



OCECD  
**QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER**

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## Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

*The information in this newsletter is not a substitute for legal advice.*

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## Learning & Growing Can Be So Much Fun for a Young Child!

### What Can You Do to Assist Your Child's Development?

#### Brain Development

Healthy brain development starts before birth and is followed by rapid growth during the first three years of life. The brain continues to develop throughout your child's childhood. A healthy brain will influence how well your child learns, uses memory, makes decisions, controls impulse, and pays attention. It also impacts their social emotional skills and mental health.



## Supporting Your Child's Development

Nature versus nurture has been a topic of conversation and debate over the years. As parents, we can appreciate what our child has been given through biology. We can also understand that we have a lot of influence over what we can provide for our child's brain and its overall development within the natural environment.



## Let's take a look at a few key elements that can support brain growth.

### New Experiences:

*It's in the trying something new where connections and brain growth are made, even if your child does not actually succeed in solving the problem.*



Trying new and different activities in a variety of environments can promote your child's growth and bonding time for both your child and you, the parent/guardian. While taking a vacation or visiting the zoo will provide stimulating opportunities for brain connections, they are not necessary. You can find ways to stimulate your child's brain growth in your own home or nearby, such as visiting a local petting farm, park, or pool. Your regular schedule can assist in providing learning opportunities, like going to the grocery store. You and your child can have fun in the fresh fruits and vegetables departments playing games like "I Spy," counting games, categorizing by colors, to name a few. You may even strike up a conversation with other shoppers. There is no limit to the interactions that can take place in a grocery store and other public places. When cooking dinner, allow your child to play with the pots and pans, or take spoons and colanders to bath time. You can sing new and familiar songs with your child as you are driving to the library. While at the library, choose new and also familiar books that will assist in brain development. Reading, reading, and more reading will promote your child's brain development.

### Repetition:



*Practicing a new skill over and over builds mastery.*

Janelle Durham MSW is a parent educator with Bellevue College and she explains how repetition promotes your child's healthy brain development: "Doing something for the first time *makes* connection. Doing it again *strengthens* connection. Doing it again in a different setting strengthens that connection and also makes connections to this new setting. Combining that activity with another deepens understanding. Think of a child learning to walk – they fall again and again until the a-ha moment happens. But then they still stumble and wobble along for a while. But the more they walk, and the more different surfaces they walk on, the better they get at it. Or think of anyone learning an instrument - we don't become expert by going to a class once a week. To become a skilled musician requires playing those same scales again and again, and playing a variety of tunes till you reach mastery."

### Processing Time:

*Children need time to "do nothing."*

Children need to sleep, rest and "do nothing" time to build their brain after new learning and experiences. This down time helps the brain to process and retain that information. Our children need to

have the opportunity to take it easy and let their brain establish the connections and then get ready to go on to more new learning experiences! Finding a good balance between exposures to new experiences and practicing the familiar is important and can be achieved by taking your child's lead.



On a scale of 1-4, rate the relevance of this OCECD newsletter for your own child/students'/consumers' experiences.

1 2 3 4

Not Relevant Very Relevant

NEXT →

## Comfort:

*Children learn best in a safe and supportive environment.*

A brain under stress is a brain that is very challenged in its ability to learn and retain information. Your child is very perceptive and can pick up on your emotions. It may not be what you say, but how you say it. Tone of voice, your body language, and movements have an impact on communicating with your child. In addition, creating a calm and relaxed environment can be beneficial to a child. Holding, cuddling, and having close interactions with your child, along with taking time to make eye contact, are critical to their feeling safe, loved, and valued. The time that you, the parent/guardian, spend with your child when you are free from distractions, lets them know that they are loved and valued. All human beings, most importantly your child, need to know they belong. This assists a brain by making it ready to learn.

## Nutrition:

*Healthy food...Healthy brains.*

Nutrition plays a significant role in your child's brain development, especially in the first three years of life. The brain is largely made up of fat and water. Myelin is a material in the brain that is composed of fat which helps to speed up the nerve signals in the brain. Faster signals assist with more direct thinking and improves the ability of your child to learn. For this reason, fat is essential in the diet of young children for neurological development and brain function. Although you may want to drink low fat milk for a healthy diet, your young child's brain needs a more substantial amount of healthy fats in food to support brain strength. Your child also needs to drink plenty of water for optimal brain health.

Learn more about important nutrition for the brain at "Brain-Boosting Foods for Kids":

<http://www.whattoexpect.com/toddler-nutrition/brain-food-for-kids.aspx>

Janelle Durham MSW goes into more detail with these key elements for brain growth.

<https://gooddayswithkids.com/2020/10/23/keys-to-brain-development/>

Here is a quick reference that explains brain development for your child:

<https://www.kidsintransitiontoschool.org/growing-brains-infographic/>

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## Play is a Child's Work

Have you ever heard the phrase, "play is work" and wondered how that can be true? Play often is dismissed as unimportant or unnecessary. The bottom line is that play IS a child's work. Your child's worksite is very diverse and can be the playground, the kitchen sink, an empty box, or playing peek a-boo with you.



## Play: It's Important for a Child's Development

Play is essential to your child's growth and development and provides the best chance for becoming a whole and happy adult. Play is so important that the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights declared it a fundamental right of every child.

You may understand that play is important, but you may not appreciate its association with learning and development. Yes, play can teach your child important cognitive skills, such as letters, numbers, and colors, but play is so much more! Play is involved at a deeper level to increase your child's necessary developmental skills. Your child's cognitive, physical/motor development, communication/language, and social/emotional skills are developed and enhanced through play. Children practice and reinforce these skills in a way that cannot be achieved through paper and pencil tasks or through an electronic device. Each time your child is exposed to new and diverse experiences there is an opportunity for further brain development. What better way to do that than through play?

## The Four Domains of Development in Relationship to Play and What the Benefits Are

### *Social and Emotional Development:*

Dramatic and imaginative play may include, but is not limited to, dressing up and role playing. These activities will develop your child's social and emotional skills and values. You can set up a play area that includes dress up clothes, dolls, or puppets. Even a couple of finger puppets can create a really good conversation. Be creative! When your child is exposed to this type of play, they have an opportunity to directly play with other children or play side by side, depending on their age and level of development. You may witness your child develop empathy, practice making choices and decisions, or learn to negotiate and be creative. They also may learn to control their emotions, reduce impulsive behavior, or reduce stress as they act out feelings and events that might be worrying them. Developing these important skills will assist your child in creating more successful relationships for the future. Your child is never too young to start to interact in this area. Holding and touching your newborn, making eye contact, singing to your newborn, and comforting your crying infant is a great start to positive social and emotional development.

For more information and ideas to support your child's social and emotional development, [click this link](#).

### [Key social and emotional milestones:](#)

#### ***Physical and Motor Development:***

Using large muscles (gross motor) by running, climbing, jumping, and dancing can support your child's physical development by strengthening their large muscles, plus improving their balance, overall health, and sense of wellbeing. Connections in the brain are strengthened through body movement and activity. When your child uses the small muscles (fine motor) by playing with play dough, popping bubble wrap, stringing beads, or engaging in arts and crafts, there can be an increase in their independence in self-help skills, such as, dressing, eating, drawing, and writing. Self-confidence rises when your child becomes more reliable upon their own skills and not yours. Fine motor activities that you can do using at home items and learn other skills at the same time:

<https://theimaginationtree.com/40-fine-motor-skills-activities-for-kids/>

Gross motor activities:

<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/8-gross-motor-skills-activities-for-kids>

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/building\\_gross\\_motor\\_skills\\_and\\_why\\_it\\_matters](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/building_gross_motor_skills_and_why_it_matters)

#### ***Cognitive Development:***

Whether your child is playing with others or playing alone, your child's cognitive skills, such as thinking, remembering, and reasoning are being further developed. Depending on the activity and the environment, they may be learning shapes, colors, measurement, counting, and letter or number recognition, which is just a beginning to further development. Also, invisible skills, such as problem solving, concentration, persistence, and resilience, that a parent/guardian does not see may, in fact, be developing.

Ideas for learning in a child's every day and natural environment:

<https://talkingisteaching.org/assets/illustrations/indoor-toolkit-v6.pdf>

([talkingisteaching.org](https://talkingisteaching.org)).

<https://talkingisteaching.org/resources/video-everyday-fun-with-spatial-awareness>

<https://talkingisteaching.org/resources/highlights-guide>

More ideas that include adaptations:

<https://talkingisteaching.org/assets/public-files/indoor-adaptation-tipsheet-EN-v3-1.pdf>

#### ***Communication and Language Development:***

Play requires thinking, language, and interactions. Due to the natural progression of understanding words and their use, listening and speaking skills will be enhanced first. Your child's vocabulary will grow as exposure to language through interactions with other children and adults takes place during play and within other natural environments. These are the beginning steps in a process of language development that will ultimately lead to your child learning to read and write. These skills are part of early literacy. This all happens in a step-by-step process.

For more information, ideas and activities to engage with your child to support his/her communication and language development, please check out the links here:

[language2.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#).

<https://talkingisteaching.org/resources/talk-read-sing-together-every-day-tips-families>

[Talking and reading with babies | StartingBlocks.gov.au](#)

[Reading with preschoolers | Starting Blocks](#)



## Not all Play is Created Equal

Since curiosity and exploration are very natural for your child, sometimes you will just need to take their lead. Keeping this in mind and careful planning of your child's playtime will reap many rewards. As the parent/guardian, you can provide a rich language environment with opportunities to explore new settings and novel items or activities within existing play spaces, as you then sit back and enjoy watching your child explore and learn. If you put a fresh box in the middle of a space, your 1-year-old will probably crawl inside it and climb on top of it in endless different ways. Your 5-year-old may create a hospital for endless patients or may create a shiny red car to drive to the store or to exotic places with her best friend. Hand your child a magnifying glass for your usual walk around the block. I'm sure some very interesting creatures to investigate will be found. Learning should be fun! When learning is fun, the information learned is more likely to be retained, as well.

Choose toys and activities wisely, keeping these four developmental areas in mind. The price of a toy is no indicator of its value. Instead ask yourself, "How will this stimulate my child's brain to further develop his cognitive, physical/motor, social/emotional, or communication/language areas of development? Will this assist him to further healthy development and be of interest and enjoyable for my child?" For more ideas for choosing toys and activities that your child's development:

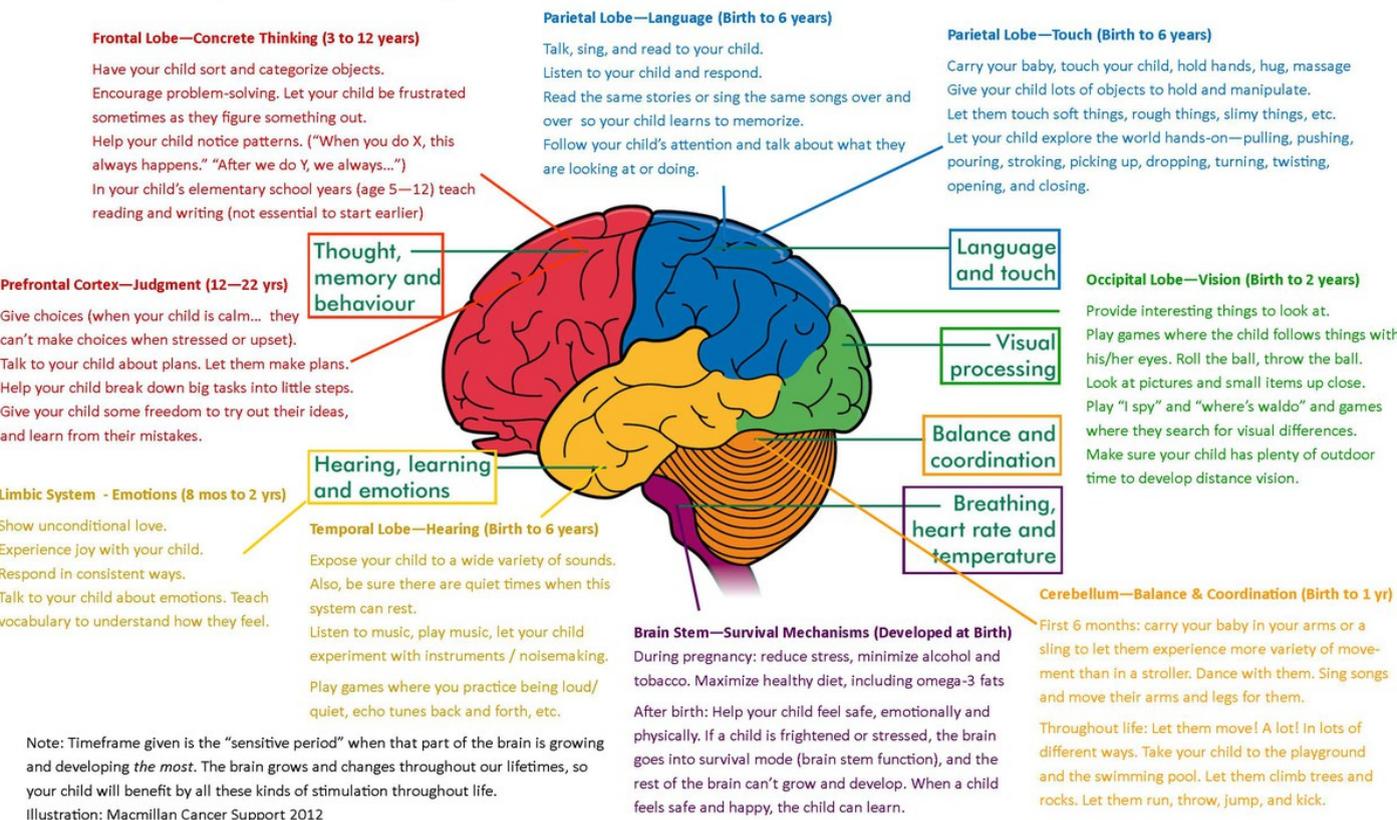
[Tips for Choosing Toys for Toddlers • ZERO TO THREE](#)

[Good Toys for Young Children by Age and Stage | NAEYC](#)

[10 Tips: How to Select 'Appropriate Toys for Young Children in the Digital Era' - Early Learning Nation](#)

# Brain Development—How you can help.

Important!! Remember to balance stimulation with rest and quiet time to process it all!



## This Detailed Map of the Brain Highlights:

1. What each area of the brain is responsible for.
2. Timeframes for “sensitive periods” when that part of the brain is growing and developing the most.
3. Includes ideas to enhance development of the individual areas.

By Janelle Durham MSW, Bellevue College:

## Developmental Milestones

The CDC has just updated the developmental milestones for children 2 months to 5 years of age. They explain, “Skills such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, and waving “bye-bye” are called developmental milestones. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act, and move.”



If you would like to learn more about the developmental milestones in relationship to your child, you may click on [CDC’s Developmental Milestones | CDC](#). This link also features tips and activities that you can do for, or with, your child at specific ages.

Track your child’s milestones from age 2 months to 5 years with CDC’s easy-to-use illustrated checklists right from your phone! [CDC’s Milestone Tracker App | CDC](#)

## Do You Have Concerns About Your Child’s Development?

### *Birth through 2 years of age:*

The first three years of a child’s life are very important for their overall development. Research tells us that the earlier a child receives services to address developmental delays the better the outcomes for future success. Early Intervention Services are available in each county for families who have a child with one or more developmental delays. If you are concerned about your infant or

toddler's development and want to learn more about Early Intervention and how it may benefit your child if they qualify for services, click here for a brief overview.

<https://ohioearlyintervention.org/>

If you want specific contact information for Early Intervention Services for your county, [click this link](#).

Additional information and resources from our OCECD website:

[Early Intervention \(ocecd.org\)](#)

[Click here](#) for more information on requirements for our state and local school districts to identify, locate and evaluate children with disabilities. You will also find contact information for an OCECD representative to answer questions you may have on this process.

*Ages 3 through 5 years of age:*

If you have concerns for your child's development and he/she is between the ages of 3 through 5, reach out to your local school district of residence. Inform your district in writing the concerns you have for your child's development and that you are requesting an evaluation because you suspect he/she may possibly have a disability.

Click below for more information on requirements for our state and local school districts to identify, locate and evaluate children with disabilities. You will also find contact information for an OCECD representative to answer questions and provide very valuable and specific information that may assist you through the special education process.

Additional Information and Resources:

[Preschool 3 to 5 years old \(ocecd.org\)](#)

Ohio Department of Education Preschool Special Education Information:

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Preschool-Special-Education>

Ohio Department of Education Early Learning Content Standards:

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Early-Learning-Content-Standards>

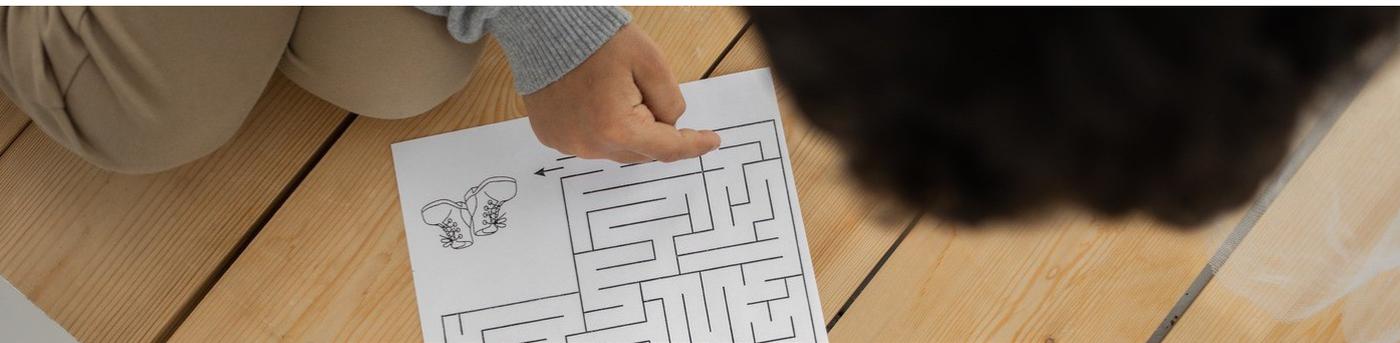
Other supports for Ohio families with young children:

<https://boldbeginning.ohio.gov/>

<https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/help-me-grow/help-me-grow>

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# More Resources for New Learning and Experiences



Here is a quick and easy way to find ideas to encourage brain development for your child, birth through 5 years, from Help Me Grow in Minnesota:

[Encouraging Healthy Development | Help Me Grow MN](#)

Would you like to receive a high quality, age-appropriate book at **no cost** each month?

<https://ohioimaginationlibrary.org/enroll>

## Reading Tips for Families

The Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities have partnered together to create a very user-friendly website for families who have children from birth through elementary school. It's called [Reading Tips for Families](#). The website is available in multiple languages. This website was designed to help families learn more about reading so that you, the parent/guardian, can help your child. There are great videos for families, as well as printed resources. Check out the [DayByDayOhio](#) Family Literacy Calendar. Each day has a new song, activity, video, and more that you can do with your children. You just might stimulate your child's brain with something new and have fun in the process!



Whether your child is an infant, toddler, or preschooler, learning through play is an especially important part of their daily life, along with being snuggled and loved by the people who care about them the most. Your child will love this, you will enjoy it, your child's brain will reap many benefits, and both of you will create lasting and fond memories.



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