

# Texas' Early Learning Pathways

An alignment of the Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines and the Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines





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# Welcome to *Texas' Early Learning Pathways*:

## An alignment of the Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines and the Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines

The rate of children's growth often seems beyond our comprehension. Within a few short years, children hold themselves up, speak, play with others, and understand stories. We watch in awe as their personalities emerge and they start building more complex relationships with their parents, siblings, other family members, friends, and the adults who take care of them.

Parents and early care providers have tremendous responsibility for understanding and guiding the social/emotional, cognitive, language, and physical developmental milestones as children grow. This booklet, *Texas' Early Learning Pathways*, defines critical points along the *pathways* of development to offer caregivers illustrations of how children develop in their early years and, more importantly, how even subtle, every day actions of caring adults contribute to healthy development.

*Texas' Early Learning Pathways* uses information from two important documents for every caregiver in Texas: the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines (ITELG)* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines (Pre-K Guidelines)*. Both documents can be found at [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org). Readers should refer to the ITELG and the Pre-K Guidelines for a comprehensive discussion of early childhood development and learning and for even more caregiver strategies for supporting healthy development.

### What is *Texas' Early Learning Pathways*?

As a "guide" for caregivers, *Texas' Early Learning Pathways*:

- aligns with the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*
- spotlights important pathways of development from birth to age 5
- illustrates how very early development relates to subsequent school readiness
- provides recommendations for activities and caregiver behaviors that support children's healthy development
- serves as a starting point for conversations about children's growth and how loving, caring adults can support their development

*Texas' Early Learning Pathways*, does not provide an exhaustive list of children's developmental skills, a full curriculum, complete developmental checklists, or assessment tools. Our knowledge of child development is constantly growing--there is more to be learned about important milestones in development.

### How *Texas' Early Learning Pathways* came about

The Texas Early Learning Council, a 19-member Governor-appointed group that aims to improve school readiness in Texas, sponsored the creation of this booklet. The Council's priority areas include workforce and professional development, parental outreach and communications, collaborations and standards, and data systems and quality rating and improvement systems. ITELG was created out of the Council's Collaborations and Standards Subcommittee. These guidelines assist caregivers in understanding early childhood development and creating high quality early experiences needed for growth and development.

After completing the ITELG, the Council saw an opportunity to bridge these guidelines to the previously developed and approved Pre-K Guidelines. The Council committed to creating an illustrative tool showing the connections between the skills of very young children and the skills children need to be ready for school. The purpose of the new tool is to present a large amount of information from the comprehensive guidelines in a way that readers can easily recognize the pathways, understand their progressions, and see what caregivers can do to support children's development.

## How is Texas' Early Learning Pathways organized?

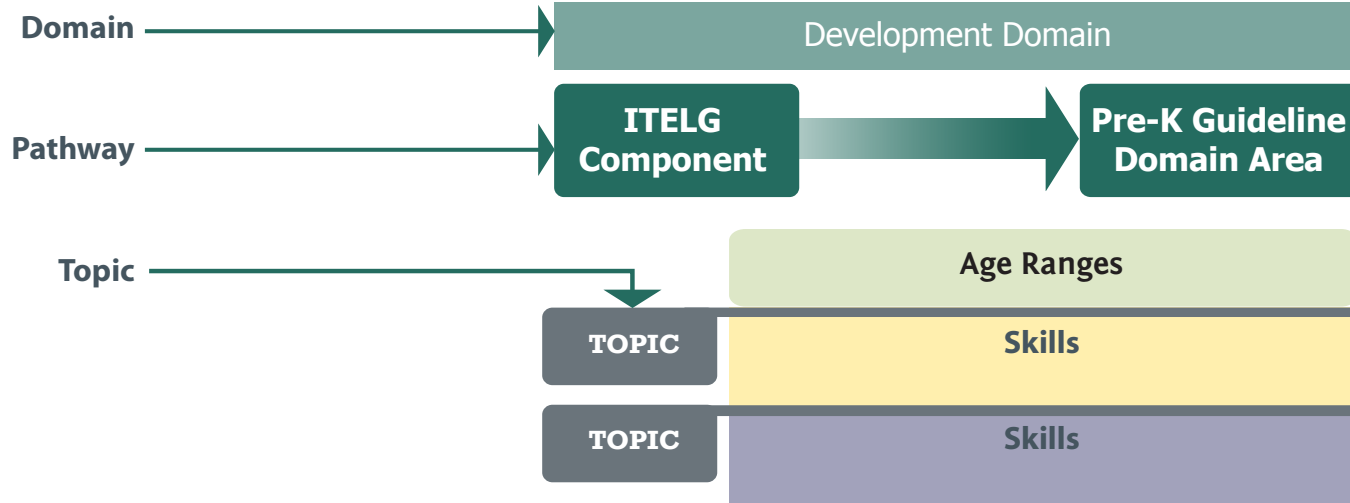
Texas' Early Learning Pathways follows the structure of the ITELG and the Pre-K Guidelines, grounded in ITELG's four developmental domains:

- Social and emotional development
- Language and communication development
- Cognitive development
- Physical health and motor development

Each domain has a series of pathways (ITELG calls them "components" and the Pre-K guidelines refer to them as "guidelines").

Each pathway is sub-divided into broad topics, each containing milestones of children's skills and behaviors by age group from birth to preschool. The topics come from either the set of indicators in the ITELG or the skill areas in the Pre-K Guidelines to best describe the skills and behaviors.

The illustration below shows how this organization works



Finally, after each pathway you will find a page of information that delves deeper into that pathway and offers ideas for how caregivers and teachers can support children in that area. These pages also include a few simple ideas for working with parents.

### How to use *Texas' Early Learning Pathways*

*Texas' Early Learning Pathways* was written with several audiences in mind: caregivers, parents, administrators, and staff developers. Each pathway is self-contained on a single page to make it easy to print specific topics for discussions with other caregivers or parents, or to display as “mini-posters.”

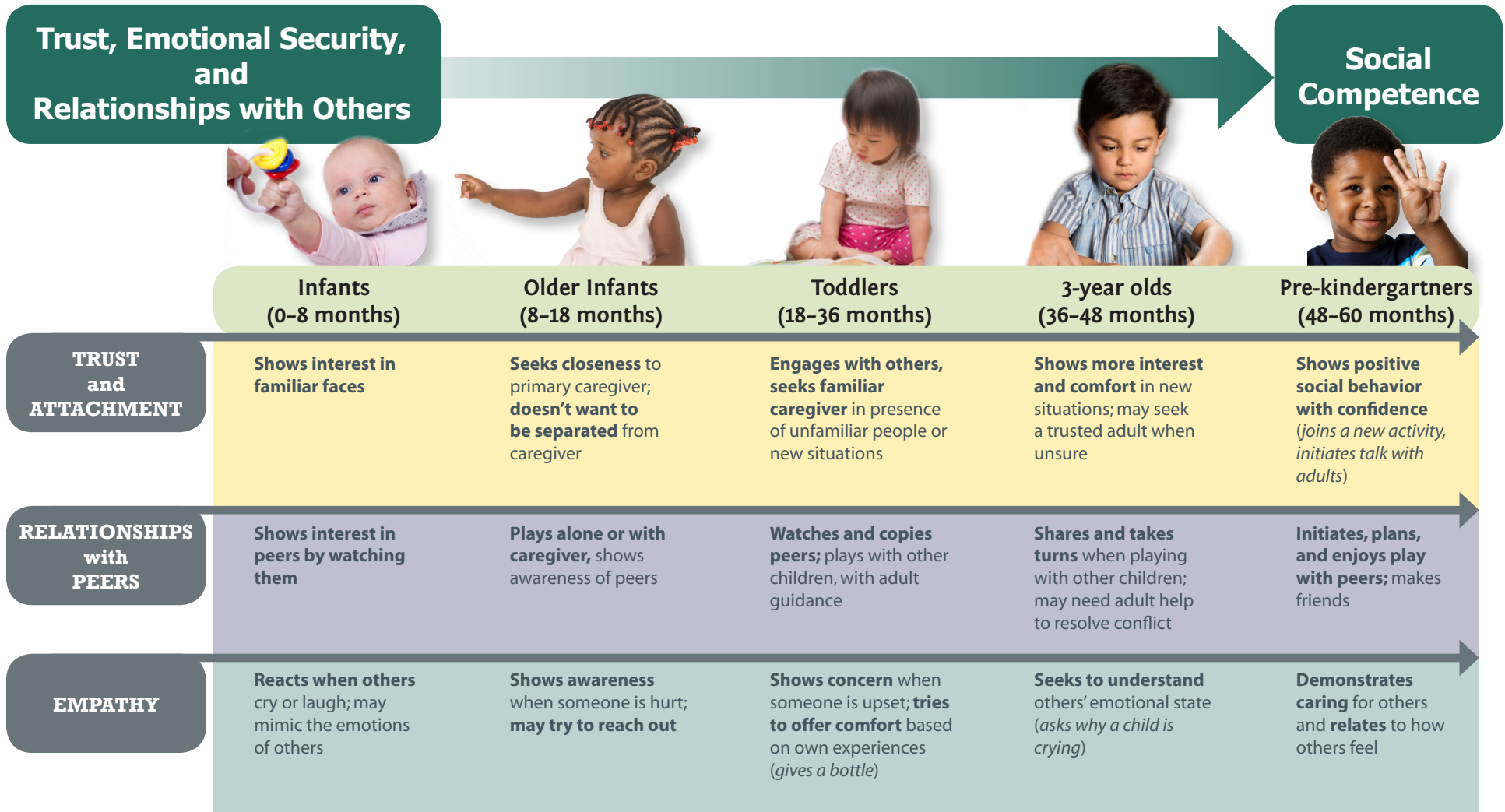
<b>Caregivers might...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read <i>Pathways</i> online to learn more about how young children change and grow</li><li>• Print sections to use in the classroom as a quick reference to guide interactions</li><li>• Use <i>Pathways</i> to spark discussions with colleagues and families to build knowledge together</li><li>• Think about the skills that individual children have developed and how to foster next stages</li></ul>
<b>Parents might...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read <i>Pathways</i> online to see how their young children’s skills and behaviors emerge over time and lead to school readiness</li><li>• Use <i>Pathways</i> to talk with caregivers about how their children are changing and growing</li><li>• Understand how they can support development</li></ul>
<b>Administrators and Trainers might...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use portions of the booklet as handouts for staff development activities</li><li>• Review curricular goals for groups of children to ensure that the goals address key developmental milestones</li><li>• Print specific domains for staff meetings to discuss and create new activities with children to support the pathways for children’s growth and development</li></ul>

### Always remember...

- Young children with special needs or who speak a different language will follow the same developmental paths, but may need extra support and team approach to progress along the pathways.
- Every child develops at his or her own pace. No two children follow the same path of growth and development.
- Human development is complex. Developmental skills often cross domains because learning is interrelated.
- New learning and development build upon prior learning and development.
- Responsive caregiving supports children as they learn and grow.
- Learning starts with families and communities. Include children’s families and their culture into programs to strengthen healthy growth.



# Pathways of Social and Emotional Development



For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.

## Supporting the Pathway from Trust, Emotional Security and Relationships with Others to Social Competence

Children develop trust, emotional security, and attachment early in life through consistent and loving relationships with caregivers. This early foundation helps children form positive relationships with adults and other children. It prepares them to learn important pro-social behaviors such as making friends, helping others, and showing empathy and caring for others. When a caregiver is aware of how he/she responds to children and encourages interactions, he/she facilitates children's social competence.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- Hold, cuddle, sing and talk in a calm and soothing tone
- Comfort infants when they are distressed
- Keep primary caregivers and helpers consistent



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- Encourage independence
- Provide opportunities for children to interact positively when they play
- Use books and activities where children can talk about caring for others



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- Notice and respond sensitively to words, gestures, and sounds
- Stay close to children as they explore
- Reassure children that you will be back when you leave



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- Be warm and welcoming with children
- Have conversations with individual children throughout the day
- Encourage children to play with others and show them how to do it (*"Jose, why don't you ask Emily if she wants to join your game?"*)
- Model caring for others and acknowledge children when they are kind and helpful



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

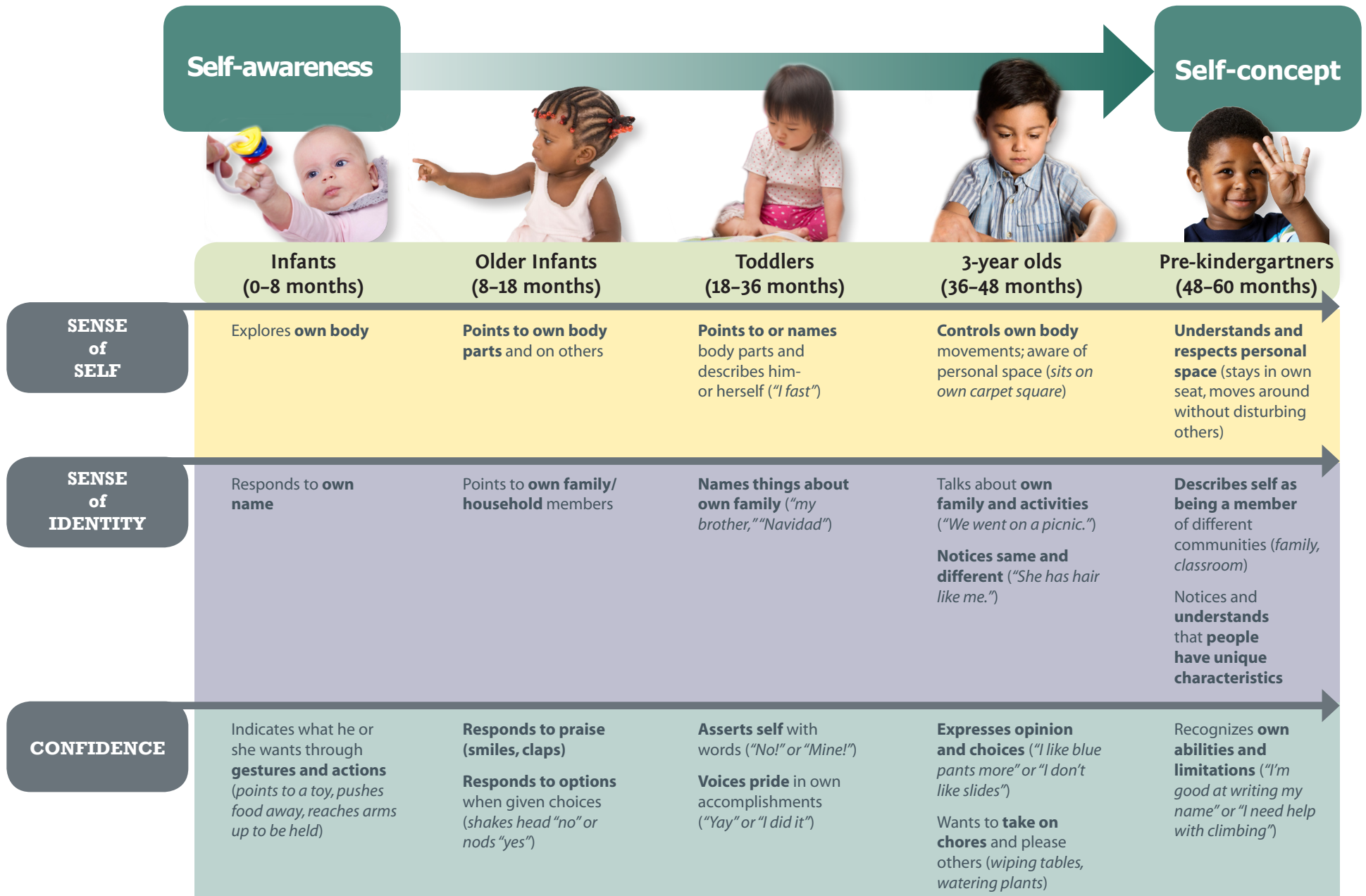
- Be warm and sensitive with toddlers
- Encourage children to play and talk about what they are doing
- Respond to toddlers' gestures and say what they are communicating (*"Oh, you want your blanket."*)
- Stay close and be reassuring



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Tell parents about the specific ways their children have demonstrated trust and emotional security.
- Suggest ways that parents can encourage positive social interactions. For example, they can model pro-social behaviors, stay close by when children play together, and notice and celebrate children's kind behavior.

# Pathways of Social and Emotional Development



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Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.

## Supporting the Pathway of Self-Awareness to Self-Concept

Children need to develop a positive and strong sense of who they are—what they like or dislike, how they feel, and what they are capable of doing. This begins in infancy as babies explore their own bodies, show emotions, and begin to assert themselves. In these early years, children start to become aware of themselves as individuals and begin to express their interests and needs. As children understand how they relate to others in their family and peer groups, children become confident in forming relationships with others. At the same time, as children learn more about themselves and gain confidence, they are more likely to persist in attempting to solve challenging tasks.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Name parts of the body (hands, feet, nose, tummy) when playing
- ❑ Use infants' names when speaking to them
- ❑ Give infants opportunities to look at themselves in mirrors



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Encourage children to draw self-portraits and describe themselves
- ❑ Talk about and celebrate family traditions and activities
- ❑ Give children opportunities to take on different roles and chores



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Encourage older infants to point to their body parts (*"Where is your hand?" "Where is your nose?"*)
- ❑ Refer to other people by name (*"There is your mommy."*)
- ❑ Show excitement and pride at new skills



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Use positive cues to remind children about their body and space (*"Hands in your lap," "Keep in your seat"*)
- ❑ Share books about people's characteristics and traits
- ❑ Encourage independence and tell children when they use good judgment (*"Eliza, you cleaned up that spill before it got to the floor! Smart thinking!"*)
- ❑ Acknowledge efforts and offer support when needed (*"You climbed the ladder by yourself! Do you need help down the slide?"*)



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Notice and respond to toddlers' need for space using words and actions (*"Here is your chair" and "This is where you sit and have snack"*)
- ❑ Respond positively when children share their own traits or characteristics (*"Yes, you do have brown hair!"*)
- ❑ Offer some choices (*"Would you like to use crayons or markers?"*)



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Invite parents to tell you what their children like to do at home and with their family.
- Update parents about their children's recent accomplishments and new skills.
- Show parents how to narrate children's activities and praise their accomplishments in a variety of ways.

# Pathways of Social and Emotional Development

Self-regulation

Self-control



**Infants  
(0–8 months)**

**Older Infants  
(8–18 months)**

**Toddlers  
(18–36 months)**

**3-year olds  
(36–48 months)**

**Pre-kindergartners  
(48–60 months)**

**BEHAVIOR  
CONTROL**

Shows some **routine behaviors** (*sleep-wake cycle, signals when hungry*)

Reacts to overstimulation (*startles and cries with excessive noise, fusses from too much activity*)

Participates in **routines** (*bath to story time to bedtime*) **with adult guidance**

Uses some ways **to calm self** (*seeks comfort object or familiar adult, thumb-sucking*)

Anticipates **simple recurring routines** (*“Before lunch, we wash hands”*) but still relies on adult prompts

Able to **stop actions with adult prompts** (*“No biting!”*)

Follows **routines with assistance** (*“Puzzle pieces go in the box after play”*)

**Adjusts behavior** according to situation with some prompts (*“Use gentle hands”*)

**Understands** and follows classroom rules and routines with **few reminders**

**Regulates own behavior** with occasional reminders (*waits for turn, raises hand*)

**EMOTIONAL  
CONTROL**

**Responds to comfort** from familiar adults (*calms when held or rocked*)

Uses **emotions** to get things (*whining and crying*)

**Recovers from emotional outbursts**, with adult support

**Expresses emotions constructively**, with help from an adult (*goes to a quiet place, takes deep breaths*)

**Increases or decreases intensity of emotions** more consistently, with support (*“I see you love to dance! Now let’s calm down for story time”*)

**CONTROL  
of  
ATTENTION**

**Responds to attention** from familiar adults (*eye contact, cooing back and forth*)

**Enjoys and responds to interactions** (back and forth play, listening to short stories when cuddled)

Shows **greater ability to focus** with guidance (*focuses on a short game, uses eye contact*)

**Stays focused on activities with some prompts** (*up to 10-15 minutes at a time*)

**Stays focused on self-selected activities until done**; engages in group activities (*up to about 20 minutes at a time*)

For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.



## Supporting the Pathway of Self-Regulation to Self-Control

Self-regulation is among the most important school readiness skills. In formal learning environments, children succeed when they can follow rules and routines and maintain attention. They need to be able to focus and find ways to effectively solve problems. Infants show basic regulation skills, such as thumb-sucking or turning toward a touch, but they don't yet know how to control their behaviors and actions. Caregivers should have appropriate expectations as children are just beginning to learn about their senses and feelings.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Notice and respond to needs (comfort when distressed)
- ❑ Respect individual routines (feeding at signs of hunger, put to sleep at signs of fatigue)
- ❑ Use calming approaches (provide soft blanket, rock back and forth)



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Provide comfort objects (favorite blanket or toy)
- ❑ Allow older infants a few minutes to calm themselves
- ❑ Talk about routines and keep them consistent (“It’s almost nap time, let’s turn down the lights”)



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Practice patience and respond warmly; name emotions and feelings (“I see you are sad”)
- ❑ Use techniques to calm emotions (move with child to quiet area, get down on child’s level to talk)
- ❑ Offer limited, safe choices (“You can sit on the chair, or the floor”)
- ❑ Use songs that require listening for actions (*The Wheels on the Bus*)



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Guide and comfort three-year-olds (“You seem sad, but it will be OK. Let’s draw a picture together”); offer a quiet space for when they are upset
- ❑ Recognize self-regulation behaviors (“I like the way you took a deep breath, Owen”)
- ❑ Acknowledge intense feelings after a child calms down (“I’m glad you feel better now. You were frustrated when Katie wouldn’t share”)
- ❑ Play games that require listening and responding (*Red Light/ Green Light*)



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Model appropriate behavior and describe how to do it (“I am ready to listen so I am sitting on my chair and being quiet”)
- ❑ Be consistent with rules and expectations; explain boundaries
- ❑ Use stories and books that encourage children to discuss appropriate and inappropriate behaviors
- ❑ Establish signals and cues to children who have difficulty paying attention (praise good effort, move toward child, use a “cue” card)



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Tell parents about the techniques you use when children are having challenges with behavior.
- Encourage parents to help develop these skills at home, and to have appropriate expectations about how children behave depending on their age.

# Pathways of Language and Communication Development



For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

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\*Please see the next pathway, *Communication and Speaking*, for skills related to expressive development.

## Supporting the Pathway of Listening and Understanding to Language and Communication

Children learn an incredible amount about their world by listening—especially to parents and caregivers talking to them. Even the youngest infants pay close attention to and respond to talk. Children need to hear a lot of talking from people around them to learn new words and build knowledge. Familiarity with sounds, words, and back-and-forth conversation sets the foundation for speaking and future reading, writing, and conversational skills.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Notice when infants turn toward sound and comment on what they hear (*“Do you hear Mama?”*)
- ❑ Talk back in response to sounds they make and body language (*“You look surprised! That was loud!”*)
- ❑ Share play mats or cloth books with sounds (crinkle sounds, squeak toys, rattles)



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Say names of familiar people and objects in the surroundings
- ❑ Follow older infants' lead in back-and-forth talk (*be sure to pause, look in her eyes, mimic level of excitement*)



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Play games and read books with sound and identify the sounds (*animal sound books, push button sound books or games*)
- ❑ Talk about and comment on what you and toddlers do, see, and feel throughout the day
- ❑ Give simple directions (*“Please sit on the floor and I’ll tie your shoe.”*)
- ❑ Notice when toddlers want to talk and let them know when it’s their turn (*“It’s your turn. What did you want to say?”*)



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Use short, full, and correct sentences when talking and expand on children’s talk (*“That right, Kesha’s dog is big and very excited.”*)
- ❑ Help them take turns talking and listening (*“That’s a funny part, let’s hear what Mika wants to say.”*)
- ❑ Share and re-read favorite books and ask questions about what happens in the story (*“If you see a kitten, say...”*)



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Create play opportunities that promote back-and-forth talk (*pet shop, restaurant, grocery store*)
- ❑ Play games that require careful listening (*“Simon Says...”*)
- ❑ Use listening centers with audio-taped stories
- ❑ Share books and ask questions about the story

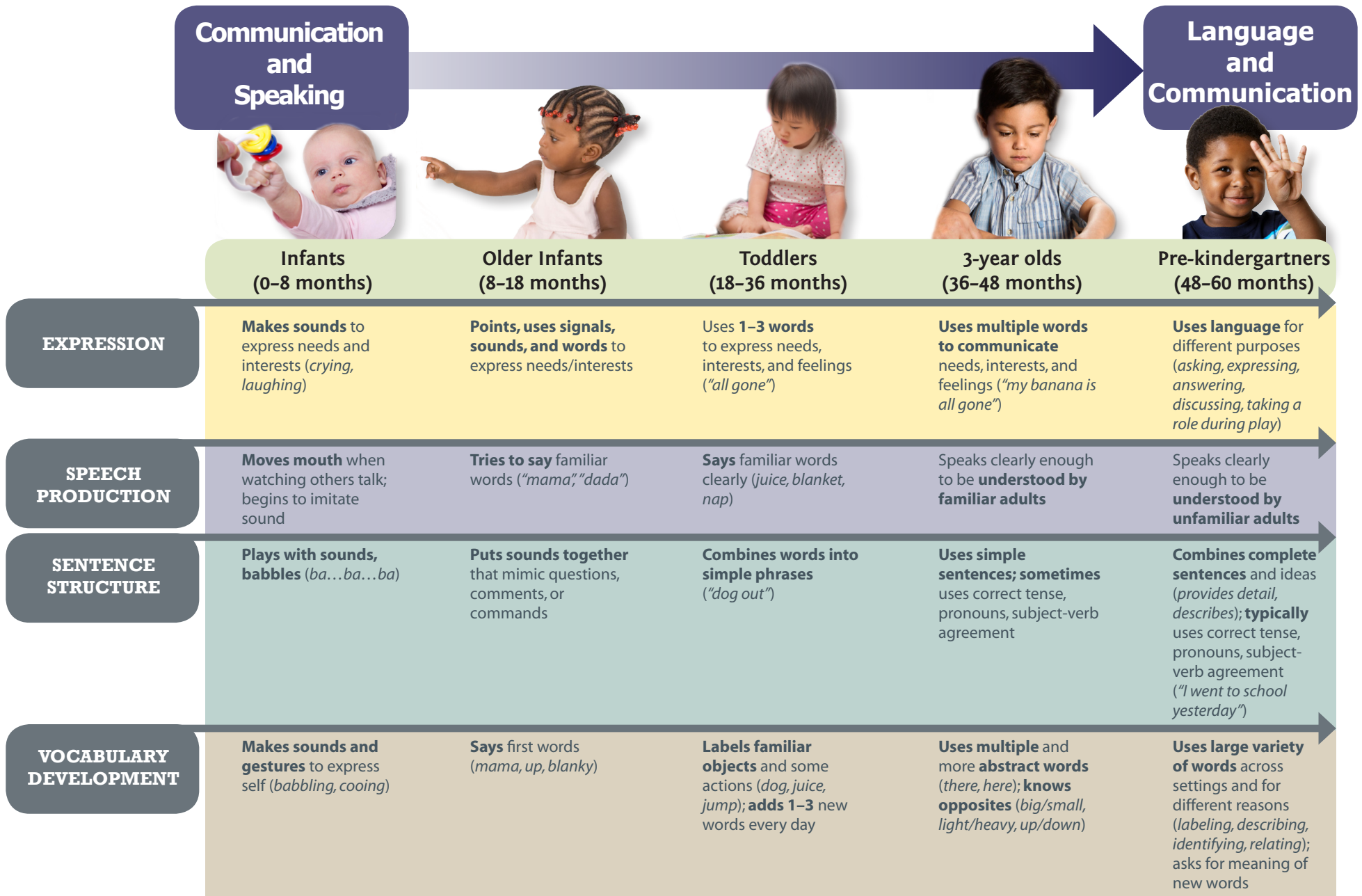


### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Talk with parents about how they can help develop their children’s listening skills during daily activities.
- Encourage parents to talk about everything they are doing so their children can hear lots of language.
- Encourage parents to model good listening skills themselves by slowing down and looking at children when they speak or make sounds and by asking questions of older children.



# Pathways of Language and Communication Development



For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.

## Supporting the Pathway of Communication and Speaking to Language and Communication

Very young children start communicating long before any words are spoken! When newborns coo or babble they are building language. Caregivers help build language by talking (narrating the actions of the day) and responding to children's gestures and sounds. As children get older, caregivers create environments and experiences that give children lots of reasons to talk and things to talk about. All of this talk helps children build vocabulary and understand what is happening around them. A rich base of vocabulary words is important for children to understand stories and what they read when they get older.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Notice and respond to infants' gestures and sounds
- ❑ Talk about daily actions and routines (*"Now it's time for a bottle."*)



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Watch and imitate older infants' attempts at making sounds
- ❑ Notice first words and repeat the word
- ❑ Name objects in the environment, especially when they show interest (*"This is your big yellow bus."*)



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Notice and support when toddlers put words together by repeating their words and adding more (*"Yes, your banana was yummy. It was delicious!"*)
- ❑ Speak in clear, complete sentences; use eye contact
- ❑ Respond to questions using simple, clear answers



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Talk about what children are doing and introduce new concepts (*"Now you are putting the yellow block on top of the blue block."*)
- ❑ Follow three-year-old's lead in conversation by showing interest and responding (*"You went to the park? What did you do there?"*)
- ❑ Create play and activity centers that encourage conversation; join in the play
- ❑ Share books and ask children questions about the story



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

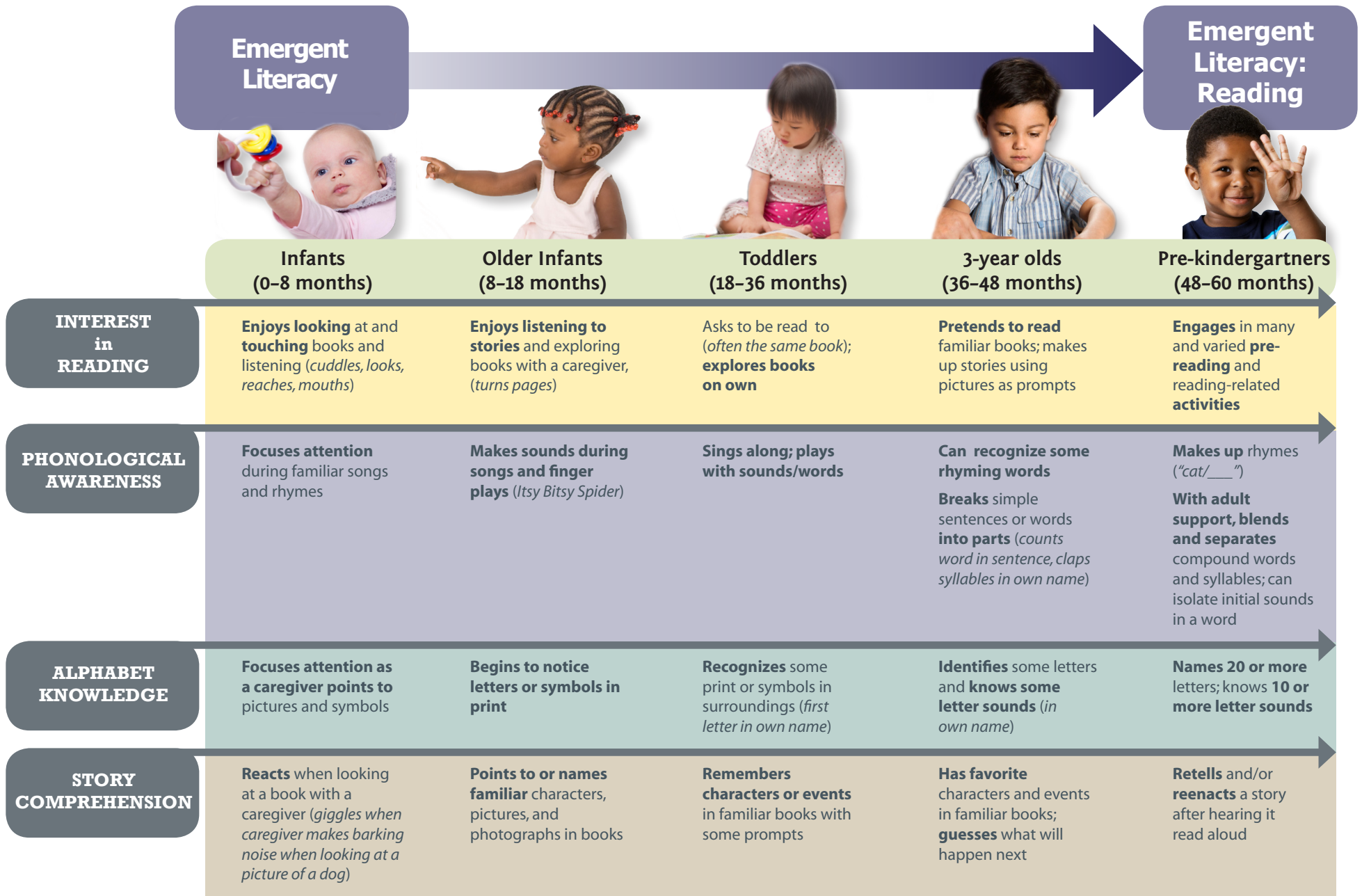
- ❑ Model appropriate language usage (*use correct tense, pronouns, subject-verb agreement*)
- ❑ Create opportunities for one-to-one talk between children and adults
- ❑ Create play environments that encourage conversation with peers and adults (*dramatic play centers*)
- ❑ Use books and stories to generate discussion and introduce new words



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Let parents know how much their children communicate during the day.
- Create a tip sheet for parents to take home that encourages back-and-forth talk during daily routines. For example, at meal-times, during the morning routine, when traveling, at the grocery store.
- Encourage parents of infants to orally respond to gazes, coos, and babble.
- Encourage parents of toddlers, three year olds, and pre-kindergartners to listen and wait for children to express themselves.

# Pathways of Language and Communication Development



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## Supporting the Pathway of Emergent Literacy to Emergent Literacy: Reading

To become good readers, children need opportunities to become interested in stories and books, learn about the sounds of words, get a sense of letters and words, and understand stories. The best things caregivers can do are to read books out loud throughout the day, tell stories, play with the sounds of words, sing rhyming songs, talk and listen, and create an environment with lots of books and print materials.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- Provide cloth or textured books
- Hold and cuddle children while reading aloud



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- Sing songs with rhymes (“*rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub...*”)
- Notice older infants’ interest in a picture and slow down to talk about it
- Talk about and point to characters in books and their surroundings
- Tell simple stories



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- Read and re-read books often, but don’t force interest
- Point out pictures and ask toddlers to tell you about them or ask them to “read” to you
- Use letter shapes to play games



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- Read frequently and point out words and letters as you go
- Pause and ask children lots of questions
- Engage them in rhyming songs and games
- Say simple sentences while clapping to the words
- Make up stories that involve the child



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

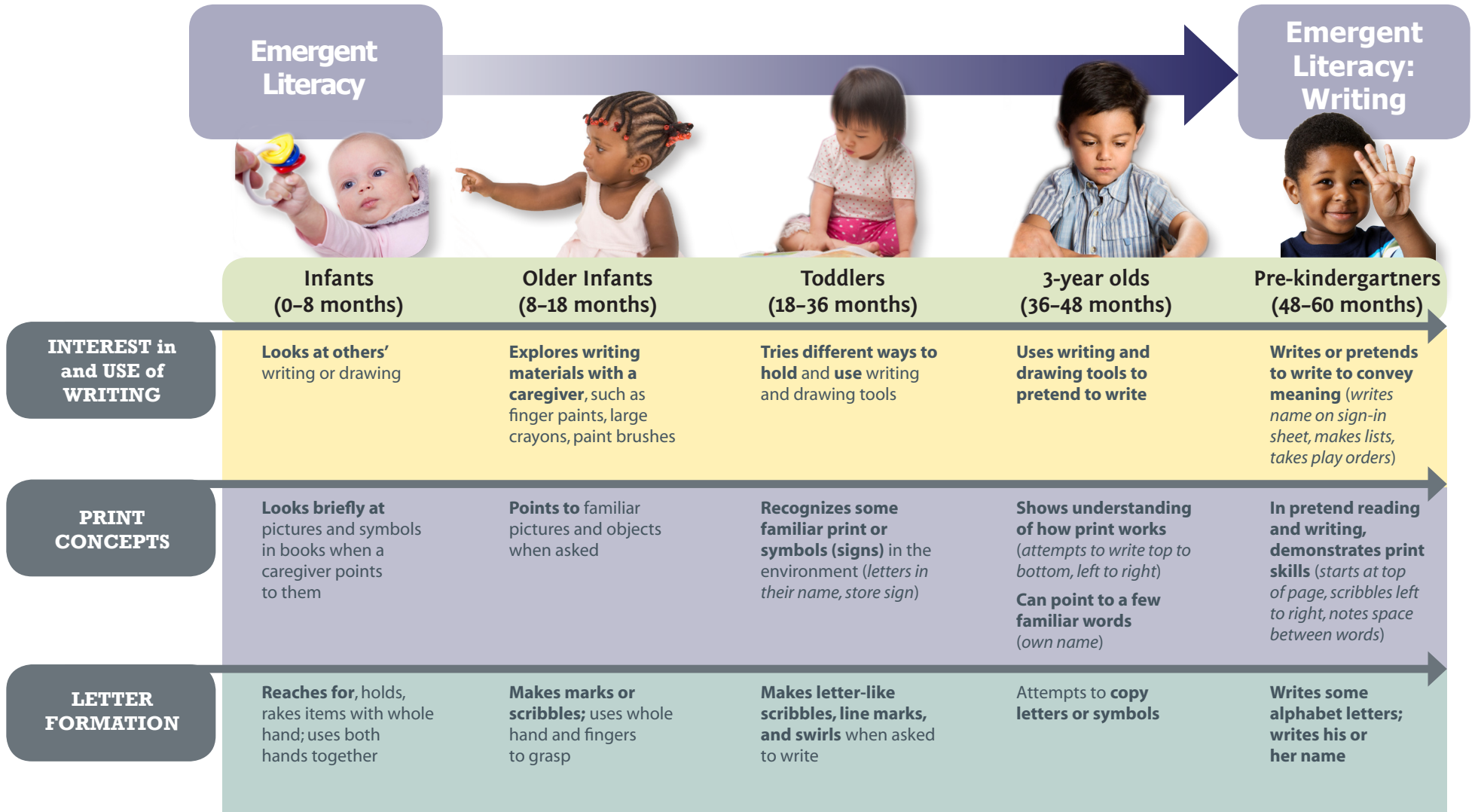
- Choose books of interest and share books often by asking questions (“*What do you think Spot should do next?*”)
- Develop activities and games to help children combine and break apart words (“*sun + shine = sunshine*”)
- Model clapping one time for each syllable in familiar words, like children’s names
- Teach the name and sound of alphabet letters (*play games, sing the alphabet song, use labels, post the alphabet*)



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Talk with parents about sharing books and stories with young children.
- Create take-home packets or a lending library with age-appropriate rhymes, poems, and books.
- Encourage parents to talk to their children about why we read. For example, reading for fun, to learn something, to put a toy together, to make lists, and to find things in a store.

# Pathways of Language and Communication Development



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## Supporting the Pathway of Emergent Literacy to Emergent Literacy: Writing

Caregivers can help very young children learn to write by exposing them to books and print materials and talking about print. Very young infants learn about print by looking at words and pictures and touching books. Caregivers should provide materials and experiences that encourage writing and drawing. Pointing out print throughout the environment also helps young children understand why writing is important.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- Talk about and name pictures in books and point at them
- Let infants see them writing and drawing



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- Point out large letters in print
- Provide age-appropriate drawing and writing tools (*finger paints, chunky crayons*)



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- Talk about print in the environment and label things in their surroundings
- Use large magnetic letters or other play letters during play
- Plan time for toddlers to use writing materials
- Point to large, noticeable words when reading aloud



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- Plan for writing opportunities during play (*while playing restaurant, write down their order*)
- Point to words as they read aloud; pause and say the word again (*list of daily activities, words in big books*)
- Provide varied writing tools to encourage writing (*chalk and blackboard, markers and whiteboards, paper*)



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

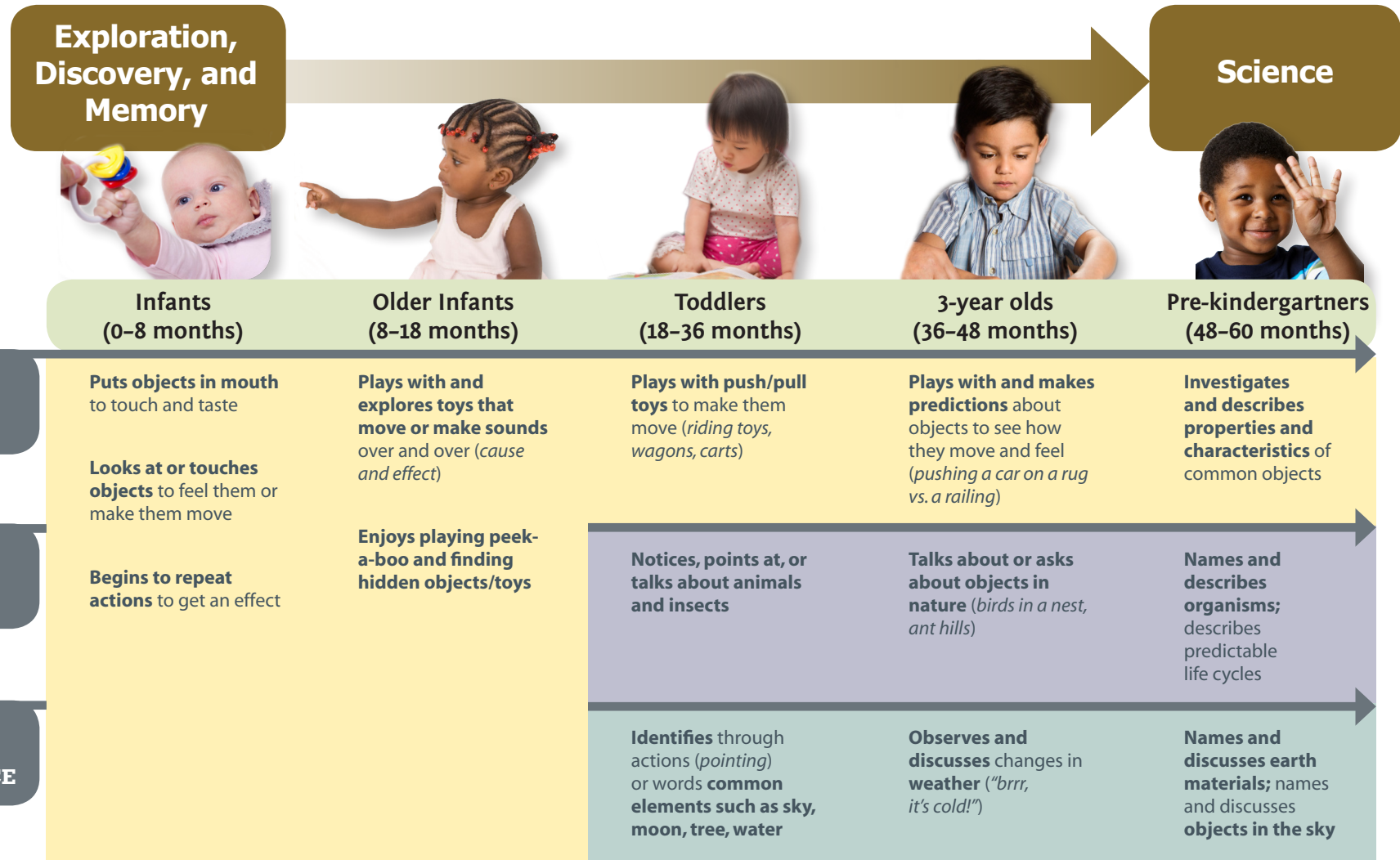
- Talk about different types of writing and how they are used (*“these directions help me put the toy together”*)
- Plan opportunities to write down what children say (*ask “what is your favorite food?” then write it down*)
- Provide writing tools in play centers (*signs in block center, lists in dramatic play, recording in a science center*)
- Create daily, routine opportunities for writing (*sign-in sheet, journal writing*)



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Ask parents to talk about and point out print and symbols during daily activities so their children can see how print is used; for example, a stop sign, street signs, restaurant names, or packaging.
- Talk with parents about keeping writing materials within reach as young children play at home.

# Pathways of Cognitive Development



For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.

## Supporting the Pathway of Exploration, Discovery, and Memory to Science

Science is all about exploration, discovery, and experience. Young children have a natural curiosity about the world around them. Infants touch things and put things in their mouths as a way of exploring. Caregivers help sharpen young children's scientific thinking skills by making it possible for them to indulge in their natural curiosity and by talking about the physical world with them, and how they use their senses of sight, taste, smell, touch and sound as tools of exploration.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- Provide objects and toys with different shapes, textures, and sounds and talk about what they are exploring
- Go on walks and talk about items in nature (“Oh, the sun is shining today!”)
- Play peek-a-boo to show that things are still there even if they don't see it (*object permanence*)



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- Provide toys and objects that make noise or move when played with (*pop-up toys*)
- Provide opportunities for safe exploration of water, dirt, sand, and grass
- Read books about and talk about animals and how to be around, and play with them, safely and carefully
- Talk about changes in the weather



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- Allow toddlers to touch and feel objects, indoors and outdoors, within rules of safety
- Read books about animals (many children are naturally curious about animals) and talk about their lives: where they live, what they eat, what kinds of sounds they make, and many other observable characteristics
- Provide toys (rolling pins, sand, water tables) that require children to push, pull, pour, and scoop, and talk about what these toys do and how they differ



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- Notice when children show an interest in the natural world and encourage further exploration (*use a magnifying glass, use all off their senses*)
- Set up a place for plants; observe and talk about how they grow
- Stimulate curiosity about the sky: how the weather changes; the motion and traits of the sun, moon, and stars; share observations and ask children what they see



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- Make a habit of asking children to use their five senses—make, share, and record observations
- Ask questions that might lead to simple experiments (*for example, what objects sink or float?*) and talk about the results
- Read books about the Earth and space

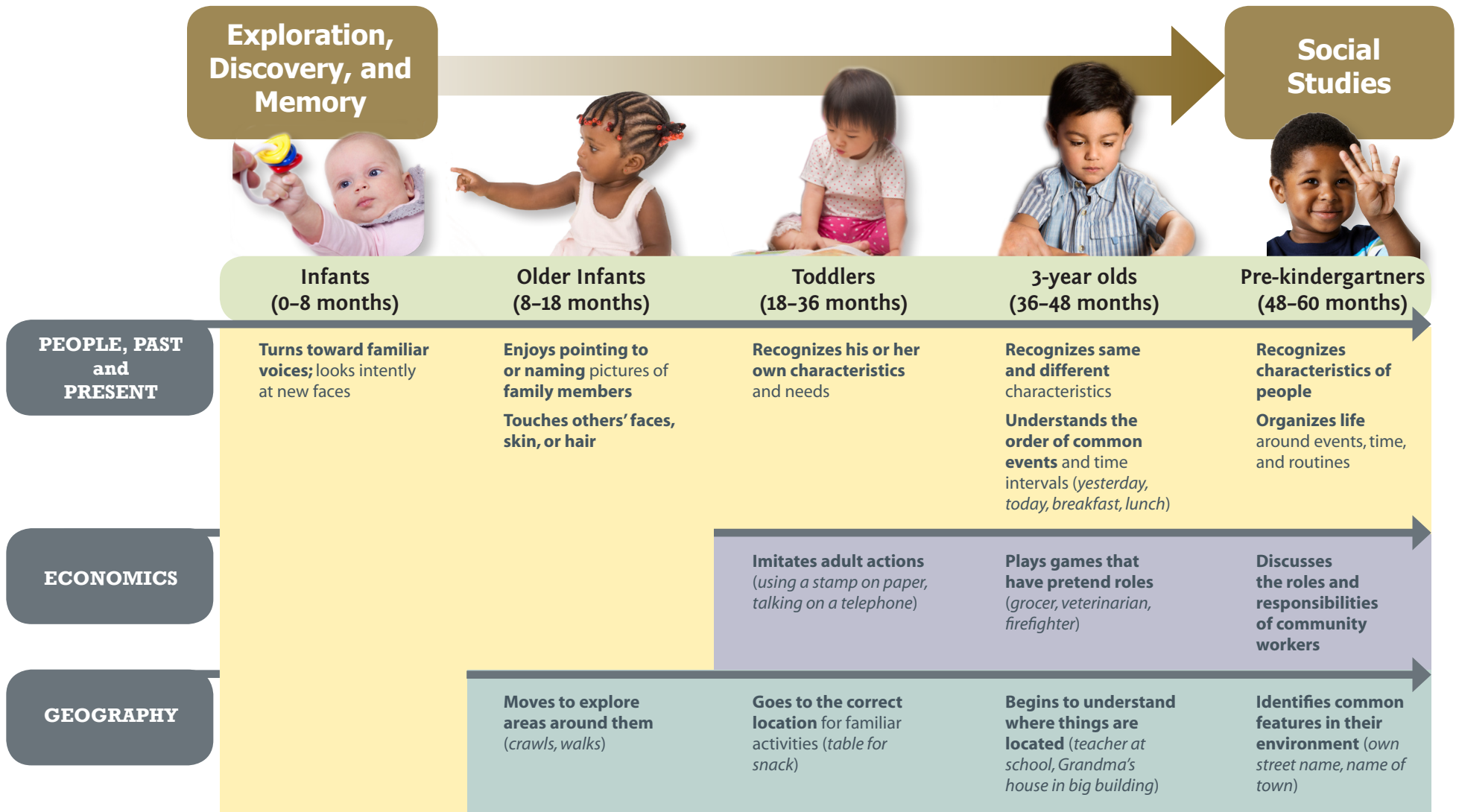


### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Talk with parents about how children learn through exploration and how they can encourage that at home and in the community.
- Create take-home activities that encourage children's scientific thinking.



# Pathways of Cognitive Development



For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.

## Supporting the Pathway of Exploration, Discovery, and Memory to Social Studies

Very young children learn about people, how they connect and what they do, and where they live and work through experiences and opportunities in their daily lives. Later, children expand on their knowledge of the people and places around them to understand the larger world and events that happened in the past. Caregivers help very young children build awareness of time by maintaining predictable routines and schedules.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Notice infants' reactions to new people and places and talk about it (*"This is Ava, my sister."*)



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Talk about people and places (*"We are going on a walk to the library."*)
- ❑ Highlight the end of an event (*clapping at the end of a song*)
- ❑ Talk about the daily routine (*"You just finished a bottle, now it's time for a nap."*)



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Introduce new places in the community and talk about what happens there and who works there
- ❑ Ask toddlers to name familiar people
- ❑ Explore surroundings and talk about how things are the same and different



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Tell stories about families and ask 3-year olds to draw pictures of their families
- ❑ Set up play areas for role-playing and play-along to introduce ideas and concepts (*grocery store, pet shop, hair salon*)
- ❑ Play games or tell stories about where people live and use location terms (*street, house, building, town, farm*)



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Read books about different places and use a simple picture map to point them out
- ❑ Discuss daily routines and events and post them using words and pictures (*put up a wall calendar to discuss date, weather today/compared to yesterday*)
- ❑ Assign helpers and talk about what they are doing (*"Jodi is doing a great job wiping the table!"*)



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Invite parents to share their family culture and traditions.
- Remind parents to talk about the different places they go to with their children (*church, grandparent's house, community center*).

# Pathways of Cognitive Development

Exploration,  
Discovery, and  
Problem Solving

Mathematics



**Infants  
(0–8 months)**

**Older Infants  
(8–18 months)**

**Toddlers  
(18–36 months)**

**3-year olds  
(36–48 months)**

**Pre-kindergartners  
(48–60 months)**

**CLASSIFICATION  
and  
PATTERNS**

Turns objects over to look at them and handle them from different positions

Stacks blocks or objects

Sorts/matches toys or objects that are alike

Sorts objects that are the same and different  
Copies simple patterns

Sorts objects and describes what makes them the same and different

Recognizes and creates patterns

**GEOMETRY  
and  
SPATIAL SENSE**

Plays with a shape sorter

Moves objects into different positions  
Turns puzzle pieces different ways to complete puzzle

Names basic shapes  
Begins to use some position words (*on top, under*)  
Completes simple puzzles

Names and creates common shapes  
Names and understands position words and concepts  
Completes puzzles and creates new shapes

**MEASUREMENT**

Enjoys taking objects in and out of containers

Understands size differences (*"too big" or "too small"*)  
Pours, scoops, and plays with sand and water

Can use tools to measure (*scoop water into bucket, string to determine length*)

Recognizes and compares amounts and lengths (*who is taller?, how much to fill bucket?*)

**NUMBER SENSE**

Asks to continue a game by signing or saying "more"

Counts objects while pointing to each one and saying number

Uses numbers and counting concepts in daily life (*can identify more or less when comparing two groups of objects*)

Can recite 1 to 30; counts 1–10 (*one-to-one correspondence*)  
Can use materials to add or subtract 1–5 (*"I have four blocks and add one more, now how many?"*)

For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.

## Supporting the Pathway of Exploration, Discovery, and Problem Solving to Mathematics

Recent research shows that even very young children have the ability to think mathematically. Very young children enjoy figuring out how to fit objects into matching spaces and older children use the same skills to put puzzles together. Caregivers who include playing with and talking about different shaped objects a part of the daily routine promote mathematical thinking. Very young children also have a natural sense about numbers and counting. For example, older infants understand the concept of “more” as it relates to food or play. They may say the word “more” or gesture. This early sense of more or less is related to more complicated mathematical thinking that is expected in older children such as adding, subtracting, fractions and more. There are a number of ways caregivers can strengthen these skills during play and routines.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Provide objects and toys of different shapes and sizes
- ❑ Use word such as “more” or “again” when interacting and playing



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Offer nesting, stacking, and sorting toys
- ❑ Name shapes while playing (“You found the round peg! Let’s find the square.”)
- ❑ Talk about the different ways you sort during daily activities (“I’m putting all the shoes on the mat and the bags in the cubby.”)
- ❑ Count out toys or other objects of interest



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Play games with shapes and name the shapes as you play (“Now I’m stepping on the triangle shape.”)
- ❑ Ask toddlers to do some simple sorting (“Let’s put the big cars in this box and little cars in this box.”)
- ❑ Measure children’s height on a chart they can see
- ❑ Practice counting during everyday activities (during snack time, count carrots as you put them on the plate)



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Play matching games
- ❑ Use position words (“Can you put the ball inside of the box?”)
- ❑ Do activities with simple patterns (use paper strips of different colors to glue on paper)
- ❑ Provide opportunities for using tools to measure, scoop, and pour
- ❑ Sing songs with numbers and counting (“Five Little Monkeys”)



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Sing and play to encourage pattern recognition (songs that include physical movements in order – clap, stomp, clap, stomp)
- ❑ Name and describe common shapes in your surroundings (circle, square, rectangle, triangle) and introduce new words (rhombus, trapezoid)
- ❑ Sing songs about positional words (Hokey Pokey)
- ❑ Ask children to count things out (“How many friends have their coats on?”)
- ❑ Model simple word problems or use models (“I have two cars and you have one car. How many if we put them together?”)



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Using storage containers of different sizes for stacking and nesting.
- Sort the laundry using different “rules” from day to day: today, sort by color, tomorrow, by owner; encourage children to be creative too—today, we sort by solids or patterns, tomorrow, by clothes worn on top or bottom of the body.
- Give parents a list of mathematical words they can use during daily activities (*more, less, bigger, smaller, equal*).
- Provide the lyrics to number and counting songs and remind parents to point when counting.

# Pathways of Cognitive Development

Imitation and Make Believe\*

Fine Arts



**Infants  
(0–8 months)**

**Older Infants  
(8–18 months)**

**Toddlers  
(18–36 months)**

**3-year olds  
(36–48 months)**

**Pre-kindergartners  
(48–60 months)**

**ART and  
FINE MOTOR**

**Explores materials with hands** (*bubbles, food on tray*)

**Reaches for drawing tools** (*crayons or chalk*)

**Grips drawing tools;** enjoys using “large” art materials (*finger painting, crayons, markers*)

**Creates art products using a variety of safe materials** (*drawing, pasting, finger painting, using play clay*)

**Uses art materials and expresses self through art**

**MUSIC and  
LISTENING**

**Turns toward sounds or music**

**Bangs on toys or instruments**  
**Gestures** (*claps hands*) **when hearing a familiar song**

**Sings or makes sounds** of simple songs  
**Moves to familiar songs**

**Sings songs**  
**Uses instruments** or items to keep rhythm

**Participates in music activities** and responds to music and movement

**DRAMATIC  
EXPRESSION and  
SOCIAL STUDIES**

**Copies caregiver actions** (*sticks out tongue, smiles*)

**Imitates adult action** (*waves bye-bye, pretend drinks from a cup*)

**Pretend plays and acts** (*uses banana for a phone, says “ah” after pretend drinking*)

**Reenacts routines** (*getting ready for bed*)  
**Pretend plays scenarios with different roles**

**Creates or recreates stories, moods, or experiences through dramatic play**

For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.

**\*Imitation and Make Believe and the Arts connect with many skills across domains including exploration, discovery, fine motor, listening, expression, and social studies.**



## Supporting the Pathway of Imitation and Make Believe to Fine Arts

The arts, play, and imagination link closely to many other skills areas including cognition, motivation, general knowledge, fine motor development, listening, and expression. Studies have shown that the arts contribute to student achievement and success in a number of ways. For example, researchers are exploring the ways that arts contribute to children's learning and success, including their abilities to focus attention, practice and persist, take pride in what they create, and work with others. By creating opportunities for the arts and pretend play, caregivers strengthen several skill areas.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- Provide opportunities for infants to look at different things; describe what they are seeing
- Use soft music, sounds, and movement to sooth infants who are fussy
- Follow infants' lead and play with them



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- Provide a variety of art materials
- Sing and dance together
- Play along with pretend play and talk about what's happening



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- Provide safe art materials (*crayons, large markers, play dough, finger paints*)
- Expose children to a variety of music and sounds (*singing, humming, instrumentals*); pair music with movement
- Notice and comment on pretend play (*"I see you feeding the baby. I bet she's hungry."*)



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- Provide time and materials for creating art
- Expose children to different types of music
- Set up pretend play scenarios and materials



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

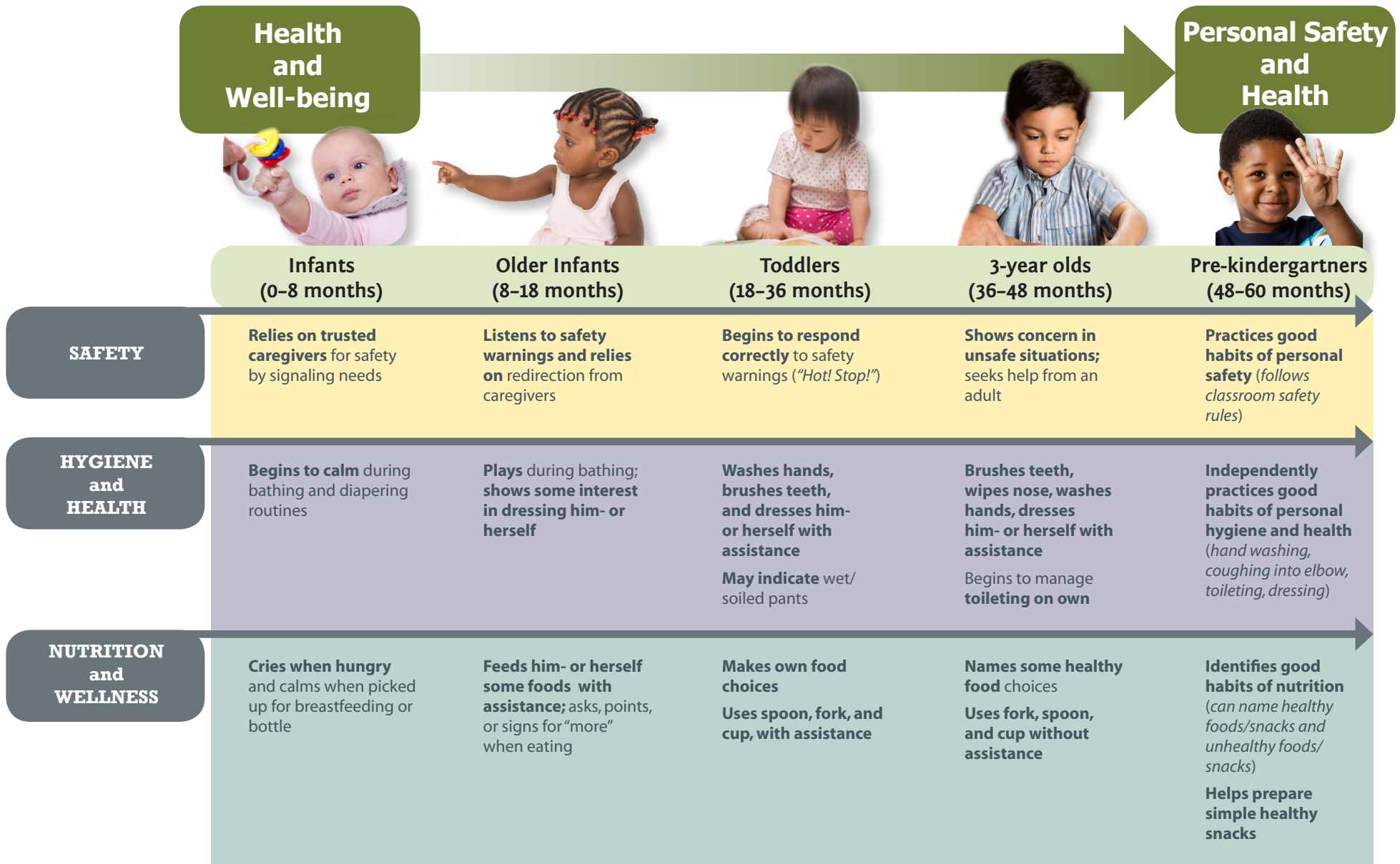
- Exhibit children's artwork and talk about it with them
- Provide music instruments and sing songs
- Play with toddlers using pretend roles and narrate their actions



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Show parents their children's artwork; encourage them to display it at home.
- Encourage parents to share traditional music or art with their children and with other children and caregivers at the center.
- Suggest play that encourages dramatic expression at home such as playing dress up or role-playing.

# Pathways of Physical Health and Motor Development



For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

Remember that skills can overlap across age ranges because children develop at their own rate.

## Supporting the Pathway of Health and Well-being to Personal Safety and Health

Helping children develop healthy routines—like choosing foods, exercising, and making safe choices—starts early. In the very beginning, infants rely completely on caregivers to provide for all of their health and safety needs. That's why caregivers must pay close attention to and respond to babies' cues. When older infants start to show eagerness to do some things on their own, like dressing themselves or using safe utensils, caregivers should provide opportunities for them to try. Most importantly, caregivers should talk about healthy and safe choices.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Be alert to infants' body language and signs; respond quickly and sensitively
- ❑ Talk with the infant about what they are doing when diapering, washing, dressing
- ❑ Follow infants' feeding signals (*turns head, pulls off bottle*)



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Provide guidance and model good health behaviors
- ❑ Discuss safety rules and behaviors; identify where and to whom children can go when they need assistance
- ❑ Allow children to eat independently using forks and spoons and choosing types and amounts of foods offered



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Provide safe and nutritious finger foods that the infant can tolerate
- ❑ Introduce "caution" words to begin to teach safety but be prepared to redirect older infants
- ❑ Allow older infants some opportunities to try to dress themselves (*put on socks or shirt with help*) and praise their efforts



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Model and discuss health and safety practices with children and give them plenty of time to practice
- ❑ Provide lots of time for active play and exercise
- ❑ Create activities for identifying healthy and not so healthy foods (*charts, collages*)



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Help toddlers with healthy self-care activities like hand washing and brushing teeth
- ❑ Provide healthy food options for toddlers to make choices
- ❑ Use caution words with toddlers; watch for understanding and reaction
- ❑ Support and encourage toddlers' efforts around self-help skills

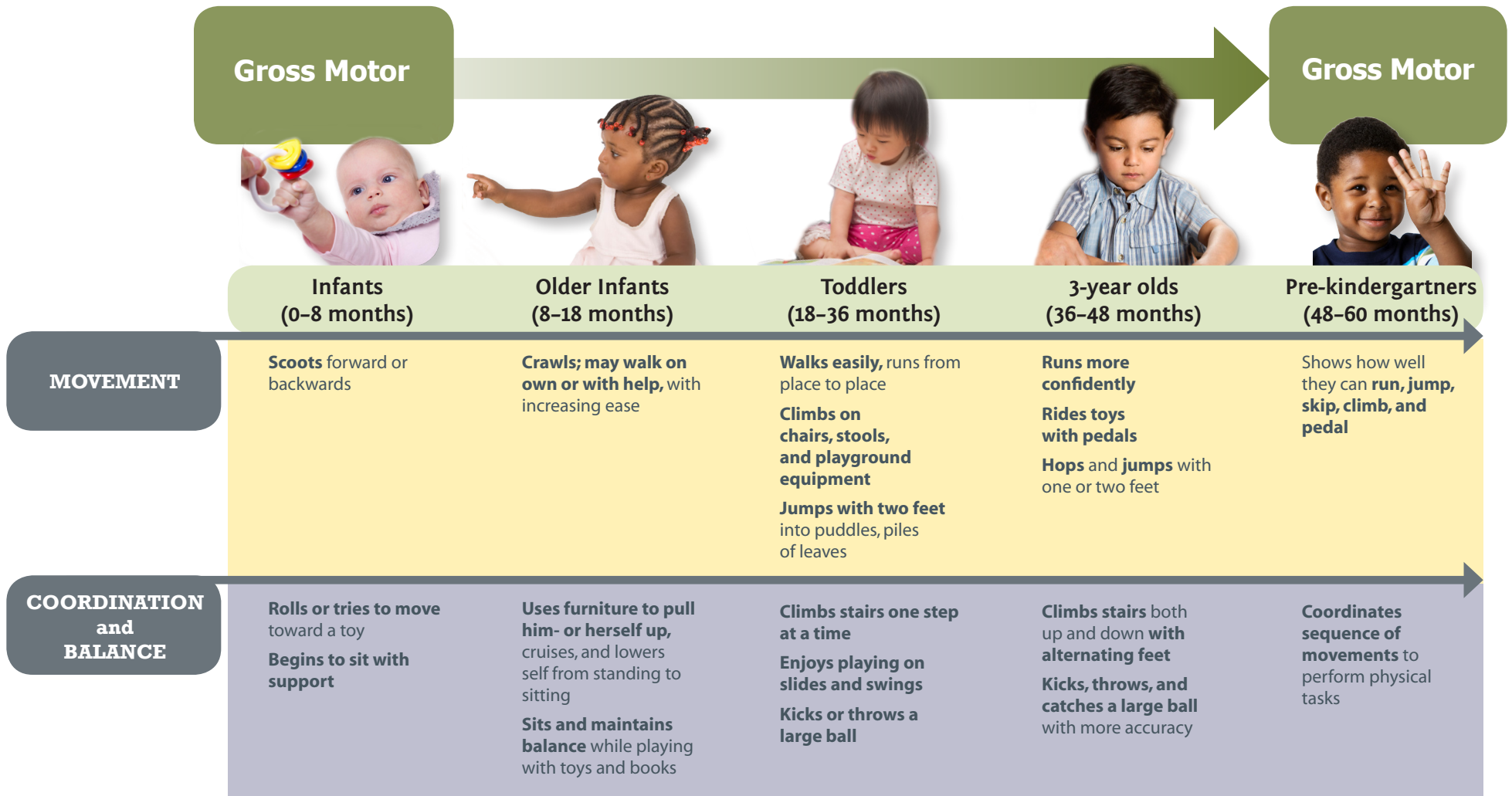


### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Give parents specific facts and guidance about the importance of good nutrition and healthy life styles.
- Invite parents to the center's safety education activities so that they can reinforce the same messages consistently at home.



# Pathways of Physical Health and Motor Development



For a more detailed chart of child skills and behaviors, visit the *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Revised Texas Pre-kindergarten Guidelines*: [www.earlylearningtexas.org](http://www.earlylearningtexas.org)

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## Supporting the Pathway to Gross Motor Development

Physical health and growth rely on the development of large or gross muscles. Children develop at different rates, but large muscle development happens in a typical sequence. For example, in general, children develop their neck muscles before they achieve control of their lower body. And usually, core muscles in the middle of the body develop before the arm and leg muscles. Caregivers should plan activities and environments that support large muscle development.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Give infants frequent, but short “tummy time” while staying close and notice when they begin to lift the neck and head
- ❑ Provide toys just out of reach to encourage children to move toward them
- ❑ Hold infants close in your lap to help them achieve balance



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Interact and play with older infants while they are sitting
- ❑ Let children play in a variety of indoor and outdoor environments (*steps, grass*) to support movement
- ❑ Notice when older infants begin trying to pull themselves up to stand; encourage their effort by placing objects in safe, stable spaces that require children to stand to reach them



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Play with toddlers inside and outside so they can practice running, jumping, and climbing
- ❑ Encourage toddlers to play on safe equipment (*climbing areas, play castles, swing sets*)
- ❑ Create scenarios and situations where toddlers can play actively with their peers



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Play games and sing songs that include large movement and exercise (*Hokey Pokey*)
- ❑ Provide riding toys for 3-year olds to exercise their large (gross) muscles



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

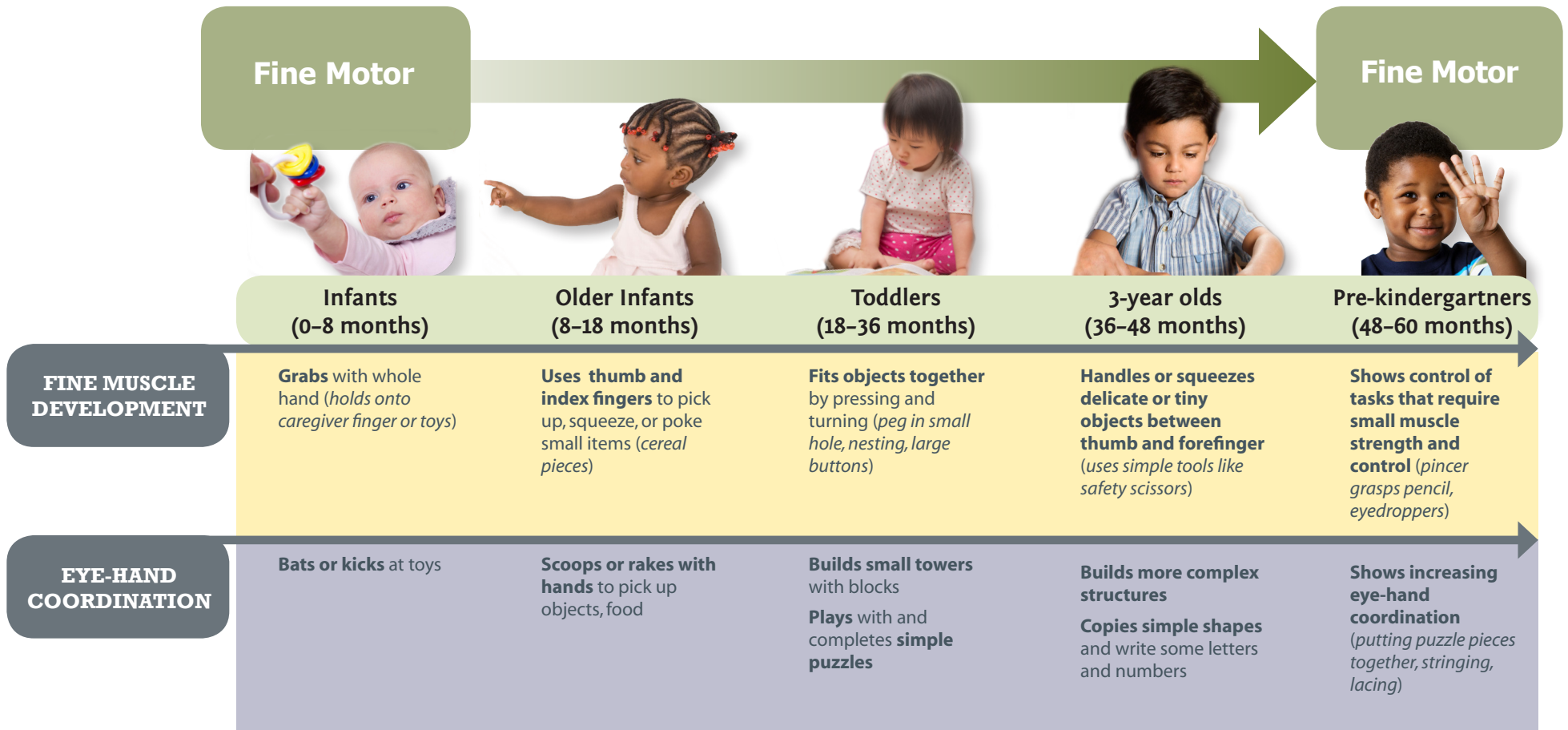
- ❑ Play games that require coordination (*Red Light, Green Light or Freeze Tag*)
- ❑ Provide outdoor equipment to practice skills like throwing, catching, and kicking



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Create family fun days where friends and family members can join in active play (*at a playground or park*).
- Tell parents what kinds of activities support large (gross) muscle development (*playing with blocks while older infants are sitting; playing active games with three and four year olds*).

# Pathways of Physical Health and Motor Development



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## Supporting the Pathway Fine Motor Development

Generally, children develop larger muscles before smaller muscles. For example, a child may be able to grasp a larger object using the whole hand (called a palmer grasp) before being able to use the thumb and forefinger to pick up smaller objects (called the pincer grasp). Children use and develop small muscles when they reach, grasp, button, color, and turn pages in a book. Young children need lots of practice using these muscles. Caregivers should plan for frequent fine motor development activities to build those small muscles and increase their precision.

### When working with infants (birth–8 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Allow infants to grab and hold caregiver's finger
- ❑ Hold and move infants' feet and hands when playing active games like "patty cake" and "peek-a-boo"
- ❑ Move objects of interest slightly and notice infants' eye movements



### When working with older infants (8–18 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Provide toys or safe household items for older infants to grab, hold, shake, and bang
- ❑ Provide toys like nesting cups and 2-3 piece wooden puzzles
- ❑ Offer cloth or board books with various textures that pique older infants' curiosity, exploration, and experience using their fine motor skills



### When working with toddlers (18–36 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Use stacking and nesting toys while playing with toddlers; ask them to build higher and higher
- ❑ Notice and encourage toddlers when they try to button and zip
- ❑ Let toddlers play with art materials (*string, paper, crayons, chalk*)



### When working with 3-year olds (36–48 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Include tongs, clothespins, and containers in the toy area so that 3-year olds can practice picking up small objects and dropping them in boxes, bowls, and cans
- ❑ Plan art activities that allow children practice cutting shapes; provide safety scissors, paper, writing materials, and glue
- ❑ Encourage 3-year olds to dress themselves and use safe utensils and celebrate success



### When working with pre-kindergartners (48–60 months), caregivers can...

- ❑ Include manipulative tools (*tongs, eyedroppers, linking cubes, writing materials*) in activity centers
- ❑ Plan activities that build small muscle strength (*torn paper collages, cookie cutters for play dough, painting*)
- ❑ Plan activities that strengthen eye-hand coordination (*stringing necklaces, weaving*)



### TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PARENTS

- Make parents partners in your efforts to build children's fine muscles; tell them how you help their children play and practice with reaching, grabbing, and holding.
- Create a take-home activity packet and ask parents to try it out with their older children. A manila envelope with supplies for making a macaroni necklace can serve as a perfect take-home activity designed to strengthen fine muscles.







