DESTINY STEPS OF GREATNESS

Understanding Your Child's Development

A Parent's Guide to Milestones, Early Signs of Concern & Finding Support

Every child deserves support. Every family deserves guidance.

FREE PARENT RESOURCE • GUIDE #1

For families with children from birth through age 5.

Welcome, families

Children grow in their own ways, and parenting brings questions. This guide offers a starting point for noticing development, celebrating new skills, and asking for support when something does not feel right. You do not have to wait for a crisis to ask questions.

What are developmental milestones?

Milestones are skills that most children can do by a certain age. They include how children play, learn, speak, act, and move. They are useful conversation starters—not a diagnosis or a test of parenting.

Five areas to notice

• Communication: gestures, understanding words, sounds, speech and conversation.

• Social and emotional: connecting with others, sharing interests, play and managing feelings.

• Thinking and learning: exploring, remembering, problem-solving and pretend play.

• Movement: sitting, walking, running, jumping and using hands and fingers.

• Everyday independence: feeding, dressing and participating in routines as children get older.

Age-by-age snapshots

These examples are intentionally broad. For age-specific checklists, use the CDC’s free milestone resources. If a skill is missing or your child has lost a skill, talk with a professional promptly.

Birth–12 months: Watch for growing interest in faces and voices, back-and-forth sounds, reaching and exploring, and progress with movement.

12–24 months: Notice pointing or gestures, understanding familiar requests, emerging words, exploring objects, walking and early pretend play.

2–3 years: Look for expanding language, combining words, more imaginative play, growing independence and improving coordination.

3–4 years: Notice conversations, questions, cooperative play, storytelling, drawing and increasingly complex movement.

4–5 years: Look for richer conversations, playing with peers, following routines, early learning skills and greater self-help abilities.

When should I ask for help?

• Your child is not meeting one or more milestones for their age.

• Your child loses a skill they previously used.

• You have concerns about hearing, vision, speech, behavior, movement or social connection.

• Your child’s caregiver or teacher notices a pattern that deserves attention.

Trust your observations. You can ask about screening even if someone else tells you to “wait and see.”

What to do next: a simple action plan

1. Write down what you notice
Describe the skill or behavior, when it happens, how often and any changes over time.

2. Talk with your child's healthcare professional
Ask for developmental screening and share examples. Ask whether hearing or vision should be checked.

3. Contact early intervention or your local school district
In Texas, Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) serves eligible children under age 3. For children ages 3 and older, contact your public school district about Child Find and evaluation.

4. Follow up
Ask what happens next, who will contact you, and when. Keep copies of evaluations and notes.

Questions to bring to an appointment

- What milestones should I expect at my child's age?
- Would a developmental screening or referral help?
- Could hearing, vision, sleep or another factor be contributing?
- What can we practice at home while we wait?
- Who do I contact if I do not hear back?

Everyday ways to support development

- Talk, sing and read together in the language(s) your family uses.
- Follow your child's interests during play and give them time to respond.
- Create predictable routines and make space for movement and outdoor play.
- Name emotions, model calming strategies and praise effort.
- Partner with teachers and caregivers to share what works at home and school.

Finding help in Texas

CDC Learn the Signs. Act Early. Free age-specific milestone checklists and a Milestone Tracker app: cdc.gov/act-early

Texas Early Childhood Intervention (ECI). For children birth through 35 months with developmental delays, disabilities or certain medical diagnoses. Find local services through Texas Health and Human Services: hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services

Texas Education Agency — Special Education / Child Find. For concerns about children ages 3 and older, contact your local public school district to request information about evaluation: tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education

2-1-1 Texas. Find community services and family supports: dial 2-1-1 or visit 211texas.org.

My Child’s Development: Parent Notes

Child’s first name: _____ Age: _____

Date: _____ Next appointment / follow-up: _____

Strengths and new skills I want to celebrate

_____

_____

What I have noticed or am concerned about

_____

_____

When and where I notice it (examples)

_____

_____

Questions I want to ask

_____

_____

Who I contacted and what we agreed to do next

_____

_____

A final word of encouragement

Asking questions is a sign of advocacy and care. You know your child in ways no checklist can capture. When families, educators and professionals work together, children have more opportunities to thrive.

About this resource: Prepared by Destiny Steps of Greatness for general educational and resource-navigation purposes. This guide does not provide a medical diagnosis, therapy or legal advice. Resources and eligibility may change; confirm current details with the agency. For urgent safety or medical concerns, seek immediate professional help.

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