

Chapter 2

Development of Pre-primary Children

- Developmental Characteristics of Children Aged Two to Six



Chapter 2: Development of Pre-primary Children

Child development is an ongoing process with certain sequences. In general, when children reach a certain age and stage, they will have the corresponding changes in their physical, intellectual, language, behavioural and social abilities. A child's development is not only affected by innate genetic factors, but is also influenced by the nurturing environments and his experiences.

The following information is adapted from the “Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum” (2006) prepared by the Education Bureau (previously known as Education and Manpower Bureau) for teachers' reference. The guide describes in detail the developmental characteristics of children from two to six years old. When teachers observe a child's development, they can pay attention to his or her performance in the following areas of development:

- Physical (including gross and fine motor development)
- Intellectual
- Language (including comprehension and expression)
- Affective and social (including emotional, social and self-care abilities)

We need to note that in reality, different areas of development are interrelated. Sometimes it is difficult to draw a line between different areas of a child's development. For instance, children's intellectual development can be affected by their language ability, and their physical development can affect their social and self-care abilities. Thus, the following content only defines different developmental areas conceptually. In addition to observing a child's developmental areas, teachers should remember also to interpret the performance from an overall perspective.

Moreover, the developmental characteristics described below only represent those of an average child. Although every child follows similar developmental sequences, the pace can differ individually. So, teachers should use the following information flexibly, and take reference from their everyday observations and experiences.

(If teachers suspect a child has any developmental or learning problems, they can refer to Chapter 3 of this Manual – “How to Identify Children with Special Needs”)



Physical development



Intellectual development



Language development



Emotional and social development



Refer to Chapter 2 of the DVD

Developmental Characteristics of Children Aged Two to Six

Age	Physical Development	Intellectual Development	Language Development	Emotional and Social Development
2 to 3 years	<p>Gross Motor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to walk with ease, pull and push objects or step backwards. 2. Need to rest both feet on one step in going up stairs; need help initially, but can gradually do it on their own without assistance. 3. Able to jump from one stairstep, but prone to injury. 4. Try to kick a ball. Initially only walk up and touch it with foot; gradually able to kick properly. 5. No sense of direction when throwing a ball, but later can throw the ball into a basket in front of them. 6. When riding a tricycle, move forward only by pushing feet on the ground; later can control the direction. <p>Fine Motor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to unwrap candies. 2. Able to turn pages of a book. 3. Able to unscrew the cap of a bottle. 4. Able to stack blocks. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin to learn to match colours, shapes, objects and sizes. 2. With repeated attempts, able to stack 5 rings onto a stick in order of their size. 3. Able to assemble puzzles of 3 to 5 pieces. 4. Begin to know their own names. 5. Know the names and functions of some body parts. 6. Able to identify common objects by touch. 7. Begin to understand the meaning of 'one' and 'two'. 8. Begin to show memory, like suddenly remembering some favourite objects and then searching for them. 9. Enjoy role play, such as pretending to be a doctor/teacher, etc. 	<p>Language Comprehension:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to follow simple instructions, or point to a number of body parts. 2. Able to understand common nouns, verbs and adjectives. <p>Language Expression:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to express with limited words and short sentences. 2. Can ask "What?" questions. 3. Able to imitate longer sentences when singing along with nursery rhymes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not yet ready to share toys with peers. 2. Able to take turns with peers under adults' instruction. 3. Become jealous easily towards peers who take away adults' attention from them. 4. Easily lose temper when frustrated, yet also easily forget about unhappy experiences when attention is distracted. 5. Like to follow routines, dislike changes. 6. Begin to show preferences for food. 7. Like to be praised, prefer pretty clothes. <p>Self-Care:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Know how to express toilet needs, able to go to the toilet on their own when prompted, but still occasionally wet their pants during the day. 2. Able to wash their hands with adult's assistance. 3. Able to put on/ pull down their pants, take off their clothes, shoes and socks.

Age	Physical Development	Intellectual Development	Language Development	Emotional and Social Development
3 to 4 years	<p>5. Able to thread large beads.</p> <p>6. Able to copy horizontal and vertical lines, circles, etc.</p> <p>7. Try folding paper and using scissors.</p> <p>8. Can knead, pound, squeeze, pat and pull when playing with clay.</p> <p>Gross Motor:</p> <p>1. Able to walk upstairs with alternate foot.</p> <p>2. Able to go up a slide and climbing frame on their own.</p> <p>3. Able to walk along a line or on footprints.</p> <p>4. Able to cross legs when sitting.</p> <p>5. Able to kick a ball moving slowly towards them.</p> <p>6. Able to catch a big ball thrown to them.</p> <p>7. Able to pedal a tricycle and steer direction.</p>	<p>1. Able to distinguish between two objects by size, length, texture, hardness.</p> <p>2. Able to stack 5 rings according to size upon two attempts.</p> <p>3. Able to assemble puzzles of 6 pieces.</p> <p>4. Begin to understand the concept of sequence, and able to make patterns with blocks or beads according to sequence shown.</p> <p>5. Begin to know how to classify and match objects like food, clothing, and able to associate objects according to use, such as shoes with socks, cups with plates.</p> <p>6. Able to match 3 to 4 colours and identify their names.</p> <p>7. Know own name, sex and age.</p>	<p>Language Comprehension:</p> <p>1. Able to understand some abstract words like “same/different”, “open/close”, “top/bottom”, “in/out”.</p> <p>2. Understand the meaning of “pretending”.</p> <p>3. Can attend to storytelling, like to ask adults to repeat favourite stories.</p> <p>Language Expression:</p> <p>1. Begin to give a simple account of past events in chronological sequence.</p> <p>2. Mainly use nouns, verbs and sometimes adjectives in sentences.</p>	<p>1. Able to play with toys alone without adult’s company.</p> <p>2. Like to join games led by adults, able to follow rules of games.</p> <p>3. Will take turns when playing with toys.</p> <p>4. Know what belongs to them and what does not.</p> <p>5. Able to care for younger children and are willing to share toys.</p> <p>6. Able to accept advice, regard parents as authority and obey instructions.</p> <p>7. Begin to have manners, able to say “thank you” and “please” when reminded .</p> <p>8. Begin to expand their interests and attention outside their families and enjoy outdoor activities.</p>

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3 to 4 years	<p>Fine Motor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to hammer wooden sticks. 2. Able to screw bottle cap. 3. Able to build a tower of more than 10 blocks. 4. Begin to hold a pencil like an adult. 5. Colour in a random manner; later they can stay within boundaries. 6. Can draw a cross and an inclined line. 7. Use scissors to cut paper strips. 8. Can apply glue. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Able to differentiate between boys and girls. 9. Able to draw a person with head and some body parts. 10. Able to recite from 1 to 10. 11. Able to count 3 to 4 objects correctly. 12. Able to repeat a string of 3 digits just heard. 13. Able to find 2 objects by memory. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Able to use words like “here”, “there”, “you” and “me”. 4. Begin to ask “what”, “where” and “who” questions. 5. Use appropriate gestures, tone, volume and speed when speaking. 6. Though their articulation is still not clear, people (including strangers) can generally understand what they say. 7. Able to recite nursery rhymes with accompanying actions. 	<p>Self-Care:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to eat with a spoon. 2. Able to pour water from a jar. 3. Can wipe their mouth after meals. 4. Begin to wash hands with soap, though adult assistance in drying their hands is still required. 5. Able to go to toilet on their own during the day; seldom wet their pants. 6. Know how to take off and put on their trousers. 7. Able to put on and take off loose jackets / blouses. 8. Able to undo big buttons. 9. Try putting clothes on hangers. 10. Begin to understand danger, and know that they should not approach fire and boiling water. 11. Will not run out to the road when going out.

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4 to 5 years	<p>Gross Motor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to jump forward and backward, hop on one leg and skip forward. 2. Able to pick up objects on the ground while running. 3. Able to throw and catch a bean bag. 4. Can walk on a balance beam. 5. Able to throw a small ball. 6. When swimming, able to walk in shallow water or float with floaters. 7. Play confidently on slides, climbing frames and swings. <p>Fine Motor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to thread small beads. 2. Able to draw a square. 3. Can draw simple pictures such as people, houses, trees, cars, etc. 4. Able to fold a piece of paper diagonally. 5. Begin to do artwork with cutting and gluing. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to distinguish between living things (e.g., cat, dog, tree) and non-living things (e.g., toy, cup and plate). 2. Able to match furniture with the room where they belong. 3. Able to point out the odd one from a group of objects. 4. Able to assemble puzzles of 8 pieces. 5. Able to identify things and what's happening by sound. 6. Able to imitate the sounds of animals. 7. Able to draw a man with head, body, limbs and facial features . 8. Begin to understand the concept of time, able to tell what they usually do in the morning, afternoon and evening. 9. Begin to understand position and speed, e.g., able to distinguish front and back, middle, the first and the last, fast and slow, etc. 10. Pay attention to the environment, able to point out the missing or inconsistent part in a picture. 	<p>Language Comprehension:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin to understand the difference between “past” and “present”. 2. Able to carry on a simple conversation over phone. <p>Language Expression:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to talk about everyday life experiences. 2. Begin to express themselves with complex or longer sentences. 3. Able to tell stories from picture sequence. 4. Able to use words like “because -therefore”, “some”, “several”, “many” appropriately in conversation. 5. Able to use opposites / complementary words and phrases. 6. Able to tell the district they live and the names of their family members. 7. Able to tell the colour of a particular object, like, banana is yellow. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to be self-disciplined and stay within a confined area even without adult’ s supervision. 2. Willing to observe game rules when playing with other children. 3. Able to take care of younger children and pets and console their playmates who feel upset. 4. Have vague concepts of right and wrong, only know that they will be punished for bad behaviour and praised for good behaviour. 5. Know how to say “thank you”, “sorry”. 6. Able to hold a conversation with strangers at ease . 7. Able to help in simple chores at home. <p>Self-Care:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn how to eat with chopsticks. 2. Able to help clean up the dinner table after meals. 3. Able to clean up dirt with a piece of cloth.

Age	Physical Development	Intellectual Development	Language Development	Emotional and Social Development
5 to 6 years	<p>6. Able to cut a simple shape.</p> <p>7. Able to secure several pieces of clay together.</p>	<p>11. Able to identify simple and common signs, like road and shop signs.</p> <p>12. Able to recite from 1 to 20.</p> <p>13. Able to count 1 to 10 objects correctly.</p> <p>14. Able to recall 4 things in a picture they have just seen.</p> <p>15. Able to tell which of the 3 objects just seen are missing.</p> <p>16. Able to read simple words.</p> <p>17. Able to single out a word of different nature, e.g. "cow, goat, dog, car".</p>	<p>8. Able to talk about people of different occupations and their responsibilities.</p> <p>9. Like to ask questions and seek explanations for things they do not understand.</p> <p>10. Begin to ask "why", "when" and "how" questions.</p> <p>11. Able to solve simple riddles like: "I have four legs, a tail, like to eat fish and can catch mice, what am I?".</p> <p>12. Able to speak fairly fluently and clearly.</p>	<p>4. Able to wash and dry their hands and faces by themselves.</p> <p>5. Learn how to brush teeth and clean nose by self.</p> <p>6. Able to get up and go to the toilet at night with no bedwetting.</p> <p>7. Begin to dress and undress themselves.</p>
	<p>Gross Motor:</p> <p>1. Able to run well on tiptoe and take sharp turns.</p> <p>2. Able to run fast for a distance of 50 feet without feeling tired.</p> <p>3. Able to walk up and down stairs alone with alternate foot.</p> <p>4. Able to catch a ball while running, kick a rolling ball or play ball with a racket.</p> <p>5. Able to climb a rope-ladder.</p> <p>6. Able to play on their own on a swing.</p>	<p>1. Can arrange objects by length, height, width or size in correct order easily.</p> <p>2. Can complete a simple game of maze.</p> <p>3. Can tell many colours and shapes of daily objects.</p> <p>4. Can describe a picture they have just seen.</p> <p>5. Able to retell three acts from a story just heard.</p> <p>6. Able to count 20 objects, and write from 1 to 20.</p>	<p>Language Comprehension:</p> <p>1. Begin to understand the concepts of "yesterday", "today" and "tomorrow".</p> <p>2. Understand words like in/out, far/hear, bottom/top, enter/leave, start / end etc.</p> <p>3. Understand the content of a story.</p>	<p>1. Able to play cooperative games with several peers, understand the principle of fair play and the need to follow group decisions, also able to explain rules of the game to other children.</p> <p>2. Able to play competitive games like chess.</p> <p>3. Begin to choose companions they like.</p> <p>4. Can turn on television, choose favourite programme.</p>

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5 to 6 years	<p>Fine Motor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to nail with a hammer. 2. Can put small beads into a bottle. 3. Able to hold objects weighing over 10 pounds. 4. Able to thread shoelaces. 5. Able to use a pencil sharpener. 6. Able to draw straight lines with a ruler. 7. Able to use an eraser without tearing the paper. 8. Able to do colouring within the outlines. 9. Able to draw a rhombus and a triangle. 10. Able to fold a piece of paper into half and then a further half. 11. Able to cut out an irregular shape. 12. Able to copy numbers and simple words. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Able to tell the order and place of an object (e.g., the first, the second). 8. Understand the difference between “half piece” and “one piece”. 9. Able to do simple additions and subtractions. 10. Able to recall 5 digits just heard or seen. 11. Begin to understand concept of calendar and time, able to tell the date of the year and day of the week. 12. Able to tell the time (e.g., 3 o’clock, 4 o’clock) from a clock, provided they are given the chance to learn. 13. Able to understand the meanings of commonly seen words. 14. Able to read and understand dozens of commonly seen words. 	<p>Language Expression:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Able to give a logical account of what has happened recently. 2. Able to describe a picture. 3. Able to communicate with family members or peers without difficulty. 4. Able to speak in turn, without digressing from the topic. 5. Can use grammar and structure of language more or less the same as adults. 6. Able to use words like “although”, “however”, “but”, “so”, though sometimes inappropriately. 7. Use different adjectives to describe a person or an object. 8. Able to briefly describe the four seasons. 9. Able to tell their own birthday. 10. Able to express feelings such as fear, anger, sadness, and happiness with appropriate words. 11. Able to talk back, protest or even scold others when frustrated. 	<p>Self-Care:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use chopsticks to pick up food. 2. Can go to toilet alone in public. 3. If trained, some children can clean themselves after using the toilet. 4. Know how to choose suitable clothes to wear. 5. Use a comb or brush for hair. 6. Can perform simple housework, e.g., pack own clothes, help setting the table before a meal. 7. Cross the road carefully. 8. When lost, know how to get help, and can tell own telephone number and address.