



12–36 Months

Physical/Health: Gross Motor Development¹

WHEN INTRODUCED: Block 2 for 12–24 months, Block 1 for 24–36 months

BEHAVIORS TO OBSERVE

- Maintains balance while moving body or part of body
- Coordinates body movements while manipulating an object

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

This *Guide* uses 12–24 months and 24–36 months age designations in relation to when specific types of emerging skills often can be observed. The age parameters are not firm; the timing of developmental pathways and milestones varies considerably across children.

Behaviors may be observed during a care routine, playtime, or guided activity. Pertinent ELM activities (Physical/Health) are cited in parentheses. The activities pertain to the age group indicated in the example.

Maintains balance while moving body or part of body

- 12–24 months:
 - crawls up and down a short set of stairs with caregiver support (Block 4, Option 1)
 - walks up a short set of stairs and uses a sitting position to come down the stairs with caregiver support (Block 4, Option 2)
 - walks up and down a short set of stairs with caregiver support (Block 4, Option 3)
 - kicks legs from a sitting position (Block 7, Option 3)
- 24–36 months:
 - walks around a designated circle (Block 1, Options 1 and 2)
 - turns body, reaches, and bends as part of a song (Block 1, Option 3)
 - steps onto and down from a step with caregiver support if needed (Block 2, Option 1)
 - steps up and/or steps down from a short set of stairs with caregiver support if needed (Block 2, Option 2)
 - steps onto and down from a step as part of an “adventure walk” with caregiver support if needed (Block 2, Option 3)



Coordinates body movements while manipulating an object

- 12–24 months:
 - rolls a ball back and forth with a caregiver (Block 2, Option 1)
 - rolls a ball in an effort to knock down a cardboard block (Block 2, Option 2)
 - carries, intentionally drops, or rolls a ball as part of an open-ended playtime (Block 2, Option 3)
- 24–36 months:
 - explores underhand throwing of a ball with caregiver support (Block 15, Option 1)
 - explores overhand throwing of a ball with caregiver support (Block 15, Option 2)
 - practices overhand ball throwing at a large target (Block 15, Option 3)

EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP LEARNING SUPPORTS

Reintroduce

Maintains balance while moving body or part of body

- 12–24 months:
 - When the toddler shows interest, repeat Block 4, Option 1, 2, or 3 to strengthen the toddler's familiarity with the steps and provide practice in crawling or walking up/down the steps. Say key words to describe the toddler's current and next action, such as "turn around" and "your feet go first." If the toddler practices walking up or down the steps (Options 2 or 3), offer reminders to hold onto a railing. Offer enthusiastic comments about reaching the top of the steps. Encourage the toddler to look at what is going on in the room from this elevated vantage point.
- 24–36 months:
 - Offer Block 1, Options 1, 2, and/or 3 as one-to-one experiences. Include movements you anticipate the toddler will enjoy and also benefit from practicing. Examples: jumping in place with two feet together as part of Option 1 ("shake my sillies out"), and clapping while walking in Option 2. In Option 2, walk around the circle next to the toddler to provide guidance in following the circle, if appropriate. In Option 3 ("Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear" song), limit the number of requested movements and repeat movements that seem slightly challenging for the toddler to do.
 - Offer Block 2, Options 1, 2, and/or 3 as one-to-one experiences. Maintain the pretend element of an activity, such as the stepper as a bridge to cross while walking to a place of the toddler's interest (Option 1), unless it appears an imaginary focus is a distraction for the toddler. Remember that it is common for a toddler to lead with the same foot when learning to manage stairs (Option 2).



Coordinates body movements while manipulating an object

- 12–24 months:
 - Focus on 1–2 specific skills involved in the Block 2, Option 1 activity of rolling a ball back and forth with the toddler. These include: when to reach for the approaching ball, how to hold hands in relation to the ball, which direction to push the ball, and how much force to use in pushing the ball (see What to Look For section of activity plan).
 - Offer Block 2, Option 2 as a one-to-one experience. You may wish to take turns with the toddler; this provides demonstration opportunities, especially regarding the challenge of determining the amount of force needed for knocking down a block.
- 24–36 months:
 - Toddlers typically find underhand throwing easier to manage than overhand throwing. Repeat Block 15, Option 1, which is focused on underhand throwing, unless the toddler seems especially interested in overhand throwing. You also may wish to offer the underhand throwing experiences included in Blocks 10 and 16 for younger toddlers (12–24 months). Repeat Block 15, Option 2 (24–36 months) for more experience in overhand throwing. Provide verbal support and demonstration, if appropriate, for key aspects of throwing, especially letting go of the ball and moving the arm forward. Eliminate the pretend lake suggestion in Block 15, Option 2 if you anticipate this will be a distraction for the toddler. Remember that the activity plans are intended as exploratory experiences with ball manipulation.

Reinforce

Maintains balance while moving body or part of body

- 12–24 months:
 - Adapt the body-rolling activities in Block 6, Options 2 and 3 by inviting the toddler to also roll in the opposite direction, back to where he/she began. Repeat Block 6, Option 1 (rolling a doll) to strengthen a toddler’s visual image of rolling.
 - Provide focused opportunities to practice walking (Block 8, Options 1–3; Block 24, Options 1 and 2). Adapt activities as appropriate, such as omitting the use of a toy animal in the parade suggested in Block 8, Option 1 and Block 24, Option 1. Offer or repeat guided practice in running (Block 24, Option 3) if the toddler readily maintains balance while walking and shows interest in supervised running.
 - Repeat activities that support balance while engaged in multi-step movements, such as turning around and sitting down (Block 14, Option 1), or touching head, shoulders, knees, and toes (Block 14, Option 2), or rolling hands and arms (Block 14, Option 3).



- 24–36 months:
 - Provide repeated practice in simple jumping movements, including jumping in place (Block 10, Option 1) and jumping off a low-level step platform with caregiver support (Block 10, Option 2). For more challenging jumping movements, repeat opportunities for the toddler to jump forward and from a squat position (Block 22, Option 1) or to jump from square to square (Block 22, Option 2).
 - Offer repeated opportunities for a toddler to alternate moving arms and stomping feet (Block 11, Option 2), move arms while pretending to fly like a bird (Block 12, Option 1), and/or move arms while pretending to swim (Block 21, Option 3). Adapt the activities with requests that offer arm movement variations. Example: pretending to fly faster and slower.
 - Offer repeated practice with a gross motor movement(s) that may be somewhat challenging for a toddler by incorporating the movement(s) into a *Simon Says* game (Block 21, Option 1).
 - Support a toddler's practice in balancing his/her body while standing or walking by providing repeated experiences with a balance beam (Block 25, Options 1 and 2).

Coordinates body movements while manipulating an object

- 12–24 months:
 - Build on toddlers' interests in playing with balls by repeating activities that involve throwing a large ball at empty jugs (Block 10, Option 1), throwing a sock ball toward colorful streamers (Block 10, Option 2), or practicing overhand throwing with a light ball (Block 10, Option 3).
 - Carrying an object while walking is a basic approach to coordinating body movements while manipulating an object. Repeat Block 12, Options 1 and 2 (carrying items in a bag), Block 17, Option 2 (carrying balls), and/or Block 20, Option 2 (carrying a sensory tube with both hands).
 - Managing a riding toy is an advanced gross motor activity for younger toddlers. Repeat Block 22, Option 1 with emphasis on how to manipulate key parts of the riding toy, especially the use of hands/arms with the handles and feet/legs with the pedals. See the What to Look For section of the Block 22, Option 1 activity plan for guidance on following the toddler's pace with a riding toy.



- 24–36 months:
 - Repeat opportunities for a toddler to use his/her arms to move a streamer (Block 5, Option 2; Block 12, Option 2) or scarves (Block 5, Option 3; Block 12, Option 3) in response to caregiver requests. Adapt the activities by including different arm movements in the request.
 - Support a toddler’s practice in overhand throwing (Block 15, Option 2), including experience in throwing toward a target (Block 15, Option 3).
 - Repeat opportunities for a toddler to catch a scarf (Block 18, Option 1), and to both toss and catch a scarf (Block 18, Option 2).

EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

Bridget is learning how to walk up the small set of stairs in our room. She always holds onto the railing. She has fun looking around the room when she reaches the top. Earlier this week she waved at a caregiver in the room when she reached the top! Currently, she comes down the steps by sitting and holding my hand. When she is ready, I will provide help for Bridget to walk down the steps, beginning with one or two steps. Supervised experiences with the stairs are a good way for Bridget to learn how to balance her body while moving.

Taylor is showing a lot of interest in overhand throwing of a soft ball. Sometimes he uses a mix of underhand and overhand throwing. Taylor seems most excited when he does an overhand throw during our supervised time with balls. I think he may be ready soon to try throwing a ball toward a large target. We will continue to provide ball-throwing opportunities for Taylor so he can strengthen his skills in coordinating gross motor movements.

Endnotes

- 1 The categories and behaviors to observe are informed by the following sources: Adolph, K E., & Berger, S. E. (2011). Physical and motor development. In M. H. Bornstein & M. E. Lamb (Eds.), *Developmental science: Advanced textbook, 6th ed.* (pp. 241–302). New York: Psychology Press; Bricker, D., Capt, B., & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (2002). *Assessment, evaluation, and programming system for infants and children, 2nd ed., Vol. 2: Test, birth to three years and three to six years.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.; Folio, M. R., & Fewell, R. R. (2002) Peabody motor development chart. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed, Inc.