



Cognitive Development

What is cognitive development?



Cognitive development refers to a child's growth in thinking and learning. Because success in life is built on the foundation of a good education, parents want their children to have all the skills needed to do well in school.

Child development research has found that developing good thinking and learning skills depend on whether a child experiences healthy development in a loving environment from the very first months of

life. As a baby grows into a toddler, and then a preschooler, parents should pay attention to all areas of development — physical, social, communication, and thinking.

Even as babies, children learn from every life experience. It is important to talk to your baby constantly, and to find as many teaching moments as possible. Simple noises, touches, and eye contact will wire a child's brain for future learning.

Toddlers are always on

the go, and learn by moving and doing. As they climb, run, jump, and play with toys, they are busy learning.

Preschoolers learn by asking questions, solving problems and interacting with other children and adults. They also learn when they are given a toy or project to work on alone.

Cognitive development usually follows a pattern, and there are milestones children should reach at certain ages. It is useless to try to rush a child's development because every child learns and grows at their own pace.

Instead, try to nurture healthy development by providing a variety of interesting toys and activities. And constantly talk aloud as you do activities together.

Ways to help your child:

ONE

Nurture language development by talking to your child, and responding to your child's noises, even if it is just babbling.

TWO

Sing simple songs to your child — like "Itsy Bitsy Spider" — and use motions to make the song more exciting. Also, play peek-a-boo and describe daily activities out loud to your child.

THREE

Read regularly to your child, even to very small babies. Your voice will soothe a fussy infant, and with time, your child will

Resources:

Call [Early Access](tel:1-888-IAKIDS1) at 1-888-IAKIDS1 if you have child development questions or concerns.

Link to an [Area Education Agency](#) in your region for more child and family information:

www.iowaaea.org. Find a contact for your area under the [AEA Directory](#) tab.

Visit [BabyCenter](#) for ideas on encouraging your baby's cognitive development, and for fun family activities.

[ZeroToThree](#) provides tips on how to help your child develop physical, social, language and thinking skills.

The [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#) has a variety of ideas and activities for families that want to make learning fun.

This factsheet is part of an informational series for parents of children ages 0-5, developed by the Iowa Department of Education Early Childhood Services Bureau. (Updated April 2010)

Three important facts about cognitive development:

1. All development is important. Pay attention to all aspects of your child's growth — this includes physical, social, communication, and thinking.

2. Progress should not be rushed. Concentrate on simple tasks and skills first. Rushing development may frustrate your child, and most likely will not help your child get ahead. Instead, nurture healthy development at a pace

your child can handle.

3. Language skills are key. The basis for most learning is reading, and the basis for reading is language. Children with well-developed language skills and vocabularies will become successful readers. When your child babbles, coos, points and reaches, reward those efforts by responding with enthusiasm. Those sounds will soon turn into words!

learn to interpret words and tone of voice, which will eventually lead to reading.

FOUR

Keep track of your child's progress. Ask your doctor for a list of milestones your child should be reaching at certain ages, and then check from time to time to make sure they are on track. Delays in reaching milestones may indicate a developmental delay.