

The One-Year-Old Child

The second year of life begins with the achievement of uprightness, give or take a few weeks on either side of the first birthday, followed by the child's first steps. The child's joy in walking is obvious, but this accomplishment is of far greater significance than at first apparent. The progression of movement development that began with mastery of the head and "looking," is followed by mastery of the hands and "grasping," and is crowned with the mastery of "walking." Uprightness and walking also signify the child's growing awareness of being separate from the environment. This awareness of separation is crucial to the further developments of learning to speak and learning to think.

It is difficult for the parents to keep track of a newly mobile child, for everything is interesting and needs to be touched and tasted. Perception of space is developing along with greater surety of gait, but tumbles are regular occurrences for young walkers.



While "doing" still dominates the life of the toddler, the urge to share what is happening begins to grow, and although not yet verbal, the older one-year-old child is clearly trying to communicate. At a certain point the babbling has a definite sentence-like structure and syntax. Soon afterward, single words and the art of naming things arise and the vocabulary of the child typically expands with greater and greater rapidity near the second birthday.

The child can play for short periods of time with everyday objects with a deep, reverential absorption. A ball can become one of the greatest "Wonders of the World," as can a basket or a box and putting things in and taking them out again. A cloth used for variations of peek-a-boo bring the child endless delight. A child is experiencing the physical nature of things (for example, the size, weight and texture of a ball) and also the inner quality of things (for example, the round, rolling essence of the ball). All of the

elements, but especially water and different qualities of earth, are important explorations for the one-year-old. Being around adults who are involved in purposeful activities with everyday objects is also important. Children, even those under the age of two, will imitate the movement activities of their parents or caretakers, such as sweeping.



There are three typical challenges during this period of development.

The first is to find the balance between keeping toddlers safe and allowing them space to practice their newfound mobility. Peace of mind for parents can be helped by “toddler-proofing” the main areas of the house. Equally important is the quality of attention paid to the busy toddler. Not interrupting their “meditation” on the world of things unless necessary requires us to be vigilant from a distance and resist the temptation to admonish, praise or comment constantly.

At the same time, having a low cupboard in the kitchen that is accessible to the child and filled with unbreakable containers can satisfy their urge to “help with the cooking.” Having a similar space in living and dining rooms can also be helpful. Caring for a toddler can be tiring and the main caretaker needs a daily break, to walk or work out, or just have time to him or herself.

The second challenge is to understand how best to support language acquisition. Parents can begin to worry if their children do not begin to talk between 18 months and 2 years of age. While it may be helpful to consult with a pediatrician or speech therapist, the timing for individual children varies considerably and the range of normal development is wider than once thought. Here are some ways to support your child’s speech development:

Avoid speaking all the time and leave space for your child to speak; speak clearly and use simple language; enjoy nursery rhymes together; avoid lots of questions and choices.

The third challenge is to discern what play objects and activities a one-year-old really needs, given the abundance of what is available. "Less is more" when it comes to the one-year-old. At this age the child is interested in ordinary objects and will focus on one for several days or a week and then move on to another favorite item. So it is not necessary to invest in a lot of specific toys. A lightweight, large ball is attractive, as are colorful squares of cloth, and objects that make natural sounds. Make sure that toddlers have plenty of experiences with the elements (earth, water, air and warmth) and have clothing suitable for winter as well as summer excursions. Introduce them to trees! "Hello, tree!"

The gift of life with a one-year-old is re-learning to wonder at the world.

Links

[J. Steegmans, "The First Three Years, Part I,"](#) from *Cradle of a Healthy Life: Early Childhood and the Whole of Life* (WECAN 2012)

[D. Udo de Haes, "The First Sense Impressions,"](#) from *The Creative Word: The Young Child's Experience of Language and Stories* (WECAN 2014)

Books

[T. Atchison & M. Ris, eds., *A Warm and Gentle Welcome: Nurturing Children from Birth to Age Three*](#) (WECAN 2008)

[H. Heckmann, *Nokken: A Garden for Children, 2nd Edition*](#) (WECAN 2014)

[S. Howard, ed., *The Developing Child: The First Seven Years*](#) (WECAN 2004)

[J. Steegmans and G. Karnow, *Cradle of a Healthy Life: Early Childhood and the Whole of Life*](#) (WECAN 2012)

[D. Udo de Haes, *The Creative Word: The Young Child's Experience of Language and Stories*](#) (WECAN 2014)