

Hello !

Thank you for your interest in children’s mental growth!

The following are the summaries of what my research has found for toddler mental development. I document the age-related “stages” that children go through. It is times when children “act up,” but on the other side of this stage is an astonishing new mental ability. My work documents both the details of the irritating behavior and the details of the new abilities. These are the summaries. Expanded descriptions can be found in my book *Misbehavior is Growth: An Observant Parent’s Guide to the Toddler Years*. Here is a chart with the main milestones in the toddler years.

Developmental Milestones for Toddlers		
No.	Age	Milestone
1	18m	Language Comprehension
2	20m	Patterns Symbols
3	21m	Symbolic Thought
4	23m	Memory Expansion
5	2.1	Persistence and Insistence
6	2.2	Deliberate Decision Making
7	2.4	Deliberate Rearranging and Creation
8	2.7	Inference/Sequence of Events
9	2.8	Creative On-The-Spot Problem Solving
10	2.9	Persistent Imagination and Execution
11	2.10	Short-Term Planning
12	2.10	Imaginative Predictions

Please send your friends to www.theobservantmom.com to find these summaries, blogs on surviving and thriving these milestones, and work for older ages.

Sincerely,

Amber Domoradzki (“The Observant Mom”)

Toddler Milestone 1 – Language Comprehension (Symbolic Representation)

Starts: 18 months

Most Intense: 18 months, 1 week until 18 months, 3 weeks

Ends: 19 Months

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy

- Very clingy
- May be in your lap a lot
- May be with you in the bathroom

Wild, Exuberant, Meltdowns

- Can be wild and exuberant, running around a lot, smiling
- Or may put things right in your face/mouth
- Occasional meltdowns

Sleep Issues

- Sleep schedule becomes erratic, e.g., unreliable nap times

Most Intense Period

- Wants to be held all the time, many meltdowns

New Abilities Summary

Language Comprehension

- Explosion in language comprehension
- For children who are talking (and some don't even until age three or older), an increase in words spoken, about one new word per day
- Spoken words are better enunciated.
- Advanced language children (often girls) talk in complete sentences (three or four words). Please do not compare your children negatively to this list! Look for the good in your child.

Symbols Represent Something

- Uses something other than an object to represent the object
- Might put their hand to their ear as a “phone”
- Might put long green Mega Bloks together and call it an “alligator”
- Might ask you to put sunscreen on their back by pretending to do it with a nearby object then signaling to put in on them
- At this one, the object quite resembles the symbol; a hand is a phone, green bricks are an alligator. At later milestones, they can use something quite unlike the symbol.
- Understands the idea of counting and may be counting

Follows Verbal Request Better, Based on the Word Alone

- Understands and executes the function of an object based solely on a verbal clue, e.g., runs over to get a jacket after the word “jacket” is said
- Or goes to the blender after “smoothie” is said
- Can answer a question but answers it by pointing to something or getting it

More Respectful/Follows Some Requests Better

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- Follows verbal requests better, e.g., “Please get your bottle”
- More respectful of others when asked to be, e.g., doesn’t step on their sibling after you ask them not to

Self-Awareness

- They are more self-aware now.
- Before, they could light up with joy, smile, be in awe of what is around them, etc. Now they are aware of that very joy.
- They might run around with a toy or food and it’s as if they notice the joy that it is to run around, specifically like that
- Or they might drape themselves in different fabrics, enjoying how the fabric makes them feel and look
- They might be a burst of sunshine, enthusiastically waving at strangers.
- They might have somewhat more deliberate behavior, such as looking at you with slightly more joyful, mischievous eyes.
- More awareness of and interest in body parts

Physical Skills

- Many fine motor skills such as doing puzzles
- May like to “scoot” on a tricycle or scooter

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Toddler Mini-Milestone 2A—Can Manipulate Symbols

Starts: Lasts for one or two days around 19 months 2 weeks

Irritable Period Summary

- Cranky
- Out of Sorts
- Wants to be near you
- Nap time changes on and around this day, perhaps being tired later than usual for nap
- Slight fever on this day, with no other symptoms of flu
- Much more likely to become ill however

New Abilities Summary

- It is hard to ascertain what they think at this one, as it is so brief, they are so young, and the next one starts so soon after.
- But given the future milestones, it almost has to be a thought that they can arrange symbols in a way to their liking.
- In the next milestone (2B), they can, say, arrange parts to make Mr. Potato Head's face. They then go on to playfully manipulate those symbols in ways other than intended (3A). They then firmly understand that symbols can represent something but are not the thing (Milestone 3B). Hence I propose that framework might be put in place here.
- Either way, I quite think this one is related to the next one, 2B, hence they are clustered together as Milestone 2A and 2B.

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Toddler Milestone 2B – Patterns Symbols (Strings Objects/Events Together)

Starts: One week before 20 months

Most Intense: 20 Months

Ends: Shortly after 20 Months

Irritable Period Summary

Major Sleep Issues

- Sleep problems: please expect naps won't be normal
- Might wake up in the night

Clingy and Cranky

- Extra crankiness
- Wants to be held and put down over and over
- Wants a lovey to go places with them

Most Intense Period

- One particular day is likely to be noticeable: Confused, stumbles when they walk, needs to be near you for an extended period of time, may be in and out of sleep all day, might have baby nightmares, wakes up from this state scared and confused, may have a mild fever for one day with no other symptoms of flu.

New Abilities Summary

- In Milestone 1, they better understand that a symbol represented something.
- Now they start to play around with “symbols.” They put objects into desired patterns and notice more patterns in the events around them.

Strings Objects Together

- Arranges objects as to represent something real, e.g., Mr. Potato Head's face
- Arranges things to form a very basic pattern, such as in a line or a in a stack

Understands Symbols Match Objects

- Understands who owns what, such as this is mom's phone and should be with mom
- Purposely takes sibling's favorite animal, blanket, or other lovey (suggesting they know that lovey belongs to their sibling)
- When they scribble, they might say it means something now, such as “Mommy” or “Lightning McQueen.”
- Can verbally identify 1 or 2 colors
- This suggests they have heightened consciousness that they are a person and that this consciousness applies to them, their physical being. And by covering up their eye, they think they can magically disappear. Their consciousness, a “symbol,” applies to them—and not to you.

Strings Events Together

- Sees the particular events that make up a routine, how they relate and how they differ
- Understands and initiates daily routines, e.g., might initiate turning a TV on if that's what you do in the mornings
- Understands the full routine of something well. They might help you make a cup of coffee in the morning and initiates (and may do) all steps correctly.

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- Or may put toys away on shelf
- The sequences they execute might have more steps, such as getting dog food out and putting it in the bowl.
- Wants to do routines, for instance, wants to watch you make their bottle or cup of milk, not just be handed it
- May be upset if routines are missed, such as if you skip brushing their teeth one night
- Follows along with simple, dramatic stories, in which events change, such as *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Helen Oxenbury and Michael Rosen
- Loves songs with a twist, such as "Pop Goes the Weasel"
- Might be able to do the actions to a song such as "Rock-a-Bye Bear"
- Note to string events together like this requires an increase in memory

Matches a Simple Action to the Right Situation

- They can apply a simple action to the right situation.
- If milk spills, they might go get a paper towel now
- If they get on a bus, they might recognize that the bus driver says "Move on back," as from the song "Wheels on the Bus."
- They can answer a simple question. They can reply with "ya" and mean it now.
- Or they can pick what shoes they want
- Or they can point in the direction they want to go after being asked
- Says "uh oh" when someone is about to fall, as they recognize the danger
- Gets scared of certain noises, such as thunder, as they better understand the threat it may be to them
- May laugh at jokes
- Increase in words spoken, mostly nouns and verbs

Manipulates Simple Events

- Deliberately tries different solutions to achieve an end goal, such as making two magnets stick, buckling a seatbelt, or laying a blanket down to make a "bed" to lie down on
- Might show a sad face or cry with the intent of getting another person to do something for them

More Consistent in Fantasy Play

- Fantasy play is more consistent, e.g., consistently flies a toy airplane around as a toy airplane
- Consistently brings favorite animal, blanket, or lovie with them places (suggests a firmer understanding of the continuous nature of time)
- Sings parts of songs

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Toddler Milestone 3A —Mischief with Objects and Symbols

Starts: 20 months, 2 weeks

Most Intense: The week prior to 21 months up to 21 months

Ends: 21 months

Irritable Period Summary

First Part

- A noticeable head shape change, in which their forehead bulges forward, might alert you that this one is starting (around 20 months 2 weeks).
- It starts a bit mild and builds in intensity. Some might not notice it at the beginning (or simply enjoy the activities the child is demanding, such as going on walks), depending on circumstances. Otherwise:

Demanding, Cranky, Jealous

- Cranky
- Wants to be in the same room with you always
- Grabs you by the hand constantly and brings you places to do things with them
- Wants to sit in primary caregiver's lap or near primary caregiver often
- Jealous of other children
- Sleep issues: early morning wakings

Second Part

- There is yet another head shape change another week in (20 months 3 weeks). The second part shows more intense behavior.
- Spatially confused. For instance, they think they are on the floor when they are on the first stair of a staircase and fall down the step. Please be careful near pool stairs or at playgrounds.
- Totally out of sorts
- Can't make up their mind, say of what they want for breakfast or perhaps can't communicate it to you
- Drools a lot, puts hand in mouth
- Takes blanket or lovey everywhere
- Absolutely won't forget when they leave something they want behind, e.g., their lovey
- Won't use plates/cups properly but wants to use them in different ways. They carry them to a non-dining area or do something playful with them.

Most Intense Period

- Insists on being VERY near you, like in the crook of your neck, can't communicate what they want or seems unable to make up their mind, wants to do everything in some specific way that they can't communicate effectively, sleep disruptions.

New Abilities Summary

Tries New Things

- Sees a challenge they think they can do, which they've never done before, and steps up and does it, on their own initiative.
- As an example, they pull a very heavy thing that you don't think they can do—and then they do.

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- Very independent and insists on doing things independently, like getting their own food
- Likes watering plants with a trickle of water from a hose
- It's as if this is a bridge between TM 2 (the last one) and TM 3B (the next one).
- In previous milestones, they were mastering the manipulation of symbols and taking part in routines.
- At this one, they take a risk to do something they can't do.

Uses Objects in a Way Other Than Intended

- They also play with objects in a “wrong” way purposefully.
- They may play with plates in a way other than eating on them, put your dress on, or insist on eating a fruit while walking around in a store.
- They might like to cloak fabrics around themselves, such as clothes too big for them or big fluffy towels
- This play time may be needed to facilitate the next milestone, when they are capable of confident symbolic manipulation, in which they creatively use items for something other than their original intended use.

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Toddler Milestone 3B – Confident Manipulation of Objects and Symbols

Starts: 21 Months 1 Week

Most Intense: 21 months 3 weeks until a few days after, then dissipates

Ends: Between 22 months and 22 months 2 weeks

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy

- Mild at first, asks to be held a lot
- Might demand you do things with them, such as go on a walk
- Wants only their primary caregiver
- More intense meltdowns than before
- More willing to be away from you at times. But when they do get separation anxiety, it's intense
- Wants a lovey or blanket to come with them everywhere

Demanding and Picky

- Demanding, such as what to watch on TV
- Picky, e.g., about what clothes to wear. Perhaps their symbolic thought makes them more acutely aware of what is on their shirts (sparkles, pictures, etc.)
- Or picky about how to eat food, e.g., wants to eat something straight out of the bag (take note of what you do and see if they are trying to mimic you)

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Stalls at nap and bedtime, demands story after story, song after song, etc.,
- Might skip naps
- There is a very noticeable change in head shape at 22 months.
- At close to 22 months, they might put things inside their cheek, such as their hand or grapes.

Most Intense Period

- Demanding, picky, may hit or throw, separation anxiety, sleep disturbances

New Abilities Summary

- Noticeably less clingy
- Less separation anxiety
- A very sunny period occurs around 22 months 2 weeks: they are filled with ecstatic joy and may play cute little cheeky games with you.

Confident Symbolic Manipulation

- They've been working with symbols for the past few milestones. It's that they are sturdy and confident now. Something is a symbol and is used to represent something. It's not the something.
- They might (intentionally) use an object to represent something else, such as a Lego to represent a teacup.
- Understands that symbolic play is just that and is silly, may prefer real things
- They do more with symbols. They don't just find a green block if asked, they also count how many green blocks there are.

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- They might be able to sort objects by both color and shape, such as a sorting toy in which the objects are different shapes and colors.
- Concrete to abstract matching games become possible, such as matching a Cinderella doll to a picture of Cinderella
- Might enjoy tracing shapes, such as circles, with a stencil
- This makes letter activities become possible, such as letter puzzles.
- Might understand abstract symbols, such as letters, better
- Capable of learning many colors
- Counting might become refined
- Understands difference in gender

Pretend Play

- Pretend play, such as pretending to be a dinosaur, pretending to read
- Imaginative play based on real events, such as puts on a play with dolls based on what they've seen others do (perhaps tries to potty train a doll)

Conversational Flow and Back and Forth in How They Talk

- Simple conversational flow in how they speak
- Responsive to questions such as saying "I'll find it" after asking "Where is your pillow?"
- They may do this nonverbally also by finding something, like their shoes, upon hearing that's what you are doing
- They might initiate a "back and forth" game with you. For instance, they hide behind a door, fully expecting you to come find them.
- More complete sentences such as "I kissed mommy." (Some see this in earlier milestones but you are likely to see an increase anyhow)

Increase in Practical Life and Fine Motor Skills

- Practical life activities explode: turning lights on and off, buckling seat belts, putting clothes on and such.
- They are just very aggressive and have fun with trying to do a lot more things.
- Figures out how to do something they want, such as turning a bin over to practice getting to a light switch (using objects other than as intended as in past milestones has come in handy!)
- Attempts a more challenging problem, such as putting an open-ended train track together (the kind that only fits together one way). They, however, might not be able to persist with it until completion yet.
- Can remember about 5 events of what is going to happen for the day (snack, play, lunch, store, home)
- Wants to drive the car
- Better fine motor control such as using a spoon better
- Better ability to regulate their own behavior such as placing the spoon next to their plate when done

Learns Quickly

- Learns new things quickly based on watching others. For instance, they might learn how to sit at a computer and pretend to use a mouse after seeing someone at the library do it.
- Or learns how to dip food in sauce after seeing at a restaurant for the first time
- Or picks up on any other thing, such as a new puzzle, quickly

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Toddler Milestone 4 – Memory Expansion

Starts: 22 Months, 3 weeks

Most Intense: 23 months to 23 months, 1 week

Ends: 23 months, 3 weeks

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy, Defiant

- Starts out with a child who is simply clingy and/or might wake up crying
- Wants only their primary caregiver at certain times
- Demanding of time
- Defiant in doing normal routines, such as taking a bath
- Might cry more

Sleep Issues

- Stalls going to bed (wants to read more books, play with toys, etc.)
- Skips naps
- When they wake up from sleep, they often cry

Crazy Behavior

- Crazy behavior: might crawl, climb on top of things, or put crayon on their face
- Grunts instead of answering questions
- May become slightly clumsier or fall easier or run into walls

Most Intense Period

- All of a sudden one day cries more easily or thrashes around, wants to be held, might seem confused, refuses naps for a few days in a row or other sleep disruptions (might wake up at night), might have a slight fever or get sick easier, and may demand large amount of time from primary caregiver

New Abilities Summary

Memory Increase

- Can remember entire songs
- Learns many words (10+) rapidly in a short amount of time
- Might be able to play the actual Memory Game
- They can answer a question about something not in sight, as they remember what the answer is, such as the color of something.
- They can remember stories and reference back to them, such as remembering a Thomas the Train plot line.
- They might say things not in sight, such as your family's pet, are "missing." This suggests they quite remember those things.
- Uses more complex sentences, with subjects, objects, verbs, and adjectives as opposed to simply "more!" or "more juice!"

Imagines One End Goal

- An increase in memory seems to always coincide with an increase in imagination. In this case, an ability to imagine one simple end goal.

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- Persists at activities that require imagining/visualizing the end goal, such as putting a train track set together (the kind that can only fit together one way).
- Or they purposely pose with a certain facial expression, such as a cute pouty face. This suggests again that they can visualize this end goal.
- They seem to actually think about one option or another, such as “Do you want a kiss?” and they ponder if they do or not.
- They may associate wrapping a gift with a birthday or Christmas coming up.

More Proactive

- Before they developed a flow to conversations. Now they initiate conversations, “Hi, Mommy! It’s nice to see you!”
- They might run up to people and say, “Ready, set, go!”
- They might ask you to change their diaper
- You might ask to kiss them and they say no. Later they come up, “Kiss? Kiss?” It’s like they remember they can do such things now.
- States opinions, e.g., “That’s crazy!”

Fine and Gross Motor Control

- Much more delicate fine motor control, e.g., careful in handling and transferring objects
- Might take an interest in using scissors
- Better at puzzles, knobbed cylinders
- Might have an increase in gross motor control, such as they start skipping, ride a balance bike, dance to the Wiggles, love to climb, or love to jump on a trampoline

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Toddler Milestone 5 – Persistence and Insistence

Starts: 2.0.1 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: 2.0.3 until 2.1.1

Ends: A few days after the intense period

Irritable Period Summary

- There may be a noticeable increase in head circumference slightly preceding the start of this one.

Clingy

- At first, it's a child who might grab your hand and lead you somewhere a lot, wants to cuddle, be sad that you left, etc. Then that and possibly:

Bossy, Demanding, Rigidly Particular

- Bossy, demanding, and possibly whiny
- They are bossy and particular about you have to do. You have to sit on a particular chair or change their diaper a very particular way.
- Their favorite words right now might be “no,” “sit,” and “move.”
- They want things done exactly the same way as days earlier, which may not be possible and may result in a meltdown. For instance, their dad assembled a train track in a certain way, and you don't now how they did it.
- Or they want a ball to roll down the stairs the exact same way each time

Defiant

- Higher propensity to bite (may happen only when they feel trapped such as being held against their will)
- Wants to push all the things and do all the things
- Hates diaper changes
- Takes clothes or diaper off (may be a desire to change their diaper on their own, diligent diaper changes may help)

Sleep Issues

- Won't nap, stalls at naptime
- Clumsy (may be from not napping)
- May wake up at night
- May have fears at night

Most Intense Period

- The previously listed behaviors start out somewhat subtly and get increasingly more intense until the end of the most intense period. At its most intense is a very demanding child who wants you almost all waking hours.

New Abilities Summary

Persistent Over Days

- Comes back to the same activity day after day and gets better at it each day
- Remembers how something was done from a few days ago
- Their memory now is over very specific things that make a big impression on them.

Persistent at Activities

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- Very persistent at accomplishing a challenge, e.g., a jigsaw puzzle or an app
- Can follow a simple verbal instruction about something new such as “hang this picture up with this tape over there” and they keep at it until they get it
- Might draw shapes such as circles
- Can count higher than they could previously

Insistent

- Insistent on doing what others are doing, e.g., to do what their older siblings are doing, such as painting with them
- They might have a sense that something or someone is gone forever (when it is), such as a toy is missing, and they keep asking where the thing or person went.
- Wants things done similar as before, such as how to build a train track

Language

- Very conversational
- Speaks two sentences, e.g., “Hi, Mommy. It’s nice to see you.”

Identifies Emotions

- There is a very clear heightened reaction to emotions, in themselves and others.
- They might identify their own emotions, as if it’s novel and interesting, such as, “Wow! Thunder! I’m scared of thunder!”
- They might tell you what they are scared of, many times.
- Might be struck by seeing the emotions in others, such as seeing a character in a book is sad
- Might purposely try to make you scared by dressing up in a “scary” outfit (a simple hat) and saying “Boo!”

Toddler Milestone 6 – Deliberate Decision Making

Starts: 2.1.3 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: 2.1.3 until 2.2.1

Ends: 2.2.2 (or bleeds into the next mini-milestone)

Irritable Period Summary

- Slightly preceding this milestone is an increase in head circumference. It might be hard to fit old shirts over their head.
- There is also, at some point in this milestone, an increase in how long their tongue is.

Clingier

- Wants to be cuddled
- Asks to be picked up a lot
- Cries for seemingly no reason
- Might ask for help a lot
- Might easily have a meltdown, but they easily go back to happy if you can guess what they want

Bossy

- Bossy, e.g., about where you are allowed to sit
- Picky and stubborn: might want the same exact shirt day after day
- Might not let you put on their pants (they likely want to pick what pants they wear)
- Insists you fill up their cup to a certain level with liquid
- Bossy about what movie gets played

Joke Playing

- Plays jokes, e.g., hides things from you on purpose or hides themselves
- Very likely to cheekily dress themselves up, such as in high heels or necklaces, entirely to elicit a reaction from others

Shows Regret

- Might show disappointment in whatever manner your child does: maybe dramatic slumped shoulders. Or full on meltdowns.
- Shows regret over past decisions. For instance, they choose one pair of shoes before going out and then they want a different pair while out and has a full on meltdown over it.

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Sleep disruptions, may be up at night
- Might drool or put their hand in their mouth
- Clumsy
- Might get sick easier

Fearful

- Shows fear over specific things, such as thunder or getting on a tricycle
- More hesitant to do things

Most Intense Period

- It varies from a child who just wants to snuggle a lot, gets sick more easily, or who does all of the bossy, stubborn behaviors listed above but more intensely with full meltdowns.

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New Abilities Summary

Decision Making

- Can intelligently alter their course if one way isn't working,
- They might use a different word when they see you aren't communicating together well. They might be saying "plate" but you think they are saying "paint," so they say, "a WHITE plate," to help clarify.
- They can look in a different direction in a book to find a picture if one way isn't proving successful.
- They can understand and answer a question like "Do you want to walk up the stairs or be carried?"
- Loves to be asked questions so they can show off their knowledge. Non-verbal children can still do this by pointing.
- Might clap and say yay when they are proud of something they did
- Very deliberate and particular about what they want, e.g., what movie to watch or how high the liquid in their cup must be filled
- Decisive about many things relating to their life, e.g., how their hair is worn, what they play with, or where they sit at the dinner table
- Very deliberate in how they behave. They may see their siblings play rock, paper, scissor and they put their hand in the shape to play
- Or they deliberately pretend to be like their sibling and put themselves to bed the way their siblings do

Symbols Help Them Make Decisions

- In the first Toddler Milestones, they developed a more solid understanding of symbols. Now they can use those symbols to make decisions.
- For instance, they may show that they understand that a strawberry on a cup of yogurt means it is strawberry and a blueberry means it is blueberry.
- Or they can press the "cold" button at a water cooler to get cold water
- This understanding may be why they are so picky and demanding. They sincerely think different color cups, e.g., a blue versus yellow cup, do different things (and they are sometimes right!)
- Other examples of understanding the meaning of symbols: may ascribe a triangle as meaning mountain
- Or they might understand that the sound of "a" is the first sound in "apple"—and thus can (possibly) read the word.

Longer Memory

- They can remember how things went from weeks ago.
- For instance, you had cashews at dinner once, with a particular meal. You have that meal again and they ask for cashews.
- They can't remember, "We did this thing two weeks ago." They make a connection between two things and remember the connection as such, even if it's been two weeks.

Loves Sorting and Comparing

- Compares many things, e.g., big and small (especially of how they are small compared to a big adult), or loud and quiet
- Loves lining things up big to small

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- Loves sorting shapes and colors

More Initiative

- Their better ability to gather data and act on the data makes them more proactive.
- Initiates conversations and activities a lot more
- Initiate jokes and games with others, such as waiting for you to come in the room then scaring you
- Might ask, “What are you doing, Mom?”
- Might put a blanket on their sibling or give them a bottle. (They have more information with which to act now.)
- Makes up their own song
- May playfully hit as a way to get their own way

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Toddler Mini-Milestone 7A – Fuses the Real and the Fake

Starts: 1 week shy of 2.3.0

Most Intense: 2.3.0

Ends: Shortly after

Clingy or Bossy

- Again clingy
- Might be bossy and insistent on what they want.
- May just really throw their weight around.

A Confusion or Fusing of Real and Fake Things

- Confusion/blending of fake things as real things
- Might think fake food is real food; may take a bite out of Styrofoam food
- Seems to think they can pick up and use a fork as found in a book. It's as if it "pops out" at them, as if it's a hologram.
- Or they do something like "scrape" at your face and sprinkle it around, as if that something (your face in this case) is actually something they can spread around, as if it's dirt (or whatever pretend play they are engaged in)

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Toddler Milestone 7B – Deliberate Rearranging and Creation

Starts: Between 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: Around 2.4.0 and again at 2.5.0

Ends: 2.5.2

Note: The timing of this one seems to vary for children. Understanding “The Hills of Child Development” may help. Look for specific behavior that kicks off this “hill.”

Irritable Period Summary

- Begins subtly but with a noticeable change in head shape and size
- You might also see them have “lazy” eyes to the point that they look cross eyed. Look for this around 2.3.2.
- Drooling
- Then hits very suddenly at or before 2 years 4 months

“Rearranges” the Environment, Bossy, Wild

- “Rearranges” many things: throws their cup, puts their shirt on inside out, opens your eye lids, wraps themselves in the curtain, throws their stuffed animals around, etc., in a repeated ongoing way
- Bossy, e.g., about diaper changes or where you are allowed to stand
- VERY defiant (to get diaper changed, go down for a nap, etc.)
- At times nothing seems to console them
- Extremely clumsy, drops stuff, does very risky things like put their blanket over their head and runs
- Makes many bids for connection throughout the day (put on my socks, take off my socks, watch me play, read a book)
- Playfully lies, such as points to the wrong answer when asked a question
- Major meltdowns
- About one meltdown per day in between the two peaks

Strong Fears

- Doesn’t want to leave primary caregiver
- Possessive of primary caregiver
- Their thinking that fake things are real things continues and causes problems.
- They might get upset if you throw away paper in the garbage
- They might think balls on a video game are real and are flying behind the TV
- Or they are very upset by a fake scary shark.

Sleep Issues

- Major sleep disruptions
- A strong chance they only nap once or twice a week during the irritable period
- On some days, may take a 6+ hour nap

Most Intense Period

- There are two peaks at this one. It may be two overlapping milestones. Some see relief in between and others do not. A strong fear of abandonment and confusion of fake and real things around 2 years, 4 months. They might get really mad you threw something away. They

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also might think the images in books/shirts are real (e.g., try to pick up and use a picture of a fork). Another intense period at 2 years, 5 months (in which absolutely nothing seems to console them) with less intense behavior in between.

New Abilities Summary

- In the past milestones, they got good at making a data-driven (intelligent) decision. Now their imagination was just turbo charged with the belief that fake things ARE real things.
- This gives them every incentive to twist things around in imagination. They can make deliberate decisions now AND think imaginatively.

Deliberate Building

- They build in a way as if they have something in their mind that they want to make a reality.
- Or they have a “script” of some sort that they work off of (sometimes literally) and build something intentional.
- Puts on a play based on a book, may put on for instance a scene from Thomas the Train over and over
- Moves around furniture and items in the house
- You can see them thinking; perhaps as their eyes dart around thinking of what to do next in a “Follow me” game.
- Seems to constantly be thinking of what they can do with their own body next. Can they hop? Wiggle their leg? Be upside down?
- Builds elaborately with wooden blocks or other sets on their own in creative ways; uses 10 or 20 or more pieces to do so
- Follows a visual pattern to build something, e.g., tangrams
- Can do many Montessori activities, such as the pink tower, with total ease
- They may get the right size block (say of the pink Montessori cubes) on demand to fit into, say, any random box they happen to find
- Can do jigsaw puzzles, specifically they can see a simple picture that should go together and then does it (that they can know the picture and put it together is between 2 – 12 pieces; they may put larger jigsaw puzzles together by trial and error)
- Plays with language; mishmashes songs; very fluent
- Plays around and gets refined/nuanced at whatever it is they do, for instance, making nuanced facial expressions to make people laugh (this is highly dependent on each unique child)

Fuses Fantasy and Reality

- Fantasy and reality are still blurred. When they pretend to be Snow White, they seem to think they ARE Snow White.
- This however allows them to play around wildly, spurring tremendous skills.
- Likes to spin and twist stories. The Prince doesn’t love Cinderella. He loves [your daughter]!!!
- Might enmesh with other family members. They want to wear their hair just “like mom” or have a cup of coffee at the table “like the family.”

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Toddler Milestone 8A – Inference

Starts: 2.5.2 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: Behavior continues to escalate for about 10 days.

Ends: Shy of 2.6.0

Irritable Period Summary

- Note some children do not go through this milestone—at all.
- It is possible that this milestone is shifted for children such that 8A and 8B happen at the same time. Hence please read through the skills listed here even if they don't seem to go through this one. Otherwise:

Head Shape Change

- Noticeable head shape change slightly before irritable behavior

Clingy

- Starts out subtle at first: wants lovey or to cuddle
- Or may occasionally run up to you for a hug
- Or trots off occasionally and becomes inconsolable (a lovey may help)

Defiant, Demanding, Particular

- Defiant ALL day long to get a diaper change, take a nap, etc.
- You might be hearing, “I don't want to!”
- Wants your attention all day long
- Rigid about the order of things, such as which sock to put on first, then next, then which shoe, etc.
- If they get hurt, you now have to kiss the exact place they got hurt.
- May want a particular caregiver at nursery
- If something didn't go well previously, they make sure it goes better next time.
- For instance, if they didn't like only having one book at bedtime the night before, they make sure to line up two books next to your chair so tonight you read two books.

New Abilities Summary

- They can make an educated guess about what just happened
- They intuitively start to see that things happen in an order over time.

Inference

- They can make an educated guess, with limited evidence, of what just happened.
- If the garage door is open, they can guess that their dad is home.
- If their brother's door is closed, they guess he is sleeping.
- Note in their early threes, they can *predict* a next event. At this one, they make a logical conclusion about what did happen (not what's about to happen).

An Ability to Use the Unseen

- They can think of things not in immediate sight.
- If you ask them what shirt they want, they might say a shirt that is in another room.
- They might like to hide a favorite toy and make you go find it.
- Can come up with a solution of their own, not presented to them.

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- For instance, as they are crying, you ask what can help them, offering maybe a drink or a toy, and they say, unexpectedly, “a kiss”
- They come up with things not in immediate site or not being currently talked about. Someone tells them they have pretty hair. They said, defiantly, “No! I have brown hair!”

Events Start, End, and Go a Particular Way

- They seem to understand that particular events are of a specific nature and happen at certain times.
- They might say “bye!” every time you leave something or something leaves them. It’s as if to punctuate their understanding that this event is ending.
- Or they might announce “I’m finished!” after finishing something.
- Or they want to carry the doggie bag out of the restaurant, because they know they are done, and that’s what you do
- They might be able to handle introductions when being introduced to new people.
- Or they recognize that things should go a particular way. For instance, they insist on keeping the gate to a fence open, because they want to go get a rock in the yard (inside the gate) then go throw it in a pond (outside the gate)
- Reality and fantasy continue to be fused. They might tell their stuffed animal to “stay,” as if it would otherwise get up and walk.
- They can be, as noted, quite particular about the sequence of events. You have to put both socks on, then their shoes.

1:1 Matching of Problem to Solution:

- There is a deductive matching of cause to effect at this one in which simple connections are made
- They might give their sibling a hug if they are crying.
- They might do something like press the pause button on the remote and utterly delight that it does actually pause the movie. (This also requires a bigger “leap of faith” that this works, as opposed to, say, hammering a ball in a toy.)
- They might also describe a stuffed animal as “sad,” as what is fake and what is real is still fused. But this shows the increase in empathy, which pulls at the heart strings and encourages problem solving.
- In their imaginative play, they might like to pretend their stuffed animal is “stuck” or “lost” and you need to rescue it.

Toddler Milestone 8B—Sequence of Events

Starts: 2.6.1

Most Intense: 2.6.2 until 2.7.0

Ends: 2.7.2

Irritable Period Summary

- There is noticeable change in head size and shape, several times over the course of this (long) milestone, with more intense behavior following each change in head shape. It's probably several milestones, but they come one after the other, so I put them in one.
- Note that 8A and 8B might mash together for some children. Please read through the skill set for 8A as well.

Highly Demanding, All Day

- VERY clingy
- Wants your attention all day long, to see what they did or to sit with you. This is, for many, a very frustrating milestone.
- Very jealous; tries to separate you from siblings
- May even throw books at you to get you to read to them
- Bossy, e.g., about where you are allowed to sit
- Refuses naps (won't go to the bedroom, runs out of the room, etc.), even though very sleepy
- Loves to be messy and muddy
- Still particular about the order of things: you have to go up the stairs first, then Dad, then them
- The irritating behaviors at this one can last all day long. They are very picky about a lot of things—no, THIS for lunch, no make a bottle with tap water not filtered water, no, I want to watch a show, no, Mom, you are not allowed to sit for more than 10 minutes. Sorry in advance.

Plays Around with “Lies”

- Deliberately tells mistruths and often. You give them their favorite stuffed animal, doggie, and ask “Is this doggie?” and they bubble, “That’s not doggie!!”
- Loves to create dramatic little plays where someone or something needs helped or rescued and they do the rescuing

Hates Leaving Fun Things

- Will not want to leave a fun activity, such as being at the playground or a bath.
- You might anticipate a major meltdown related to this around 2 years 7 months.

Physical Accidents

- Can be very dangerously clumsy, like they get super upset while on a changing table and almost fall over face first
- More likely to get sick

Most Intense Period

- Jealous and bossy about their primary caregiver, may hit or throw to separate primary caregiver from others, may not let primary caregiver move, wants caregiver all day long, gets clumsy and may fall off chairs, changing tables, etc., head first. Be careful when they are simply sitting on a chair even.

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New Abilities Summary

- Before, they made an educated guess about what is going on and also started to notice that events go a certain way, at certain times.
- Now they are more intellectual about this process. They can talk about it and make more plans with it.
- They can rely on their past experiences and knowledge to apply a (simple) solution at the right time and place now. In the next milestone, they are more flexible in matching solutions to problems.

Sequence of Events

- Understands sequences of events: “First this, then this” such as “I’ll be with you after I finish my drink.” They intently watch, waiting for you to be done.
- Their new understanding of sequences makes them more cooperative at diaper changes, “First we are going to do this and then we are going to change your diaper.” They submit willingly.
- Might use the word “because,” e.g., “I am not going to cry, because I am happy” This is a sequence of events, as intellectually understood by them. I did this, because of this.
- Can identify themselves as “thinking,” as in “I am thinking about what to do next.”
- They use their knowledge of steps to manipulate the process. For instance, they know they can give their siblings a hug before bedtime. So, they ask to go give the hug. Then they dart off to go play.
- Loves a story in which something goes wrong in the past and it gets rectified. For instance, a child lost a doll and they go back and get it. Peppa Pig and Paw Patrol are ideal for this.
- After the most intense period, their imaginative play becomes more complex: more characters, more plot twists, they execute the actions faster and more reliably.
- Beginning steps to sounding out letter sounds to read a word, such as “n-e-t” spells “net.”

Continuity of Time:

- Understands “yesterday,” “today,” and “tomorrow”
- Remembers past events, say the time they almost lost their shoe while running in the rain, and wants to talk about them again and again and again and again.
- They know that they are never getting a fun moment back if they leave .
- On the other hand, at times, seems more comfortable with separation, as if they understand they will reconvene with something or a person in the future.

Imagination Changes

- Before, fake things and reality were fused. They thought a picture of a fork was a real fork.
- Now they note that such things are fake. They are losing this fantastical thinking.
- If they see a cookie drawn on a paper, they may pretend to eat it, but it’s as if they know that’s wrong and they are making a joke.

Applies Simple Solutions at Correct Time and Place

- This is not that they execute what is asked of them through pressure or punishment, e.g., eat your dinner or else you don’t get cake.
- This is that they, on their own, apply a right or wrong solution to a life problem in a conscious, deliberate way. Such as:
- May know that when you get to a road you have to stop and look
- If they get dirty, they may ask to take a bath.

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- Says sorry after something went wrong (but only can do it immediately after it happened)
- This might show up very playfully at first. They may get to a road and throw their hands up like “Oh no! A road! Whatever are we going to do!?”
- Or another playful way is they intentionally say the wrong answer to something, emphasizing that they know they can choose to be wrong
- Exaggerates when something goes well maybe saying “Woo hoo!” and when things go poorly such as saying “Oh no!”
- They may purposely pretend to be shocked or scared.
- More reliably understands rules, e.g., they are unlikely to run into the road at any time now, if, say, on the driveway (It’s a relief, really!)
- Follows some directions like “Can you take your pants off?”
- Much more direct in knowing what they want. They might take your hand and lead you directly to the playground down the street.
- This ability to know what they want and how to get it increases greatly after the most intense period at 2 years 7 months, and they become very confident and fast.

Physical Changes

- More deliberate and exact in their fine motor control, e.g., may deliberately place fingers together
- Growth in their legs, arms, and feet
- Whereas before you may have been constantly worried for them when, say, taking a bath, now they are more reliably stable and coordinated.

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Toddler Milestone 9 – Creative On-the-Spot Problem Solving

Starts: 2.7.3

Most Intense: 2.8.0 until 2.8.1

Ends: 2.8.2

Irritable Period Summary

- Milestones 8 and 9 are so close together as to likely vary and blend for many children as far as when they start.
- Looking at the behavior is, in my experience, the best indicator to know what milestone you are in. Milestone 9 is distinct from 8. Milestone 8 is marked by defiance all day long. Milestone 9 is marked by confusion and paralysis to solve problems.

Confused and Indecisive

- Becomes confused and indecisive, whereas not long ago they were confident and certain.
- They might ask you to take a walk and then can't make up their mind about which way to go.
- Seemingly paralyzed to answer a question, e.g., what movie would you like
- Refuses to move to solve a very simple problem. For instance, a toy, cup, or food is a few feet away but they won't get it and instead cry for it, as if paralyzed to do it.
- Wants to have the toys other children have. I believe this stems from a feeling of indecisiveness over what is the very best toy. Seeing a child with a different toy makes them feel the other toy is better.
- Shows regret over the solution they originally picked, e.g., agrees that one solution is OK, such as dad can turn the light off, but they have a change of mind (and gets upset) a few seconds or minutes later when they seem to realize what is going on, because they wanted to do it
- Very particular, e.g., out of their entire wardrobe, there are only two pants that they will consider wearing

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Refuses naps, screams about being left alone
- Keeps stalling at bedtime to do "just one more" thing or loves to talk late at night
- Drools a lot, puts their hand in their mouth

Jealous, Demanding

- Jealous if their caregiver gives attention to another child or person. They get jealous even if they are in a different room and you are giving attention to another child.
- Tries to separate primary caregiver from anyone or anything else that has the child's attention or who is not the child
- Wants you off and on, but now typically wants something specific and then lets you be again
- Not as likely to want to be right next to you all day long. However, they hate when you leave the room. If they leave the room on their own, it's fine. If YOU leave, prepare to be attacked.
- You may have trouble doing the simplest of things, like going to the bathroom or going into another room to look something up on a computer.
- Asks to cuddle (some of the behaviors are cute!)

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Most Intense Period

- Jealous, demanding, won't let you freely move, in seeming disbelief of what is going on, paralyzed to act, irritated and sad for seeming no reason, needs extra comfort

New Abilities Summary

Heightened Self and Situational Awareness

- Right away starts with an incredible increase in self-awareness.
- They might all of a sudden be embarrassed to not have clothes on, as if they understand this custom and their deviance from it. (Their last mental awareness dealt with applying correct behavior at a correct time or place.)
- They clearly start to understand when they are near their own house after coming home in a vehicle.
- Has an increase in imagination. Now they are likely to apply their imagination to themselves for a prolonged time. They may pretend they are a crane for days on end and they pick things up like a crane every time they go to do that.
- Their personality reflects this. They act in a pointed way more, putting their whole body into something. They might act shocked or surprised, on purpose, just to do it.
- Or they might build a tower then shoot you a devilish, "Look at what I did!" look.
- Or they throw themselves into play, acting as if they are a sort of "detective" solving a mystery.
- Also starts off with a noticeable increase in attention span, in which they might commit to a craft or other activity for 45 minutes
- Also has better fine motor control, such as they can squeeze a lime

Flexible Solutions to Problems

- Before they could apply one solution to one problem. Now they can choose a solution from many choices. You can all but watch them as they see a new problem arise and scan, in their mind, all potential solutions.
- This makes them more adaptable and quicker to apply a solution on the spot.
- They can come up with solutions to new problems that arise. If they notice it is cloudy, they might get an umbrella.
- Can match a song to what is going on. They might start singing "Rain, rain, go away," when they see it's raining.
- Color objects properly, e.g., colors Ariel's hair red
- Can match an etiquette to a social situation. When Dad comes home, they might show them Mom, as if introductions are taking place.
- Attempts to solve much more complex problems without help. On the spot, they might figure out how to put batteries in the remote control
- Can correct themselves on the spot better, e.g., they say something wrong and you say it the right way, they say it then the right way
- Advanced-language children might handle more factors needed to read, such that a picture of a cat also relates to the letters "c-a-t."
- Can apply a solution at a particular time over a more extended time. For instance, you said they could do X in the morning and they wake up, realize it is morning, and they can do X.

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- However, you can't yet tell them to do Y at a time (e.g., "tell daddy Y when he gets home"). This skill develops soon. For now, it's based on what they personally want to do and a seeming in-the-moment recognition of the time.

Thinks About Problem Solving Itself

- They might initiate a conversation itself about solving problems, such as "What should we do if the baby is crying? I know! How about a bottle!"
- May make up plays about characters who are "great helpers"
- Can go backwards and forwards in solving problems. They might start to build something and realize they made a mistake a few steps back and go back and fix it.
- They talk to themselves as they work through problems, "No, no, that wasn't right."
- Starts to make beginning value judgments like "Butterflies are nice" or "This creation I made is great." Which one is good? Bad? Which way is better?
- Says "I don't know" now. This suggests they recognize a path forward is possible, but they don't know which one at the current moment.

Challenges Themselves to Solve Problems Differently

- Likes to challenge themselves with new problems and to use a different solution than normal.
- For instance, they might purposely walk a different way than normal to see if they can find their way home.
- Depending on the child, they might like complicated problems about 3-D space. They might challenge themselves to fit as many blocks as they can in a particular area, say the bed of a toy dump truck.
- Or takes on a complicated challenge such as putting together a Tangram puzzle (will need your help but may be committed to trying to solve it)
- They might make a joke in which they play off of two things (as they can pick from several solutions now to apply on the spot now). For instance, they tell you to "count backwards." So you say, "3, 2, 1..." and they say, "No, count BACKWARDS," and they turn you around so you are facing backwards. It's cute and funny.
- Builds much more elaborate constructions, such as making Thomas the Train, with a funnel, whistle, and cab, out of blocks
- Or makes very long, elaborate train tracks that sprawl the entire toy room and get bigger and different every day
- Has clever solutions to problems, such as building a bridge over something that has a gap or bump (if building with say train tracks or other materials)
- Might play damsel in distress to get others to come help them (it's one way to solve a problem!)

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Toddler Milestone 10 – Persistent Imagination and Execution

Starts: 2.8.3

Most Intense: A week before 2.9.0 until 2.9.0, getting progressively worse in that time, then starts to dissipate

Ends: 2.9.2

Irritable Period Summary

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Stalls at bedtime, majorly.
- May be up until midnight working on their new skills
- Becomes drooly for a day or two
- More prone to illness

Clingy

- May be extremely clingy
- Demands primary caregiver be near them often, wants to sit on you often, nestles in really close to you, follows you everywhere, demands your attention by grabbing you often
- They want to be with you, all day, for weeks
- They might choose to be clingy with people other than their primary caregiver now, such as an older sibling.

Bossy, Demanding, Sensitive

- May cry more easily
- Has meltdowns more easily
- Blocks people from moving
- Bossy about how routines are executed, e.g., agrees to do something but insists on doing something else first
- Demands a specific type of food or drink that they haven't had in a year (suggests an upgrade in memory)

Most Intense Period

- Cries, won't stop an activity without an epic meltdown, may thrash around when you stop them from doing something (say taking their sibling's dinner), drools, highly possessive of primary caregiver, blocks caregiver from moving, may fall asleep at unusually early hours

New Abilities Summary

- Marked by having much more information in their mind more persistently. They can compare things mentally and execute instructions more reliably with this increase in persistence of imagination.
- This one is marked by a more persistent memory and imagination, resulting in an ability to follow instructions and make mental connections. The next one is marked by the beginning ability to *predict* a next event.

Mental Connections

- Can notice a pattern between things even if they aren't immediately in their sight. For instance, while looking at a tomato says, they say it looks like an apple.
- Or while looking at the color yellow says it looks like a lemon
- They might put on a silly play with a potato asking if it's a potato or an avocado.

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More Persistent Memory

- Can remember new information for a longer amount of time.
- If something interesting happened in the morning, say they saw a big boat, they might tell someone about it in the afternoon.
- If you tell them they can have food after doing X, after they do X, they will demand the food.
- Or they want to take a bath, but you tell them they have to wait until their sibling is done with their bath. When their sibling is done, they tell you it's time for their bath.
- Their growth in imagination might help them read as they remember what words are what. They might read one complete sentence out of a familiar book.

Short-Term Instructions

- Follows and commits to verbal instructions better.
- You might tell them, "The safe spot is the sidewalk. Please stand there" and they actually stay there without forgetting they shouldn't.
- Or you show them how to do an exercise and they copy it well.
- Or you are on a ride and they say, "If standing up, hold onto the rail." They, although previously sitting, stand up and hold the hand rail.
- Whereas before they didn't follow instructions in a class better, now they are the exemplary student.
- On occasion, more accepting about doing something based on the logic of something. For instance, they are agreeable to getting their diaper changed because you point out that you don't want them to be dirty.
- Said another way, they follow short-term instructions longer.

Persistent Imagination and Creativity

- Impressive increase in imagination
- Re-enacts lots of stuff that they see. They might put on a play with a basic plot after seeing a show or movie, such as Diesel pushing jobi logs off of a bridge.
- Or if they see, say, a train track structure in a book, they go build an identical one for real. Or they see, say, a circle puzzle piece and build a train track creation (or perhaps wood block) creation into a circle
- Or they might make up plays. Maybe their train gets blocked in by blocks. As far as you know, they've never seen this plot line.
- Make up their own, new solutions to problems. Say they want to balance a block and they can't, so they put together many blocks on the bottom to build a platform.
- Or perhaps they go and get a straw for you to drink with. From your glass of wine.
- Starts some simple patterning such as lining up objects by color in the pattern green, yellow, blue. May commit to doing this all day, with patterns getting longer and more complex day after day.

Negotiates

- Negotiates with you on their behalf and in a wild way, e.g., "No the bacon only takes one minute to cook!"
- Clever in figuring out how to get their own way, e.g., if they get to use a phone after a bath, they ask to take a bath often

Cognitive Empathy

- Might pass bread out at the dinner table to others.

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- Might try to make something enjoyable for their stuffed animal, such as setting them up with a book to read.
- Might understand that if they like X, it doesn't mean others do too
- If they are fighting over a toy and the other gets really upset that they didn't get it, they might give it to them, "so they are not sad."
- This really depends on the child, however. Some children can be told they hurt someone, and they do not care at all.
- Sensitive to what you think of them: is the thing they just created good?

Toddler Milestone 11 – Short-Term Planning

Starts: 2.9.3 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: 2.10.0 until 2.10.1

Ends: 2.10.1

Irritable Period Summary

Jealous, Possessive

- Clingy
- Falls asleep on you
- Possessive of primary caregiver
- Want all toys and food for themselves
- Might demand you all morning and again in the evening
- You might have trouble separating from them to do important business, like answer a phone call.
- May be whiny

Extreme Confusion Over the Timing or Completion of Things

- In seeming disbelief of what is in front of their eyes about what just happened. They might beg you to put butter on their bread—and you do—but they insist it’s not on there.
- A large time delay in responding to real events. For instance, after their head gets stuck in a shirt, they break out into tears about it—several seconds after they are no longer stuck.
- They understand processes continue on or “go out of sight” now.
- They might misconstrue this at first. When you brush their hair, they might think their hair will pull out or fly out.
- Or you have to throw away a bag of food, as it got old, and they get terribly upset

Bossy and Rigid—Down to Seconds and Inches

- Does not handle change well, even immediate change, such as moving a utensil a few inches
- Asks to do something and is upset if it doesn’t happen within microseconds
- Demands you sit in a very exact spot and not even inches different
- Extreme, major meltdowns, probably in public
- Strong desire to do things themselves, resulting in meltdowns if they can’t accomplish something
- Might try to put lipstick on and it ends up all over the bottom of their face
- Might hit you in the head with a toy they are frustrated with
- Bossy to others about their role as they solve a problem they are working on
- May use you as a human “tool,” such as making your hand move their toys for them
- Acts as if they are the driver of the car, “Turn! Turn!”
- Meltdowns can last a looong time now, 30+ minutes

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Want to stay up late
- Falls asleep at weird times
- Might talk in their sleep, such as repeating letter sounds they know

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- Uncoordinated and clumsy, may drop glass cups, spill liquids while pouring them, seems to love to grab knives by the blade, and such

Most Intense Period

- One or more terrible meltdowns where they seem confused and in disbelief of what is happening and/or where they boss you around a lot. This one can be through the roof tiresome with some children, but not all children.

New Abilities Summary

- In the last one, they started to understand that x things happen at y time. This ability strengthens at this one. They are very aware of all plans being made and, now, where they want to be in those plans.

Very Fluid at Understanding Short-Term Future Plans

- Fully understands short-term future plans and makes their desired role in those plans known.
- Understands something like “We can’t have candy now,” because it’s not a convenient time or place. But, on their own, when it is a more appropriate time to have candy (an hour later and after doing a bunch of stuff), they ask about it.
- They might ask about what is happening next.
- Can be told something like “Show Dad this picture when Dad gets home,” and they remember
- Can be involved in planning activities, e.g., bedtime routine
- They very easily handle things up to an hour and pretty well up to a day.
- Similarly understands the short term past. They (might) remember the events of the day and identify them as happening “that day,” but typically only if you were just talking about those things with them

Plans Short-Term Events, Decides How Things Should Go

- Might make a little date with you like “Mommy, come over here and let’s take a nap”
- Very opinionated on how things should go. They are more “rules” oriented. They might admonish others “no taking!”
- May lecture you to “be careful” with them or others

Tries to Act in a Correct Way In-The-Moment

- Much more fluid in their movement, unlikely to get as seeming lost in what they are doing as in last milestones. They really change dramatically at this one; they are losing their “babyness” big time.
- Clearly deep in thought while in mid-action, such as when running around and contemplating their next move
- Tries to do what is right while moving, such as being very careful not to spill a drink.
- They can be told, “I don’t like when you hit me here because it hurts,” and they understand and refrain from hitting.
- Understands back and forth banter better
- Might play cheeky little games where they resist but they know if you are clever there is little point in resisting
- Loves to explore places and know their way around
- Understands that red means stop and green means go
- More often reliably cooperative if you explain something like “You’re dirty and need a bath”
- Says “You’re Welcome” at the right time now

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- Very forthcoming with saying “Thank you” and “You’re Welcome”
- Takes strong initiative to help other children, such as if another child fell off a bike. They stick with the whole thing, all the way until the child is back up and on the bike again. It’s extremely endearing.
- Or while on a walk, they always want to help. When your stroller gets stuck, “Ok, Mommy, I’ll help you!” As you are trying to get up a hill, “Ok, Mommy, I’ll do it!” This is the extremely sunny period ending this Short-Term Planning hill.

Very Exaggerated in their Likes and Dislikes

- States their strong likes and dislikes
- States what a favorite thing of theirs is
- Likes to exaggerate when things “GROSSSSSS.”
- Loves messy/sensory play
- Love to show you gross things in their mouth
- They get a big kick out of your reaction to smells

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Toddler Milestone 12 – Imaginative Predictions

Starts: 2.10.2

Most Intense: With a bang at 2.11.0

Ends: 2.11.2

Note: Irritating behavior starting at 2.11.3 is Three Year Old Milestone 1A

Irritable Period Summary

- There may be a noticeable head shape change which starts this one.

Clingy

- Starts out sweet and subtle at first
- Wants to sit and cuddle
- Right on you as you exercise or sit
- Attached to your leg
- You might see a few exceptionally sunny days at the beginning, which are the especially sunny times from the last milestone. (They are hard to separate as they overlap.)

Demanding

- Escalates about a week in to a child who is more demanding
- Whiny
- Meltdowns
- Wants you all day
- Stall at bedtime
- At bedtime, they might say they have to go potty or say they are hungry. But they don't eat when you get them food.
- Won't let you leave at bedtime, often up until midnight

No Sense of How Far Away Things Are or How Long Things Take

- They have no sense of how far away things are. They might try to grab the moon.
- This is cute and innocent. It might, however, cause problems when they try to pour a drink and it spills all over.
- Or they put lipstick all over the bottom of their mouth
- If you ask them their sad part of the day, they might answer with something that happened weeks ago.

Disoriented, Confused

- More towards the intense period, they become disoriented and confused.
- They may have just had a toy, but they think you put it away. They keep asking you to get it, even though it is already out, and they should know it's out.
- They might spill a drink or bite into juicy food, creating a mess, then run around, oblivious to the mess, and take a spill.
- Easily falls off of chairs

In Everything, Bossy

- Wants to be "in" everything, such as medicine and such that they shouldn't be in

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- The desire to do everything and make messes can be over-the-top frustrating with some children.
- Want to “help” do everything
- Won’t accept “No” as an answer
- Becomes a back-seat driver, dictating what street they want you to go down

Most Intense Period

- This one hits like a truck. The intense part starts off right away potentially with spills, accidents, clumsiness, clinginess, confusion and/or whining. They also may demand to stay up really late. However, it gets greatly dissipates right away.

New Abilities Summary

- They’ve been getting good at seeing how things work and what plans are being made. Now they take their hand at predicting what might happen next. It’s wild and off at first.

Imaginative Speculation

- They are able to predict what next event happens or make a logical guess about what caused something, but in a highly imaginative way.
- This starts right at the beginning of this milestone and follows a clear head shape change.
- They are highly imaginative about guessing what is happening:
- They wonder if the person jiggling the door know “is a monster!!!!”
- Their stuffed animals might now be “scared of ghosts.”
- They might make a guess of what will happen next like “Daddy will be back soon.”
- Asks “did you mean?” as they project thoughts about what wasn’t said but what might’ve been said
- May understand that food goes into your belly (where you can’t see it)
- May love mystery stories (“who done it?” stories) already
- Might love to initiate and Hide and Seek, as the seeker. They are good at guessing where you are now.

Predictive Solutions

- They like to openly talk about what solutions match what problems. They think of the problem, talk about it, and pick a good tool or action. The problems are not just things happening right now but might happen.
- They might pick up the two utensils at dinner and say, “Fork or spoon? Which one should I choose?”
- They might like to play around with picking the wrong tool for a job, e.g., brushes hair with a book.
- They might love giving you turn by turn directions to get to the grocery store.
- They may love baking cookies or making a smoothie and seeing how all of the individual steps do lead to cookies or a smoothie.
- They are more trusting that, say, at a grocery store, you indeed put your stuff on the conveyor belt and pay for them. As such, they are willing to give up a toy and wait for this process to unfold, as they know it will be handed back to them.
- They might match their understanding of what is going on to what you do. When arriving at a restaurant, they are “so excited to eat!” When they have a blanket on, they are “so excited to

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be warm!” They might state this in weird ways, but when you probe them, all they are doing is matching the theoretical problem to the solution.

- They might like a book in which you pick the right tool for a job. They might like “Are You My Mother?” Which of these animals is the bird’s mother?

Flexible and Creative in Their Imagination

- They are more flexible and creative in their imaginative play.
- For instance, they put balls on a DUPLO truck and says they are wheels.
- They might make up things in their free play like a toy chest needs a “key” to be opened.
- Their stuffed animals may now also “play with toys.”
- Might love to act out and put on plays, often simple stories like The Gingerbread Man. They may be able to put the entire story on themselves.

More Mental Connections, Often Across Time

- Recalls past events and makes connections
- For instance, a character in a book rescued someone just like their dad rescued them in a pool (which happened in the past)
- They sort their toys at one level of abstraction higher. They might line up all “race cars” (ready to race) and all “spectators” (non-race cars like tow trucks and police cars) on the side (ready to watch). All of these things have x in common and these others have y.
- Might notice that a train rode over a carpet and then left tracks
- Reminds you of something you promised earlier

Superb Emotional Control

- They are much more willing to adhere to requests, even if against their own desire at the time, e.g., please don’t get into a pool that you are filling up with water.
- Doesn’t just understand but is fully committed to following principles, e.g., “Green means Go” or take their shoes off when you get in the house
- They no longer chase you out of the house if you leave. If the walk you to the door, it’s just because they wanted to say bye.
- Better emotional control, collect themselves after they fall
- Noticeable better control over their body, don’t fall as much
- Can easily now say “I’m sorry” and “Thank you” even when they are feeling bashful or uneasy.
- Accepting of “No” as an answer
- Better at playing cooperative games where players take turns

Interested in Small Things

- Interested in small details, such as where tiny mice are in their favorite story
- Or that the smallest speck of dirt from a spill needs cleaned up

Manipulates Their Eyes

- They might like to squint their eyes and points to things
- Or maybe likes to look at things through a tube
- Or they purposely try to make their eyes be a certain way, such as copying you as you pose for a silly picture

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