

Your
18-20
Month-Old
Child



School Readiness Program
Provided by the WIC Program and First 5 LA

Yes! And No!

I LOVE TO TALK. Most children say at least 20 words by the time they are 20 months old. Often, a child's favorite word is "NO." You may not understand all of the words your child says. They may be combining two words into sentences. They probably understand hundreds of words.

I CAN RUN, CLIMB and JUMP. Your 18-20 month-old is walking, running, climbing and jumping! (And you are chasing!) Your child probably still walks with legs wide apart and arms spread to help balance.

I LIKE TO BE AROUND OTHER CHILDREN. Your child is beginning to be interested in other children, but needs help learning how to play. It's too soon to introduce them to screen time. Let children play and explore together in a safe space while you lend a hand. **HINT: Put down your phone.**



READ READ READ! Reading should be fun. Let your child help decide what you read and how much you read. Let your child turn pages. Talk to your child about what is in the pictures. Most children only pay attention for short times. Don't worry if you do not finish the book. Your child learns best when reading is fun for both of you. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

Look inside for more information about talking, movements, and friendships of 18-20 month-old children.

Try this!

You can repeat words to your child, saying them correctly. For example, if your child says, “Bah,” for BALL, you can say, “Yes, that’s a BALL.” This way, you are teaching them that you understand. The more they feel understood, the more they will want to talk. You are also showing them the right way to say the word. If you tell them that the word is wrong, they maybe less willing to try new words.

QUESTION: My child says a lot of words in baby talk. How can I teach my child to say the words correctly?

ANSWER: When children are first learning to talk, the words do not sound like adult words. Some sounds are very hard to learn to say. Even many five-year-olds still have trouble with the “R” sound and “L” sound. You probably understand your child better than other adults understand your child.

QUESTION: What language should I speak to my child?

ANSWER: Children who learn more than one language gain something that will help them through their whole lives. If you speak more than one language, talk to your child in all of the languages you know. Or, you can speak one language and someone else can speak another language. Also, sing to them in all of the languages you know. Talk, talk, talk!

QUESTION: My child says “NO” all day long. What should I do?

ANSWER: Saying “NO” is part of normal development, but not always a fun part of development. This is a time when children learn that they can make choices. Your child is not trying to make you mad. 18–20 month-old children want to control what happens to them. They prove it by saying, “NO.” This is a sign of growing up. You can decide when to accept a “NO” and when not to accept a “NO.”



Try this!

Sometimes you can give your child a choice. For example, if your child says, “NO” when you are trying to dress him, you can say, “Do you want to wear the red shirt or the yellow shirt?” This gives your child some control. Sometimes your child cannot have a choice. Taking medicine that a doctor has prescribed is not your child’s choice. You can say, “Even though you do not want the medicine, you need to take it so that you will be healthy.” This shows your child that you understand the “NO,” and explains why you cannot give in to your child’s wish. The good news is that children grow out of saying “NO” to everything.

QUESTION: What if my child is not talking yet?

ANSWER: By 20 months, most children say at least 20 words. If your child is not talking yet, watch and see how they respond to you. When you ask them a question, do they understand you? When you smile, do they smile back at you? Do they give you a toy, then wait for you to give it back? Do they hear you come into the room? If your child seems not to respond to you, **ask your doctor.** If your child needs extra help, it is best to get the help as early as possible. There are special programs for helping children, even very young children.

QUESTION: How coordinated should my 18-20 month-old be?

ANSWER: 18-20 month-old children walk more smoothly. They walk with their tummy out and shoulders back. They can walk backwards, sideways, and can even run. Children this age can jump. When they want to pick up a toy, they can bend down and pick it up. They are beginning to walk up stairs with help. Even though your child may seem to have better balance now, make sure that your child can't get to the stairs without an adult close by.



QUESTION: Should my child be using forks, spoons and crayons?

ANSWER: Your 18-20 month-old is getting better at using fingers and hands. Children this age still love to eat small pieces of food that are easy to pick up with their fingers, but are also starting to use a spoon or fork, and drink from a cup. They also like to fit objects inside of each other (stacking cups, shape-sorters, puzzles). Scribbling with a crayon helps a child's fingers grow strong. Scribbles will not look like letters, but scribbling will help them write in Kindergarten.

QUESTION: My child sometimes tells me when his diaper is wet or messy. When should my child start using the toilet?

ANSWER: Children who are trained to use the toilet before they are 2 years old are more likely to still have accidents when they are 4. Waiting until your child is really ready will make it easier for both of you. Your next handout (Handout J for 21-23 month-olds) will include ideas about using the toilet.

Try this!

Playgrounds are more and more fun now that your child can move around more easily. Many children love slides and swings and sandboxes. Talk about everything you and your child do. Swings and slides are great places to talk about opposites such as up and down, back and forth, high and low, come and go, close and far. Use those words to tell your child what is happening as you play with your child on the swing or slide. Bring a ball and be ready to chase it. Your child will love throwing balls, but probably cannot catch yet. When you run after the ball, say "Look how far you threw the ball! I'm getting closer and closer and closer and closer and closer ..."
Children love hearing the same word repeated. If you sound excited, your child will be excited too!

Be careful! Because 18-20 month-olds are so active, playgrounds can have dangers. Make sure that someone catches them at the bottom of the slide; your child is too little to go down a slide alone. Your child may love to swing, but will not understand how to be safe near swings.

Try this!

Draw with your child. Do not worry about drawing something that looks real. The scribbles are what they will enjoy. Many 18-month-old children scribble in a circular motion. It will not look like a circle, but it will look round. By 20 months, your child may be able to copy your drawing of a line up and down.

Try this!

Bring enough spoons and plastic cups to the sandbox for all of the children. Don't worry. In a few months your child will learn to share.

QUESTION: Is my child old enough to play with other children?

ANSWER: 18–20 month-olds are very interested in other children. They want to be around other children. They play near each other, but not with each other. This is called “parallel play.” If the other child is building a tower, your child may build a tower. If your child fills a bucket with sand, the other child may fill a bucket with sand. They are not old enough to share toys, but they like to do what other children are doing.

18–20 month-old children do not know how to be friends yet. Some days they might play really well. Other days, they may bite, pull hair, or hit other children. They are not being mean. They do not understand that it hurts when they hit or bite.

Some parents bite or hit their child back because they want their child to learn that these hurt. Doctors say that you should not hit or bite your child back. Biting or hitting them teaches them that bigger people are allowed to hurt smaller people.



Try this!

Move the biter or hitter away from the other child. Tell them that hitting or biting hurts and that they cannot play with other children until they stop. When the children are together again, stay close and try to stop a bite or hit before it happens.

QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for 18–20 month-old children?

ANSWER: You are more important than any toy. **READ** to your child every day. **PLAY** on the floor with them every day. Cuddle them every day. And **TALK** and **SING** in every language you know!

Your child will enjoy fitting things into each other. Stacking cups, shape-sorters, and simple puzzles are still great toys for this age. Crayons, playdough, and other art supplies give your child a chance to practice new finger skills and see how they can create. Your child won't be able to make a craft that you can recognize, but will have fun painting and playing with colors.



Any media use should be very limited and only when an adult is standing by to co-view, talk, and teach. Remember, screen time includes TV, cell phones, computers, tablets, and other hand-held games and devices.

Safety Corner



There are so many fun things to discover and explore in the playground. Most playground injuries come from falls.

Tips to consider:

Before Play:

- Make sure the playground equipment is appropriate for your child's age.
- Look for sharp edges, loose or broken screws on playground equipment.

During Play:

- Watch your child carefully. Accidents can happen quickly! Put down your phone.
- Teach your child playground behavior such as no pushing or shoving.
- Keep children under 5 years old in a play area away from older children.



First 5 LA

First 5 LA is a child advocacy and grant making organization created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues in programs for improving the lives of children from prenatal through age 5 in Los Angeles County. First 5 LA champions health, education and safety causes concerning young children and families. For more information, please visit www.first5la.org.



The WIC Program

WIC provides nutrition and health education services, breastfeeding support, referrals to community agencies and healthy food to eligible women, infants and children under age five. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For more information, please visit www.wicworks.ca.gov.