

0–4 Months

- Infants like to look at each other.
- Infants prefer to look at faces, especially at eyes.
- By 2-3 months, an infant will smile at another infant.
- A 3-month-old infant lying on his back will reach out to touch a peer next to him/her.

4–8 Months

- Infants may poke, push, pat, etc., another baby to see what that other infant will do. They often look very surprised at the reaction they get.
- Infants like to look at, approach other infants, and initiate (Selby & Bradley, 2003).
- Infants smile and laugh at each other.
- Infants cooed at each other (Porter, 2003)
- Infants as young as 6-months of age showed more interest in peer strangers than in adult strangers (Brooks & Lewis, 1976).
- Six-month-olds showed more excitement at photos of 6-month-olds than at photos of 9- and 12-month-olds (Sanefuji, Ohgami, & Hashiya, 2006)
- Infants may interact with peers with their whole body: rolling into them, crawling over them, licking or sucking on them, or sitting on them.

8–12 Months

- Infants like to touch each other and crawl around beside each other.
- Nine-month-olds preferred to look at photos and movies of babies their own age, rather than at 6- and 9-month-olds (Sanefuji, Ohgami, & Hashiya, 2006).
- Peek-a-boo is a favorite game at this age, but an adult may need to start the game.
- When an infant is placed together with one other infant (pairs), more frequent, complex, and intense peer interaction occurs than when an infant is with many peers.
- Infants can understand another's goals and use this awareness to govern their own behavior (Brownell, Ramani, & Zerwas, 2006).
- Because infants are now more goal-oriented, they may push another infant's hand away from a toy or crawl over another baby in order to get a toy.
- Children begin to communicate in a variety of ways: actions that pacify, threatening actions, aggressive actions, gestures of fear and retreat, actions that produce isolation (Montagner, 1984; Pines, 1984)

12–18 Months

- Infants may touch the object that a peer holds. This may be a positive initiation and interactive skill (Eckerman, Whatley, & McGehee, 1979).
- Infants show or give a toy to another child (Porter, 2003).
- Infants may gesture or try to talk to another child.
- Infants initiate play with another infant (Porter, 2003).
- Infants will imitate each other at this stage (e.g. making a joyous symphony of spoons banging on the table at meal time). They communicate with each other by imitating (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001).
- Actions are carried out with the intention of attaining a goal; however, goals can change from moment to moment (Jennings, 2004).
- 10- to 12-month-olds preferred to look at other infants of their own gender (Kujawski & Bower, 1993).
- Toddlers communicate using their bodies (Lokken, 2000; Porter, 2003).
- Toddlers share at least 12 themes in their play (e.g. positive affect to share meaning). The children use laughter to indicate understanding of each other's actions. They encouraged each other to repeat their performances by laughing and/or smiling (Brenner & Mueller, 1982).
- Prosocial behavior is present.
- Friendships: preferences for another child began around 12 months (Howes, 2000).
- 4-18-month-olds imitated 3-step sequences and imitated peers better than they imitated adults (Ryalls, Gul, & Gyalls, 2000).
- 14- to 18-month-olds could imitate peers both 5 minutes and 48 hours after they observed the peer (who had been taught particular actions with toys) (Hanna & Meltzoff, 1993).
- Children are little scientists at this age, experimenting to see how things work. This affects how they "get along" with peers. They are constantly doing things to other children to see what response they will get.
- They will enjoy looking at books together by forming an informal group (this means they move in and out of the group) around the legs, lap, and arms of a favorite parent or teacher.
- They love sand and water and playing with different sizes of safe bottles and balls. When each has his own bin or tub of water or sand, play goes more smoothly.

- Between 13 and 15 months of age, 27% of children engaged in complementary and reciprocal play. Children demonstrated action-based role reversals in social games such as run and chase or peek-a-boo displays (Howes & Matheson, 1992).
- Between 16 and 18 months of age, 50% of children engaged in complementary and reciprocal play and 5% began cooperative social pretend play. Children enacted complementary roles within social pretend play (Howes & Matheson, 1992).
- Biting may appear as children bite others “to see what happens,” to get the toy they want, or to express frustration. On the cusp of communicating well, they may communicate through their mouths in the form of a bite.

18–24 Months

- Between 19 and 23 months of age, 56% of children played complementary and reciprocal games and 6% engaged in cooperative social pretend play (see 12–18 months for definitions) (Howes & Matheson, 1992).
- They may have toddler kinesthetic conversations as they follow a leader in moving around the room—moving in and out of the group, taking turns as leader and follower—as if in a conversation of listening and talking. They are learning valuable turn-taking skills (Lokken, 2000a, 2000b.; Shanok, , & Wittmer, and Capatides).
- Toddlers may congregate and cluster and herd together. When a teacher begins playing an interesting activity with one child, children often come running from the corners of the room.
- They may work together constructing with blocks, with one the leader and the other the follower (Porter, 2003).
- They may work together toward a common goal.
- Friends are more likely to touch, lean on one another, and smile at each other than are children who are not friends.
- Toddler friendship is “proximity seeking,” wanting to be close and to show affection, such as smiling, laughing and hugging. Friends prefer each other as interaction partners (Whaley & Rubenstein, 1994).
- Most toddlers can show kindness to others who are feeling distressed. Toddlers, however, may assume that what will comfort them will also comfort the distressed child. So, the one child may offer his blanket or bottle to the hurt or sad child (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & King, 1979).
- Some are capable of offering help to others who are hurt or sad. Some may have an impressive repertoire of altruistic behavior, and if one thing doesn’t work they will try another way (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & King, 1979).
- Toddlers begin saying “mine” and “yours.” Children who began saying “mine” between 18 and 24 months of age were more likely to say “yours” and share at 24 months (Hay, 2006).
- Pushing, shoving, grabbing, and hitting may occur as children struggle over “mine for as long as I want it” and “yours, but I want it, too.”
- Toddlers may have conflicts over small toys more than large, non-movable objects (DeStefano & Mueller, 1982).
- Conflicts can play a positive role in peer development as children learn that others have ideas that are different from their own and that negotiation needs to occur (Chen, Fein, Killen, & Hak-Ping, 2001); Eckerman & Peterman, 2001; Shantz, 1987).

24-36 Months

- Two-year-olds share meaning (for example, different types of hits have different meanings to children (Brownlee & Bakeman, 1981).
- Two year olds are becoming true social partners. The majority of 27-month-olds could cooperate to accomplish a task (Brownell, Ramani, & Zeruas, 2006).
- Children become more positive and less negative in their social play between 24 and 36 months (Chen, et al, 2001).
- Twos understand the difference between “ownership” and “possession” (Fasig, 2000).
- Two-year-olds use a variety of words for a variety of functions such as to describe, explain differences, foster a sense of membership in a social group, and develop a pretend play script (Forman & Hall, 2006).
- Twos guide other children through prompting, demonstration, and affective signals in relation to a goal (Eckerman & Didow, 2001).
- Twos can comfort other children with pats, hugs, and kisses and attempt to remove the cause of another’s distress.

- Two-year-olds can protect and warn another child and warn and suggest solutions to peer problems (Murphy, 1936).
- Six dimensions are present in 2-year-olds' friendships: helping, intimacy, loyalty, sharing, similarity, and ritual activity (1994).
- Children can express glee. They laugh, show delight, and experience joy and hilarity with each other (Lokken, 2000a, 2000b).
- Children use many strategies during conflicts (Hay, 2006). They may insist, reason, offer alternative proposals, compromise, ignore, request an explanation, or use physical force (Chen, 2001). They raise their voice, talk faster, and emphasize certain points (Brenneis & Lein, 1977).
- One child may dominate another (Hawley & Little, 1999).
- Biting occurs for many reasons, primary among them being that children are learning to "use their words" and take another person's perspective (Wittmer & Petersen, 2006; Wittmer, in press).
- Children who are aggressive need support to feel safe, learn alternative strategies, early intervention, or mental health strategies (NICHD, 2004; Tremblay, 2004)).

Adapted with permission from Wittmer & Petersen (2006)