

# Developmental Task of Infancy and Childhood

## Developmental Tasks at Various Stages

According to R.H. Havighurst (1953) "A developmental task is a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness and difficulty with later tasks." Developmental tasks are based on the aspiration and needs of the society.

B.L. Neugarten (1969) says that "Every society is age-graded and every society has a system of social expectations regarding age-appropriate behaviour. The individual passes through a socially regulated cycle from birth to death as inexorably as he passes through the biological cycle, and there exists a socially prescribed time-table for the rendering of major life events. Although the norms vary somewhat from one socio-economic, ethnic or religious group to another, for any social group it can easily be demonstrated that norms and actual occurrences are closely related."

## Characteristics of Development Tasks

- Every society or culture has certain norms.
- Members should follow these norms..
- These norms are in terms of certain essential skills.
- Mastery over these skills leads to happiness, and failure leads to unhappiness.
- Skills are related to age groups.
- Norms vary from one socio-economic group to another.

## Purposes of Developmental Tasks

- According to Elizabeth B. Hurlock, development tasks serve the following three purposes:
- They are guidelines to enable this individual to know what society expects from him at a given age.
- Developmental tasks motivate the individual to do what the social group expects him to do certain things during his life.
- Developmental tasks serve to show the individual what lies ahead and what he will be expected to do when he reaches the next stage of development in the life span.

## Hazards Related to Developmental Tasks

- Inappropriate expectation-physical or psychological limitations of the individual.
- By-passing a developmental stage. Each stage must be lived through.
- Lack of opportunity to learn the developmental task.
- Lack of guidance.
- Lack of motivation.
- Poor health.
- A low intellectual level.

## Factor Promoting Developmental Tasks

- Provision of opportunities to learn the developmental tasks.

- Adequate guidance in learning the developmental tasks.
- Developing motivation.
- Good health.
- Appropriate level of intelligence.
- Creativity.

## **Developmental Tasks at Various Stages**

### **A. Brith to 6 years**

- Learning to walk.
- Learning to take solid food
- Learning to talk
- Learning to control the elimination of body wastes.
- Learning sex differences.
- Achieving physiological stability.
- Forming simple concepts of social and physical reality.
- Learning to relate oneself emotionally to parents, siblings and other people.
- Learning to distinguish right and wrong and developing a conscience.

### **B. 6 to 12 years**

- Learning physical skills, ordinary games.
- Building wholesome attitudes towards oneself as a growing organism.
- Learning to get along with age-mates.
- Learning appropriate sex role, i.e., masculine or feminine role.
- Developing fundamental skills in reading, writing and calculating
- Developing concepts necessary for everyday living.
- Developing conscience, morality and values.
- Achieving personal independence.
- Developing attitudes towards social groups and institutions.

### **C. Adolescence (12 to 20 years)**

- Accepting one's physique.
- Accepting a masculine or feminine role.
- Gaining emotional independence from parents and other adults.
- Establishing new relations with age-mates of both sexes.
- Achieving assurance of economic independence.
- Selecting preparing for a vocation.
- Developing necessary concepts for civic competence.
- Developing intellectual skills. 9. Developing socially acceptable behaviour.
- Preparing for marriage and family life.
- Developing harmonious moral and scientific values.

## Scope of Child Development

- Growth and Development.
- Approaches to understand the child.
- Developmental tasks.
- Developmental Process at various stages.
- Factors influencing development: Heredity and Environment.
- Role of the family and teachers in fostering development of the child.
- Major aspects of child development.
- Personality development.
- Measurement and Evaluation..
- Elementary techniques of research.

## Objectives of Child Development

To find the common characteristics and age changes during childhood in appearance, in behaviour, in interests and in goals form one development period to another.

- To find out when these changes occur.
- To find out their causes.
- To find out how they influence behaviour.
- To find out whether they can be predicted.
- To find out whether they are individual or universal.
- To find out how they can be modified.

# **Developmental Landmarks During Infancy**

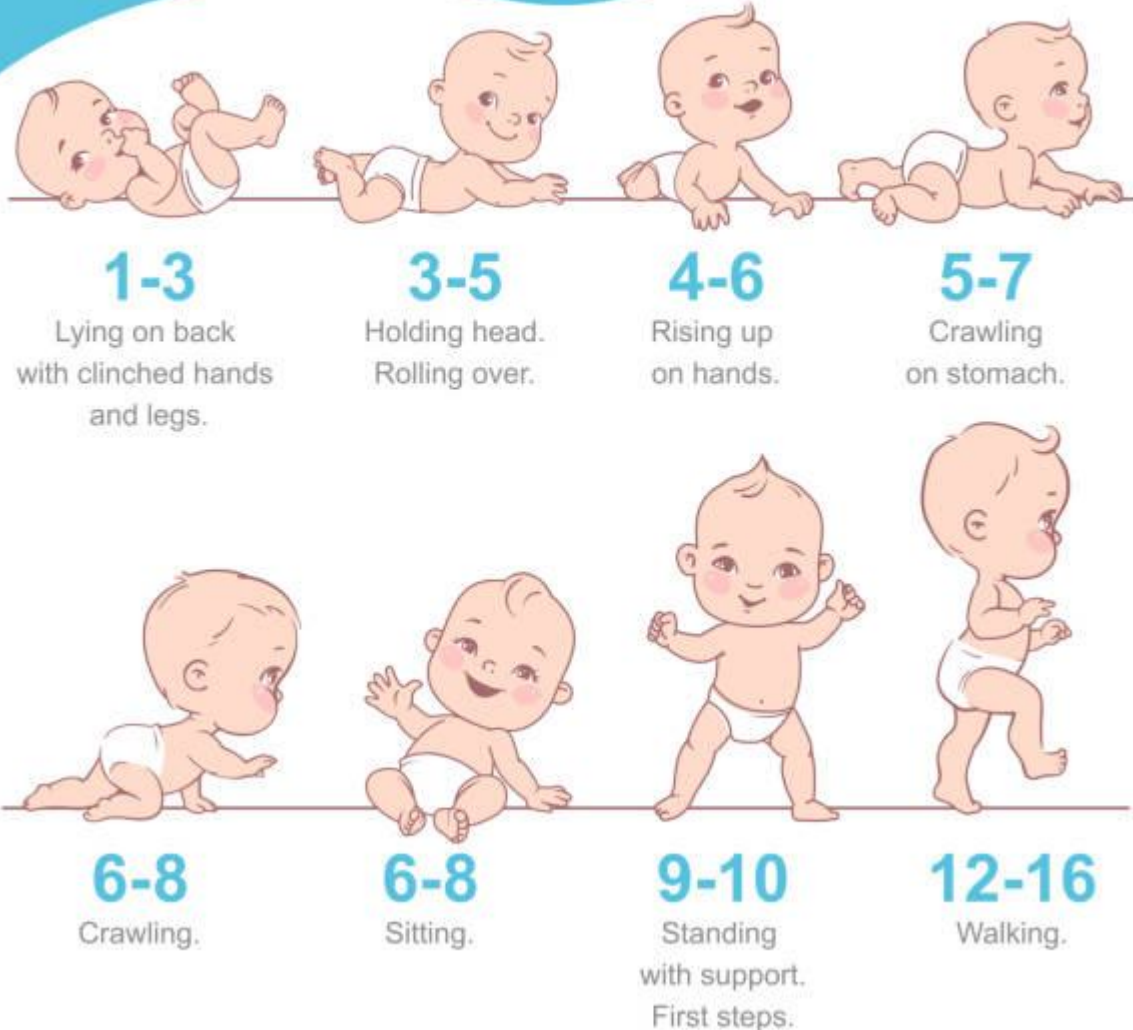
## **1. Physical Growth and Motor Development**

Children are born with many reflexes. These are built-in physical responses. Primitive reflexes ensure the survival of the baby after birth. Examples of primitive reflexes include: crying, grasping, and sucking reflexes. Postural reflexes, such as: stepping and swimming, help newborns adapt to the new world. Stepping and swimming reflexes help the baby to become oriented to the environment.

Physical growth and motor development follow a direction. Physical growth and motor development start from the upper areas of the body to the lower areas. This is cephalo-candal direction. At birth, for example, the head of a newborn is much bigger than the rest of the body.

Physical growth and motor development also proceed from the centre of the body to the peripheries. This is proximodistal direction. For example, the chest and the trunk develop and reach adult status before the limbs.

# BABY DEVELOPMENT IN FIRST YEAR



## The motor achievements of children at the infancy stage of development include:

**1. Postural Control** – Postural control is the ability to stand upright. This ability may be observed progress from lifting head, lying on stomach, rolling over, lying, sitting propped up, to standing holding on to something. 90 per cent of children achieve postural control by the end of the first year of life.

**2. Locomotive Control** – Locomotive control is the ability to move around. This ability is observed progress from rolling on stomach, crawling on buttocks, creeping on arms and knees, climbing stairs, walking when led to walking alone. 90 per cent of children achieve locomotive control by the end of 15 months.

**3. Manual Control** – Manual control is the ability to manipulate objects. It involves the use of fine motor skills. Fine motor skills appear when the child is able to coordinate sensory information with motor

actions. An example of manual control is shown in prehension. Prehension is the controlled act of reaching for and grasping an object. Reaching and grasping is achieved through eye-hand coordination. Prehension appears around four months.

## **2. Cognitive Development**

Physical growth and motor development are at the heart of cognitive achievements at infancy. As locomotive and manual control increases, children venture into the environment of their world. The things they find and the experiences they have significantly influence the course of cognitive development.

Cognitive development at infancy stage of development involves the development of sensorimotor activities. The process of coming to know during infancy is typified by an organisational process.

The major landmarks in cognitive development during infancy include:

### **1. Organisation of Reflexes**

At infancy, the child's inborn reflexes become organised into schemes. Schemes action patterns for understanding the environment. Schemes are self-initiated activities. Examples of schemes include sucking, kicking, grasping, crying, hitting. Building of schemes become increasingly more complex as the child's development progresses.

### **2. Object Permanence**

Perceptual abilities develop rapidly during the first year of a child's life. The child achieves object permanence during the first year of life. The child comes to know that an object exists even when it is removed from their field of vision. The object continues to exist in time and space outside the child, even when the child cannot access it. The evidence for the development of object permanence is when children begin to actively seek or search for a hidden or missing object which they want.

### **3. Active Experimentation**

Active experimentation follows the child's achievement of object permanence. Children begin to explore and discover new properties of objects. Instead of mere fitting of existing schemes to new situations, children now actively vary their actions to produce different outcomes.

Their actions resemble that of scientists gathering information through trial and error.

### **4. Mental Representation**

Between 18 months and two years, children begin to use mental representations. Objects that are not seen can be mentally represented and manipulated using words, symbols, gestures and mental images.

Use of symbols is the basis of pretend play or make-believe plays of children. Thus, mental representation signals the beginning of thought.

## 5. Language

Many children utter their first word by the age of 12 months. From this time onwards, children begin to use language to identify things, speak with others, construct past events, and to influence actions in the future.

## 3. Psycho-social Development

During infancy, the transformation from a helpless newborn to a baby capable of forming close relationships with others takes place.

The landmark achievements in psychosocial development of the infancy stage of development include:

### 1. Attachment Bonding

An attachment bond describes a child's connection with a caregiver.

This connection provides the child a sense of safety and security. As children grow older, attachment with a caregiver ensures that they are cared for. The emotional relationship that develops between the child and the caregiver enables the child to venture with confidence into the world feeling loved and secure. Bonding begins at birth, and is strengthened by reflexive smile and crying.

### 2. Social Smile

Social smile follows attachment bonding. Eye contact with a human face provokes social smile as distinct from reflexive smile which occurs mainly when the baby is asleep. Social smile ensures that the caregiver will continue to look at, pick up, hold, stroke, and feed and love the baby. It makes caring for the child enjoyable and rewarding.

### 3. Crying

At birth, crying is reflexive. Crying is the reflex response to choking which allows the child to take in their first breath. Crying elaborates into a scheme when it becomes melodious, signifying different states such as wet, hot, hungry, uncomfortable, seeking attention or in pain.

Crying generally increases until about six weeks of age to two months. Crying in children declines as they get older, and peaks again between 12 and 18 months. Crying peaks when children begin to display negative emotions and may reach the point of temper tantrums.

### 4. Laughing

Laughing in children appears at about six months of age. Physical stimulation such as tickling; and visual stimuli like the mother's own laughing provoke infant's laughing. By the end of the second year of life, children are able to participate in fun-making activities like pulling on the mother's ear, or biting the mother's nipple.

## 5. Social Referencing

Social referencing appears in the first year of life. Social referencing is the ability to seek out emotional cues from trusted adults. Children use social referencing to know how to react to new situations. Social referencing ensures that children understand facial expressions, and voice tones that signify various emotional states. Children are able, for example, to differentiate emotions such as anger, happiness, approval, and disapproval. Social referencing impacts considerably on a child's social behaviour. For instance, social referencing is the basis of the development of empathy feeling.

## 6. Self-awareness

By 18 months, self-awareness has appeared in children. Self-awareness describes the sense of oneself as distinct and different from other persons. Self-awareness makes it possible for the child to experience secondary emotions such as; pride, shame, guilt, embarrassment and jealousy. Self-awareness paves the way for children to see peers as individuals. It aids them in forming friendship based on trust and shared interest.

# **Developmental Tasks**

## 1. Learning to Walk

The child at this stage of development is expected to master the skills of walking. Mastery of these skills ensures that the child learns during subsequent stages to run, jump and skip.

## 2. Learning to Talk

The child utters their first word between 12 and 18 months. With the first word uttered, talking begins. Speech is engendered by the forces of maturation and learning.

Mastery of speech ensures that the child succeeds in achieving effective communication and social intercourse during subsequent stages of development.

## 3. Learning to Eat Solid Food

At this stage, the child is expected to master the skills of taking solid food and be weaned from the breast. The nature of the weaning process, the age at weaning, and the schedule of feeding during weaning, all have profound impact on later development of personality.

## 4. Learning to Control the Elimination of Body Waste

The child must learn to urinate and defecate at socially acceptable times and places. Toilet training is the first moral training the child receives.

The stamp of this first moral training may persist in the child's later character.

## 5. Learning to Trust Self and Others

The child is expected during infancy to learn to trust caregivers as providers of contact comfort, nourishment and security. The child must also learn to trust self as an efficient system capable of self-control.

## Developmental Tasks During Childhood

Early childhood is characterized by basic tasks such as learning to walk, to take solid food, and to control the elimination of body wastes. In addition, young children have to achieve more complex cognitive and social tasks, such as learning to talk, to form simple concepts of reality, and to relate emotionally to other people. In middle childhood, developmental tasks relate to the expansion of the individual's world outside of the home (e.g., getting along with age mates, learning skills for culturally valued games) and to the mental thrust into the world of adult concepts and communication (e.g., skills in writing, reading, and calculating). Achieving adolescent developmental tasks requires a person to develop personal independence and a philosophy of life. Adolescents are confronted, for example, with learning to achieve new forms of intimate relationships, preparing for an occupation, achieving emotional independence of parents, and developing a mature set of values and ethical principals. The peer group plays a major role in facilitating the achievement of adolescents' developmental tasks by providing a context in which some of these tasks can be accomplished.



## Language Development

In early childhood, the understanding, synchronizing, and generating language in children grow at a very fast rate. In the beginning, when a child is 6 months he or she can respond to his or her name but can not speak. Between the ages of 2-6 years, old children have the ability to understand what they are told than they can speak. However, as they grow, the ability to speak goes up and thus matches with their ability to understand. A child starts by talking the easy words in plurals and uses possession when using the noun (Hurlock, E.B. (1974). Between the age of one to two, he or she tries to remember and repeat words that have been used by the adult previously to express their reaction.



This may lead to discomfort and embarrassment to the parents as the child may repeat a word that is not appropriate. Thus the adults should be very careful about the words they use around the child such as incorrect grammar or swear words. When a child goes beyond the use of more than two words (this is at the age of the tree), he or she starts to understand grammar, the child may use a different kind of words to form difficult sentences that cannot be understood by the adults.

This is because the sentences formed have irregular verbs like “she come” rather than “she came” (Hurlock, 1974). Children at the age of three can speak vocabularies of about 900 words which increase drastically to 8000 to 1400 words by the age of six. Children at this age also try to refine their word pronunciation and this is easily achieved when a child starts to go to school. As the child grows, language becomes more complex and mature; he or she starts to use basic metaphors such as “white as snow” on ideas that have been put before him.

The child also starts to recognize the different ways of talking to the adults and to the peers and age mates. By the age of six, the child can be able to give a word for a certain definition that the adult has put across. At this age also, the child is able to laugh at jokes that have been told by the adult (Kathleen, 2008).

## Physical Development

Preschoolers tend to grow at a slower but even pace than toddlers whose growth goes on and on. The kind of physical growth that these children experience involves their brains growing and acquiring motor skills along with health changes. (Dinkmeyer, 1965). Children lose their toddler features of looking chubby and look more sporty. The male children tend to have more physique than the females even in their childhood years.

Physical proportions also tend to change with the head still being larger than the rest of the body but to a lesser extent compared to toddlers. Children who are aged three should be averagely 38 inches in height and their weight should be around 32 pounds (Hurlock, E.B. (1974). Consequently, when they are six the expected height and weight are 46 inches and pounds respectively depending on their parent’s social and economic ability and the kind of feeding they are getting since this will directly affect their health. (Kathleen, 2008).

According to Dinkmeyer (1965), Motor skills are physical abilities. There are two types of motor skills gross and fine. Physically involving tasks like dancing and running make up the gross motor skills while tasks involving cognitive application such as drawing and writing are the fine motor skills. Fine motor skills take a longer time to perfect because they involving the brain more compared to gross motor skills. Children in this age bracket learn through observation and repetition of what they see and in learning new behaviors.

Preschoolers are generally healthy but may develop ordinary illnesses such as colds and stomachaches which on average are expected to last around 14 days. Their lungs are underdeveloped making them prone to respiratory complications. Some of the illnesses that last more than 14 days in children include influenza, Pneumonia, cancer, and HIV and AIDS. However, children born in large families face the risk of getting infections from other family members and other issues prevalent in large families like poverty and family stress (Seidman, 1958).

## Cognitive Development

In the attempt to understand, organize, build and forecast the space around them, children have developed cognitive insight. During the age of 2-6, the child has improved in the use of the language, symbols and has started emulating the behavior of the adult; this is demonstrated when children build cars by the use of empty cartons and play the family games (Seidman, 1958). In cognitive development when a child is at the age of two, he or she cannot differentiate between his or her opinion and the opinion of others. This is however overcome when the child goes to school and starts learning about the views, emotions, and desires of other people.

At the age of four and five, the child can be able to explain the views, experiences, thoughts, and feelings of others and communicate like an adult. At the age of five, the child can be able to understand the mind of others and the eventual consequences and by the age of six, the child can be able to explain situations and the surrounding (Kathleen, 2008).

