted with permission from the "What I Am Like" handout created by the Parents Interacting with Infants (PIWI) project at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

 For more information on child development, see the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse Web site at <http://eicclearinghouse.org>.

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