



MONTESSORI BABIES COURSE: BIRTH – 2 YEARS DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDE

A gentle guide to understanding your baby's development, following their lead, and supporting them from birth through toddlerhood.

How to Use This Guide

Your baby is growing and changing so quickly, and it can be hard to know what to look for or what might come next. This quick-reference guide is here to make that feel a little easier.

Rather than focusing too much on exact ages, this guide follows your baby through different stages of development. Every baby develops in their own way and in their own time, so you may notice your child moving between stages or working on skills from more than one stage at once. That's totally ok.

Start with the stage that feels most like your baby right now. Notice what they're interested in, how they're moving, how they're communicating, and what they seem to be working on. From there, you can explore the materials and experiences in that section for ideas to support their development.

A little reminder: Read ahead to get a sense of what may be coming next and how you can support your baby along the way. Please keep in mind, you do not need to do everything in this guide. It isn't a checklist, and there is no perfect Montessori timeline to follow.

While your baby is growing, you are growing too. You're learning about who they are and what they need, as you discover who you are as a Mama.

Give yourself patience, grace, and time as you grow into this new version of yourself.

A Simple Way to Think About It

Observe → Reflect → React = Following Your Child

Watch your baby. Notice what they're curious about and what they're working on. Create a space that supports them, introduce simple opportunities to explore, and let their response guide you.

You don't need to rush ahead or constantly introduce something new. Sometimes the best thing you can do is simply give your child more time with what they already love.

You know your baby best. This guide is simply here to help you understand what you're seeing and feel more confident supporting what comes next.

Every child's developmental journey is their own. If you ever have questions about your child's development, please consult your pediatrician. 



EXPERIENCES ACROSS ALL DEVELOPMENTAL AREAS

Art & Creative Expression

Newborn: Beautiful artwork at the child's visual level; music; singing; dance/movement with caregiver.

Non-Mobile Baby: Music; rhythm; safe instruments; movement to music.

Mobile Baby: Rhythm instruments; dancing; songs with movement; opportunities for beginning mark-making as readiness emerges.

Walking Toddler: Crayons; chalk; painting; clay/dough; collage; gluing; music; instruments; creative movement; open-ended art exploration

Nature & The Real World

Newborn: Outdoor time; natural light; fresh air; trees; weather; sounds of nature.

Non-Mobile Baby: Outdoor exploration of grass, leaves, flowers, safe natural objects; observing animals; outdoor floor time.

Mobile Baby: Outdoor movement; natural terrain; collecting natural objects; plant care; observing animals; water/sand/soil experiences.

Walking Toddler: Gardening; watering plants; collecting leaves/rocks; observing insects; observing animals; weather; seasons; food origins; community outings; transportation; family traditions; real-world cultural experiences.

The Birth – 2 Developmental Sequence

I am discovering who I am and how I relate to the world around me.

NEWBORN

I am adapting to my world.

The prepared environment primarily supports security, attachment, sensory organization, freedom of movement and the absorption of language.

NON-MOBILE BABY

I am discovering my world.

The child increasingly reaches, grasps, communicates, experiments and intentionally interacts with people and objects.

MOBILE BABY

I can explore my world.

Mobility dramatically expands the child's developmental work. The environment supports exploration, problem-solving, language, coordination and emerging independence.

WALKING TODDLER

I can participate in my world.

With increasing mobility and coordination, the child's hands become available for purposeful work. Practical Life, language, increasingly coordinated movement, problem-solving, autonomy and participation in family life become central.

Across every stage: Observe first. Follow the child. Prepare the environment for what the child is working to master now while also anticipating what your child will need next.

Every child has their own beautiful developmental journey.



NEWBORN (Birth – 2 months)

Gross & Fine Motor Development

Developmental Focus

- Transition from reflexive to increasingly voluntary movement
- Freedom of movement
- Head and neck control
- Bringing hands toward midline
- Visual tracking paired with head movement
- Emerging purposeful reaching
- Increasing awareness of the body

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Movement mat → Building strength through unrestricted floor movement
- Low horizontal mirror
- Munari mobile
- Octahedron mobile
- Gobbi mobile
- Dancers mobile
- Simple tactile mobiles
- Black-and-white/high-contrast images
- Low artwork or photographs
- Lightweight grasping ring as reaching emerges
- OBall, teethingers, and other soft grasping toys once intentional reaching has emerged

Language and Communication Development

Developmental Focus

- Orientation toward the human voice
- Auditory discrimination
- Recognition of familiar voices
- Early reciprocal communication
- Crying and body movement as communication
- Cooing
- Eye contact
- Beginning conversational turn-taking
- Absorption of the sounds and rhythm of spoken language

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Face-to-face conversation (serve & return)
- Sportscasting
- Rich, natural spoken language
- Songs
- Lullabies
- Rhymes
- Poetry
- Books - read aloud (all types)
- Realistic images
- Family photographs
- Intentional pauses allowing your newborn an opportunity to respond



Cognitive Development

Developmental Focus

- Alertness and attention
- Visual tracking
- Recognition of familiar people, voices and routines
- Beginning anticipation
- Early cause-and-effect experiences
- Building memory through repetition
- Integration of sensory information

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Montessori visual mobiles
- High-contrast cards/images
- Mirror
- Predictable caregiving routines
- Simple repeated songs and games
- Opportunities to observe the household
- Slowly moving visual objects
- Natural household sounds

Social-Emotional Development

Developmental Focus

- Attachment
- Security and trust
- Co-regulation
- Recognition of caregivers
- Expression of needs
- Early reciprocal interaction
- Developing expectations of the environment
- Beginning awareness of self and others

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Topponcino
- Consistent caregivers
- Responsive caregiving
- Skin-to-skin contact
- Face-to-face interaction
- Predictable routines
- Respectful diapering
- Respectful dressing
- Responsive feeding
- Slow transitions
- Verbal preparation before touching or moving the baby
- Unhurried periods of connection

Sensory & Perceptual Development

Developmental Focus

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Visual contrast | • Smell |
| • Visual tracking | • Taste |
| • Auditory localization | • Vestibular awareness |
| • Touch | • Proprioceptive awareness |
| • Temperature | • Integration of sensory experiences |



Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Munari mobile
- Octahedron mobile
- Gobbi mobile
- Dancers mobile
- High-contrast images
- Mirror
- Natural light
- Outdoor time
- Natural fabrics
- Bare feet/hands when appropriate
- Gentle exposure to ordinary household sounds
- Opportunities to experience different safe surfaces and positions

Montessori Practical Life & Independence

Developmental Focus

- Developing trust in caregiving routines
- Beginning awareness of predictable sequences
- Participating through gaze, movement and body cues
- Experiencing respectful care
- Building the foundation for later independence through sportscasting

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Consistent diapering area
- Organized dressing area
- Prepared feeding environment
- Accessible clothing and care supplies for the adult
- Predictable sleep routines
- Narration during caregiving
- Pausing before transitions
- Inviting participation during dressing and diapering



NON-MOBILE BABY (3–6 months)

Fine & Gross Motor Development

Developmental Focus

- Purposeful reaching
- Grasping
- Releasing
- Hand-to-hand transfer
- Bringing objects to the mouth
- Rolling
- Pivoting
- Pushing through the arms
- Developing core strength
- Coordinating both sides of the body
- Preparing for independent sitting and mobility
- Refining hand-eye coordination

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Movement mat/area
- Low mirror
- Bell on ribbon
- Ring on ribbon
- Montessori tactile mobiles
- Grasping ring
- Interlocking discs
- Grasping beads
- Lightweight rattles
- Cylindrical rattles
- Fabric or textured balls
- Easy-to-grasp household objects
- Basket of Known Objects with categorized items as appropriate
- Rolling objects placed slightly out of reach

Language & Communication Development

Developmental Focus

- Babbling
- Vocal experimentation
- Sound imitation
- Responding to familiar voices
- Emerging response to name
- Increasing receptive language
- Beginning understanding of familiar words
- Reciprocal vocalization
- Connecting spoken words with objects and experiences
- Using gaze, sounds and body movements to intentionally communicate

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

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|---|-----------------|
| • Realistic board books | • Songs |
| • Family photo book | • Fingerplays |
| • Photographs of familiar objects | • Rhymes |
| • Real objects for naming | • Simple poetry |
| • Animal figures paired with real animal language | • Naming games |



Cognitive Development

Developmental Focus

- Cause and effect
- Beginning object permanence
- Intentional action
- Repetition
- Anticipating outcomes
- Searching visually for objects
- Exploring physical properties
- Understanding that actions produce results
- Increasing attention and concentration

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Grasping materials
- Rattles
- Bell on ribbon
- Cause-and-effect materials
- Partially hidden objects
- Tissue box with scarves
- Peekaboo games
- Containers with objects
- Treasure baskets
- Balls
- Simple household objects with different functions
- Early object permanence experiences

Social-Emotional Development

Developmental Focus

- Secure attachment
- Social smiling
- Reciprocal interaction
- Social referencing
- Recognition of familiar/unfamiliar people
- Increasing agency
- Expression of preferences
- Secure-base exploration
- Co-regulation

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Mirror
- Family photographs
- Predictable routines
- Face-to-face games
- Songs involving names/body parts
- Floor time with caregiver nearby
- Opportunities for independent concentration without interruption
- Responsive communication
- Respectful transitions
- Opportunities to reach toward or select between two appropriate objects



Sensory & Perceptual Development

Developmental Focus

- Exploring objects through the mouth and hands
- Texture discrimination
- Weight
- Shape
- Temperature
- Sound
- Visual depth
- Color
- Three-dimensional exploration

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Treasure baskets/Basket of Known Objects (Soft/safe)
- Wooden objects
- Metal objects
- Fabric squares
- Natural-fiber materials
- Textured balls
- Safe household objects
- Wooden rattles
- Metal rattles/bells
- Developmentally safe natural objects
- Objects of different weights, shapes and textures
- O-ball

Practical Life & Independence

Developmental Focus

- Increasing participation in caregiving “Can you hold? Thank you!” “Would you like __ or __”
- Emerging participation in feeding
- Reaching for food or feeding materials as readiness emerges
- Beginning to hold feeding implements as appropriate
- Participating in dressing
- Anticipating routines
- Beginning to offer directed choices

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Weaning table/chair (when starting solid food introduction and sitting stably)
- Supportive high chair with appropriate positioning for solid food introduction that pulls up to table for meal inclusion (Tripp-Trapp)
- Small open cup (6 mo + or when you start solids)
- Small spoon
- Child-sized bowl/plate
- Bib accessible before meals
- Finger foods
- Dressing participation
- Low basket for personal belongings
- Predictable mealtime routines



Sitting, Slithering, Crawling, Cruising Baby (6 mo – 12 mo)

Gross Motor Development

Developmental Focus

- Independent sitting
- Transitioning in/out of sitting
- Slithering/commando crawling
- Crawling/creeping
- Pulling to stand
- Cruising
- Emerging independent standing
- Moving across different surfaces
- Emerging Climbing

Montessori Materials & Experiences

- Large open floor space
- Low mirror
- Pull-up bar
- Stable low furniture
- Low shelves
- Sturdy ottoman/step
- Climbing cushions
- Low stairs with supervision
- Balls
- Pickler Triangle (supervised)
- Rolling toys
- Push objects once ready
- Baskets positioned around the environment
- Carrying objects while moving

Fine Motor Development

Developmental Focus

- From whole hand grasping to pincer grasp
- Intentional release
- Bilateral coordination
- Increasing precision

Montessori Materials & Experiences

- Containers for putting in/taking out
- Ring stacker
- Peg materials
- Simple puzzles
- Shape-fitting materials
- Object permanence box

Language & Communication Development

Developmental Focus

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Rapid receptive-language growth | • Sound imitation |
| • Understanding familiar words | • First words emerge |
| • Following simple requests | • Naming familiar people and objects |
| • Gesturing | • Body-part vocabulary |
| • Pointing | • Action vocabulary |
| • Joint attention | • Connecting language to experiences |



Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Classified objects
- Baskets of real objects
- Realistic animal figures
- Object baskets organized by category
- Realistic board books
- Family/familiar-person photo books
- Body-part songs
- Object-naming games
- Simple language cards/photos
- Songs and rhymes
- Objects paired with photographs when ready

Cognitive Development

Developmental Focus

- Object permanence
- Means-end problem solving
- Trial and error
- Cause and effect
- Spatial relationships
- Understanding containers
- Intentional posting
- Opening and closing
- Beginning categorization
- Increasing working memory
- Increased moments of concentration

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Object permanence box with tray
- Object permanence box with drawer
- Ball drop
- Coin box with large, appropriately sized disks
- Containers with lids
- Opening/closing baskets
- Putting-in/taking-out activities
- Ring stacker
- Peg materials
- Simple knob puzzles
- Shape-fitting puzzles
- Nesting objects
- Object-to-object matching as readiness emerges
- Basket of Known Objects organized by category



Social-Emotional Development

Developmental Focus

- Secure-base exploration
- Increasing autonomy
- Separation anxiety and awareness
- Expressing preferences
- Beginning awareness of limits
- Tolerating brief frustration
- Developing persistence
- Peer awareness
- Joint attention
- Beginning imitation of social behavior
- Co-regulation

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Setting simple, consistent limits
- Low accessible shelves
- Limited meaningful choices
- Consistent places for belongings
- Predictable routines
- Mirror
- Family photographs
- Songs/games involving turn-taking
- Opportunities to participate in household routines
- Uninterrupted work/exploration periods
- Simple, consistent limits
- Opportunities to “work through” before adult intervention. For example, when trying to accomplish a task on their own, let them try before jumping in.

Sensory & Perceptual Development

Developmental Focus

- Visual discrimination
- Shape
- Size
- Weight
- Texture
- Sound
- Temperature
- Spatial awareness
- Depth perception
- Proprioception
- Vestibular development

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Basket of Known Objects | • Outdoor sensory exploration |
| • Balls of different sizes/textures | • Water experiences |
| • Wooden/metal/fabric objects | • Natural objects |
| • Nesting objects (cups) | • Different safe floor surfaces |
| • Simple shape sorters | • Climbing opportunities |
| • Ring stackers | • Music and movement |



Practical Life & Independence

Developmental Focus

- Self-feeding
- Increasing independence drinking from an open cup
- Using utensils
- Carrying objects
- Beginning to put objects away
- Participating in dressing
- Removing simple clothing
- Participating in handwashing
- Beginning participation in wiping spills
- Beginning care of environment
- Increasing participation in family routines
- Stand-up diapering (once baby is stably standing while holding something)
- Familiarization with the toilet/toileting environment

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Weaning table/chair
- Open cup
- Small pitcher
- Small spoon
- Child-sized plate/bowl
- Placemat
- Small cloth for wiping spills
- Low basket for laundry
- Pull-up bar for stand-up diapering
- Low hooks
- Accessible clothing basket
- Small cleaning cloth
- Low shelf for dishes
- Child-accessible handwashing setup
- Low toilet in environment and offer when stand-up diapering



The Walking Toddler (Around 12 months – 24 months)

Gross Motor Development

Developmental Focus

- Refining independent walking
- Walking while carrying objects
- Pushing and pulling
- Squatting and returning to standing
- Running
- Climbing
- Emerging stair navigation with support
- Throwing
- Kicking
- Balance and equilibrium
- Coordinating whole-body movements
- Increasing strength and stability
- Spatial awareness during movement

Montessori Materials & Experiences

- Push wagon
- Pull toys
- Balls of various sizes
- Opportunities for stair practice with support
- Low climbing structures
- Balance beam or other balance opportunities
- Carrying baskets
- Carrying appropriately weighted objects
- Outdoor walking and exploration
- Opportunities to run
- Throwing and kicking games
- Pushing or pulling appropriately weighted objects
- Movement songs and games

Fine Motor Development

Developmental Focus

- Increasing hand and finger strength
- Refining grasp and release
- Developing pincer grasp and fingertip control
- Increasing wrist control
- Coordinating both hands together
- Developing hand-eye coordination
- Crossing the midline
- Refining precision and controlled movement
- Manipulating small objects
- Opening and closing
- Twisting and turning
- Threading
- Transferring objects between containers
- Pouring
- Using tools with increasing control
- Developing foundational movements for later writing
- Increasing independence with practical handwork



Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Posting activities
- Peg work
- Ring threading
- Large bead threading
- Simple puzzles
- Opening and closing containers
- Locks and latches
- Nuts and bolts/twisting materials
- Dry transfer work — hand transferring, spooning, scooping, and tonging
- Wet transfer work — pouring and transferring water
- Pouring between pitchers
- Using funnels
- Simple droppers or pipettes as readiness emerges
- Simple tongs
- Using spoons and scoops
- Large crayons
- Chalk
- Finger painting
- Paintbrush and paint
- Water painting
- Stamping
- Dot markers
- Play dough or clay
- Rolling, pinching, squeezing, and shaping dough
- Tearing paper
- Gluing and pasting
- Sticker work — peeling and placing stickers
- Collage work
- Beginning scissor work when developmentally ready
- Snipping paper
- Beginning lacing work as readiness emerges
- Stringing large beads
- Simple practical-life tools such as brushes, whisks, spreaders, and child-sized utensils
- Washing and scrubbing activities (like truck car wash)
- Dressing practice such as zippers, Velcro, large buttons, and snaps as readiness emerges



Language & Communication Development

Developmental Focus

- Rapid vocabulary growth
- Naming objects, people, places
- One-word communication progressing to two-word combinations
- Emerging grammatical complexity
- Increasing understanding of action words
- Descriptive vocabulary
- Increasing ability to follow directions
- Emerging question - like communication
- Conversational turn-taking
- Emerging recall of experiences
- Emerging communication of experiences
- Increasing ability to communicate needs and emotions through words, gestures, and expressions

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Classified language objects
- Classified language cards
- Object-to-object matching
- Object-to-picture matching
- Picture-to-picture matching
- Realistic animal figures
- Miniature objects
- Vocabulary baskets
- Realistic books
- Poetry
- Songs
- Rhyming games
- Family/community photo books
- Language games
- Mystery/identification games
- Three-period language lessons when appropriate

Cognitive Development

Developmental Focus

- Problem-solving
- Cause and effect
- Matching
- Sorting
- Classification
- Sequencing
- Memory and recall
- Spatial reasoning
- Understanding size relationships
- Understanding shape relationships
- Pattern recognition
- Increasing concentration
- Increasing ability to participate in multi-step activities
- Emerging awareness of quantity
- Early one-to-one correspondence
- Object permanence
- Trial-and-error learning
- Making connections between objects and their functions
- Symbolic and pretend thought emerging



Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Object-to-object matching
- Object-to-picture matching
- Picture-to-picture matching
- Sorting activities
- Classification activities
- Nesting materials
- Stacking materials
- Graduated objects
- Simple puzzles progressing in complexity
- Shape puzzles
- Shape sorters
- Posting activities
- Opening and closing activities
- Containers with lids
- Emerging simple sequencing through familiar routines
- Cause-and-effect materials
- Inserting and removing activities
- Simple construction and building materials
- Blocks
- Opportunities for trial-and-error problem-solving
- Hide-and-find/object permanence games
- Simple memory and recall games/experiences
- Real-life sorting during household routines
- Real-life counting opportunities through everyday activities (via cooking, laundry etc.)
- One-to-one correspondence through everyday tasks
- Exposure to simple patterns through songs, movement, and objects
- Pretend play with realistic objects
- Opportunities to imitate familiar routines
- Practical life activities with a beginning, middle, and end

Social-Emotional Development

Developmental Focus

- Strong drive toward independence
- Autonomy
- Emotional expression
- Beginning to identify and name emotions
- Co-regulation
- Beginning regulation with adult support (co-regulation)
- Beginning to test, understand, and respond to consistent limits
- Beginning to wait briefly with support
- Parallel play
- Emerging peer interaction
- Turn-taking with support
- Beginning empathy
- Introduction to grace and courtesy through modeling
- Expressing wants and boundaries
- Participating in family/community life



Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Emotion books/photos
- Mirror
- Family/community photographs
- Grace-and-courtesy modeling
- Real opportunities to help others
- Small-group songs
- Shared mealtimes
- Simple, turn-taking games with adult support
- Predictable routines
- Limited choices
- Child-accessible environment
- Personal space for belongings
- Practical Life activities
- Simple, real household responsibilities (such as setting table, scooping dog food into bowl, etc.)

Sensory & Perceptual Development

Developmental Focus

- Developing visual discrimination
- Developing auditory discrimination
- Exploring and discriminating texture
- Increasing awareness of shape
- Increasing awareness of size
- Color awareness
- Weight
- Temperature
- Smell and taste
- Spatial awareness
- Proprioceptive and vestibular refinement

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Texture matching and exploration
- Sound matching
- Color matching
- Shape matching
- Nesting materials
- Graduated-size materials
- Sorting natural objects
- Smelling experiences
- Taste experiences
- Water play/water table
- Sand
- Clay/dough
- Nature collections
- Outdoor gross-motor experiences



Practical Life & Independence

Developmental Focus

- Self feeding
- Pouring
- Transferring
- Beginning participation in food preparation
- Setting and clearing the table
- Cleaning spills
- Beginning sweeping
- Beginning washing/scrubbing
- Beginning participation in plant care
- Beginning participation in animal care routines
- Dressing/undressing
- Toileting awareness and participation
- Handwashing
- Nose wiping
- Participation in hair brushing
- Participation in teeth brushing
- Caring for belongings
- Participating meaningfully in household life

Montessori Materials & Developmental Experiences

- Small pitcher
- Open cup
- Child-sized utensils
- Child-sized plate/bowl
- Placemat
- Serving utensils
- Small cutting board
- Child-appropriate food-preparation tools
- Banana slicer
- Spreader
- Small bowls
- Child-sized broom
- Dustpan/brush
- Cleaning cloth
- Small spray bottle
- Small sponge
- Small bucket
- Plant-watering pitcher
- Table-washing materials
- Laundry basket
- Low mirror
- Hairbrush
- Toothbrush setup
- Handwashing station/stool
- Tissues
- Accessible clothing
- Low hooks
- Toddler tower/learning tower
- Low chairs or stools for dressing practice
- Basket for clothes
- Shoe rack or basket
- Low child-sized toilet
- Toileting basket with supplies
- Water pouring
- Transferring with spoons, tongs, droppers as readiness emerges
- Opening/closing containers
- Large bead stringing/threading
- Simple folding, sorting clothes, putting away