

The Hawai'i Early Learning & Development Standards (HELDS)

Supplemental Guides for Infants and Toddlers

Discovering Identity: Toddlers 18–24 Months



This Guide was developed by the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family, with support from the Hawai'i P20 Partnerships for Education. © 2013



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The Hawai'i Early Learning and Development Standards (HELDS) describe what young children, ages birth through five, typically should know and/or be able to do at different periods in their developmental progression. During this period, the architecture of a child's brain and nervous system is under construction and this development becomes the foundation for learning in the school years. By understanding the HELDS standards and how learning established in an earlier period is the basis for future learning, parents and caregivers can provide children with a strong foundation to become lifelong learners.

HELDS Supplemental Guides for Infants and Toddlers

The HELDS Supplemental Guides for Infants and Toddlers is a multi-part series that looks at three distinct phases of development within the first two years of life: Building Security (birth–8 months), Moving and Exploring (8–18 months), and Discovering Identity (18–24 months). Each guide illustrates the rapid growth and unique developmental needs of children during a particular period.

The guides provide information on:

- typical infant or toddler behaviors within each of the HELDS domains, listed in approximate sequence of development;
- specific ways in which caregivers can support development and learning; and
- key infant and toddler outcomes that result from these supports.

The capabilities, interests, and needs of a younger infant (e.g., a 6-month-old) differ greatly from those of

an older, more mobile infant (e.g., a 9-month-old) and those of a toddler (e.g., a 19-month-old). Within any phase there are also normal variations in development from child to child. Effective caregivers understand these differences and tailor their practices accordingly. The guides provide a starting place for caregivers to reflect on the extent to which their current strategies, interactions, environments, and care plans support optimal development. While the examples listed are not exhaustive, they provide an overall picture of healthy development and quality caregiving.

Discovering Identity: Toddlers 18–24 Months

The hallmark of this period is the developing sense of self. Toddlers are becoming aware of routines and are good observers of the world around them. They eagerly try to do things on their own—dressing, eating, playing with household items—and are starting to use words to express themselves. Areas of the brain responsible for motor development, language, and independence show rapid change and are affected by the toddler's environment and daily experiences. These changes in the brain allow the child to engage in more complex thinking and behavior. Adults can support the toddler's growing autonomy by allowing them to complete simple tasks and by offering choices. Providing these along with positive guidance and boundaries fosters the child's awareness of the relationship between self and others. Building on the foundation established in the earlier infancy and explorer periods, the toddler phase also sets the stage for later learning and development. By being intentional in practice and providing the highest quality of care, adults help toddlers develop optimally within and across the HELDS domains and acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for future success.

HELDS DOMAIN

Physical Well-Being, Health and Motor Development

This domain encompasses physical growth and maturation, including the ability to move and use the body. The toddler refines the use of large and small muscles, and participates more in self-care activities.

Examples of typical toddler behaviors:



- Turns things on and off, e.g., TV, light switch
- Walks steadily
- Jumps up and down in place with two feet
- Moves tricycle or small-wheeled riding toys with both feet
- Imitates some adult finger-play movements
- Attempts to groom self
- Scribbles with crayons and markers
- Strings large beads and other objects
- Eats with fork and spoon or with chopsticks
- Throws and catches ball using two hands
- Starts to gain bladder and bowel control

Examples of caregiver practices that support development:



- Provides clean and safe areas where toddler can walk, run, and move freely
- Provides a variety of materials for small muscle development, e.g., large beads to string, clothes with snaps, buttons, or zippers
- Provides materials and play equipment to support large muscle development, e.g., ride-on toys, push toys, tunnels, balls
- Provides low, multi-level surfaces for exploration and climbing, e.g., ramps, step stool
- Engages with the toddler in movement activities, e.g., dancing, finger plays
- Encourages the toddler to feed self, using utensils, e.g., fork, spoon or chopsticks
- Allows the toddler to attempt to groom and dress self
- Is close and ready to assist the toddler engaged in challenging physical activities

These types of caregiver supports help toddlers to:



- Use body with intention
- Use and strengthen large muscles, e.g., arms, legs
- Use and strengthen small muscles, e.g., facial muscles, fingers, hands, and toes
- Develop muscle coordination
- Refine self-help skills



Social and Emotional Development

This domain includes the ability to regulate behaviors and emotions and to form healthy relationships. The toddler starts to form relationships based on an emerging self-identity (who I am) and a beginning understanding of one's own feelings and those of others.

- Copes with short-term separation from caregiver
- Looks to caregiver for guidance and cues about how to act or feel
- Is possessive of own belongings, e.g., favorite blanket or toy
- Shows excitement and anticipation about seeing/being with people who are special to the toddler, e.g., "See aunty today!"
- May show preference for specific peers
- Responds to the emotions of others, e.g., comforts a crying child
- Shows beginning awareness that one's actions affect others
- Has limited self-control, e.g., finds it difficult to wait, runs off when excited
- Shows pride in personal achievements
- Plays next to but not necessarily with another child
- Initiates display of affection through physical contact and simple words
- Initiates and responds to social routines, e.g., please, thank you

- Provides consistent, predictable routines throughout the day
- Uses physical affection, eye contact, a positive tone of voice, and smiles throughout the day to communicate warmth and affection
- Recognizes and responds quickly and calmly to address the toddler's emotional needs
- Provides words to describe the toddler's feelings and presents appropriate ways to express them
- Respects the toddler's preferences for favorite toys, foods, and activities
- Encourages and provides opportunities for the toddler to make choices from a limited set of options, e.g., "Do you want to wear these shorts or these pants"
- Gives simple, consistent, and positively worded messages about behavioral expectations, e.g., "Bang on the drum or the floor" rather than "Don't bang on the table"
- Provides opportunities for the toddler to communicate and play with other children and adults
- Uses words or familiar phrases from the toddler's home language

Approaches to Learning

This domain encompasses the processes that underlie learning. The toddler begins to demonstrate higher levels of attention, memory, persistence, curiosity, and problem solving skills.

- Seeks help from others
- Experiments with multiple uses of objects, e.g., blocks to build, pound, or stand on
- Distinguishes among different tastes, smells, and textures
- Works to find solutions to simple problems, e.g., dumping out toys from container to find desired toy
- Remains focused for longer periods of time when interested in an activity
- Starts to show persistence with challenging tasks, e.g., makes multiple attempts to place a puzzle piece in the right space

- Provides the toddler with time and space to stay with a simple task or try to solve a problem
- Provides the toddler with a range of materials or activities and encourage curiosity and experimentation
- Describes and asks about what the toddler may be thinking, wondering, or discovering
- Observes, comments, and asks questions about the toddler's play to build on interests, encourage problem solving, and extend learning
- Engages in conversations about past experiences, reminding the toddler of what took place
- Responds with delight and enthusiasm when the toddler makes new discoveries, figures out how something works, or applies previously gained knowledge in new ways

- Feel secure, confident, and good about self
- Learn to regulate behaviors
- Begin to understand emotions
- Recognize self as separate from others
- Build relationships with others

- Build curiosity and creativity
- Develop a deeper level of attentiveness towards objects of interest
- Increase memory capacity
- Build persistence in trying to figure out how things work



Cognition and General Knowledge

This domain includes thinking, reasoning, and using information to acquire knowledge and understanding of one's world. The toddler begins to demonstrate the ability to classify objects based on common characteristics, and apply knowledge of how things work to new experiences.

- Recognizes need for help from others, e.g., "Fix toy"
- Engages in creative expression using music, movement, building, and play activities
- Attempts to use toys and other objects for intended purpose
- Matches familiar personal objects to make a pair, e.g., finds Dad's missing slipper
- Experiments with fitting objects of different sizes into different spaces, e.g., puts self in a laundry basket, uses shape sorter
- Anticipates certain results from intentional actions, e.g., adding more blocks may cause tower to fall
- Understands descriptive words about direction, e.g., "near," "under," "next to," and "behind," and size, e.g., "big," "small"
- Begins to associate quantities of objects with numbers, e.g., two puppies
- Recognizes characteristics of objects and creates own categories for grouping them
- Anticipates and follows the sequence of familiar routines

- Provides activities of varying complexity within and just above the toddler's ability level, with support as needed
- Provides expanded opportunities for the toddler to independently discover how things work
- Asks the toddler to make predictions, e.g., When reading a familiar story asks, "What will happen next?"
- Gives the toddler opportunities to complete simple tasks, e.g., "Please put the cup on the table."
- Uses numerical concepts in everyday activities, e.g., "Would you like one cracker or two?"
- Acknowledges the toddler's attempts to use numbers in everyday interactions e.g. "You are right! There are two trucks!"
- Provides opportunities for creative expression, e.g., dancing, singing, drawing, painting

- Understand basic concepts about the physical world, e.g., gravity, distance, space, and quantity
- Develop basic categorization and classification skills
- Apply the concept of cause and effect



English Language Arts and Literacy

This domain encompasses response to and use of communication. The toddler uses and understands a greater number of actions and words, and begins to learn the social conventions of conversation. The child begins to understand that print and common logos represent an idea.

- Uses a combination of words and gestures to communicate
- Puts words together into short phrases, e.g., "Daddy home"
- Talks to self while playing
- Starts to use personal pronouns, e.g. "me," "mine," "I"
- Asks simple questions, e.g., "What dat?"
- Initiates and participates in conversations with others
- Starts to use plurals and verb tenses but not always correctly, e.g., "Look the mouses," "My toy broked"
- Draws horizontal or vertical lines
- Holds book right side up, and mimics story book reading
- Starts to identify some letters in the alphabet, e.g., first letter of own name
- Follows two-step directions
- Understands approximately 300 words and says more than 180 words.
- Starts to recognize common logos and labels and what they represent, e.g., sees restaurant sign and names favorite food served there

- Provides detailed narration of what the caregiver, the toddler, and others are doing and experiencing
- Asks questions to elicit the toddler's ideas and listens to what the toddler has to say
- Participates in turn-taking conversations with the toddler
- Repeats and expands on the toddler's speech to model the use of wider vocabulary, correct grammar, and more complex sentences
- Encourages the toddler to use descriptive words, e.g., wet towel, soft chair
- Engages the toddler in reading, singing and sharing stories or nursery rhymes
- Provides a variety of word and picture books for the toddler to use
- Makes simple connections with the toddler's personal experiences when reading aloud, e.g., Tutu has a car like this one
- Models and encourages the use of writing materials, e.g., jumbo crayons and washable markers

- Develop communication skills
- Increase listening and comprehension skills
- Connect words and sounds with experiences and actions
- Build vocabulary and use sentences
- Develop an interest in and enjoyment of literacy activities



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