

16 Actions with Objects by 16 Months



Children Should Learn At Least 16 Actions With Objects By 16 Months

Research shows children learn by doing. Discovering what they can do with objects leads to learning to talk and to pretend, which then launches imagination. Children should be learning at least 2 new actions with objects each month from 9 to 16 months. By 16 months, children should use at least 16 actions with objects.



Babies are natural explorers and are motivated to learn from birth. Their drive for learning comes from their fascination with everything that captures their attention.



Toddlers are “movers and shakers” — always on the go. They seek information about the world. They experiment to figure out how things work. Their enthusiasm to share their experiences and accomplishments is contagious.



9 MONTHS: MOUTH, BANG, DROP

At 9 months, babies repeat different actions with objects. They mouth objects to explore the features. They bang objects with their hand and bang two objects together to create sounds and actions. They drop objects sometimes by chance and other times on purpose.





10 MONTHS: TAKE OFF, TAKE OUT

At 10 months, babies learn to grab and pull and take things off, like a sock, shoe, or hat. They grab and pull to take a towel off their head and play peek-a-boo. Babies are drawn to see what's in an open drawer and take things out to explore.



11 MONTHS: PUSH, TURN

At 11 months, babies learn to push. They can push and squish soft stuff or push hard things, like a piano key to make a musical sound and a button on a toy phone or pop-up toy. They can push a toy train to make it move or a tower of cups to knock it down.

Babies learn to turn things. They can turn a ball on their toy mobile, a steering wheel on a toy car, or the faucet in the tub. They can turn a page in a book. And they can turn a basket upside down, put it on their head, and make you laugh.



12 MONTHS: PAT, PUT IN

At 12 months, babies learn to pat. They can pat themselves with a towel to dry off or pat their Teddy bear. Soon, their pat develops into a hug to share their love. Babies are learning functional actions with a purpose in mind. They can put things in, such as put clothes in the dryer or a shape in a puzzle. From "put in" they learn a variety of functional actions. They can put a sippy cup to their mouth to drink, a spoon in a bowl to scoop, and a spoon in their mouth to eat.



13 MONTHS: FEED OTHERS, OPEN & CLOSE

At 13 months, children begin to learn by observing others and copying what they do and say. They can feed Mom with a cup or teddy bear with a bottle, showing they are on the cusp of pretending.

They open and close objects as they learn to use objects as tools. They try to open and close tongs and clothes pins. Toddlers can open and close cupboards and oven doors. As they become more mobile, nothing is out of reach. You can harness this interest by inviting them to do things that are safe and helpful — like open the dishwasher and take out forks and spoons.



14 MONTHS: MOVE OBJECTS BACK & FORTH, UP & DOWN

At 14 months, toddlers learn to move objects back and forth. They can help to brush their teeth and hair. They can push a toy back and forth and pretend they are vacuuming, try to roll a ball to you, and try to help push a rolling pin back and forth.

They learn to move objects up and down and try to cut things, real and pretend. They jiggle a pan to pretend to cook. They move drum sticks up and down, experimenting with sounds and rhythms.



15 MONTHS: POUR, WASH & DRY

At 15 months, children are learning to use two objects together with a plan in mind. They can pour from one object to another such as liquid from a bottle into a cup. They can pour from a shovel into a bucket and from a watering can onto plants.

With a plan in mind, they can help wash and dry dishes and even the car. Toddlers are eager for a role in family chores.

16 MONTHS: STACK, CUT OUT, SCRIBBLE, DRAW

At 16 months, children can make and create things. They can stack 3 or 4 blocks to make a tower. They can make a bigger tower with blocks that connect, and rings on a pole. They can cut out dough to help make cookies. They can cut out Playdoh shapes and put them together to make a creature. Children are learning how to create drawings. They can scribble with a crayon and paint with a paint brush. With a little help and practice, they try to draw with colored pencils.



Having 16 Actions with Objects is a Critical Milestone to Launch Imagination

Watching how a child's actions with objects grow tells you a lot about their development in play—and whether to be concerned if they are not yet talking. The actions a child learns vary depending on their family or culture. But having 16 actions with objects by 16 months is a critical milestone for all children because it launches imagination, and that fuels language learning. By their 2nd birthday, children learn to use words and phrases to describe, inquire, and negotiate with others. It's this ability to talk, imagine, and create new ideas that sets the stage for lifelong learning.



The Best Time to Get Ready for Preschool is From 9 to 16 Months

The richest moments for early language learning are when a child and caregiver share attention on the same thing and the caregiver talks about the child's focus of attention. This creates opportunities to learn that stem from actions with objects... and gestures. By observing early actions with objects and gestures between 9 and 16 months, you can get a critical snapshot of what a child knows and is thinking about.

If a child is not using a variety of actions with objects and gestures from 9 to 16 months, then the parent may not have the chance to respond and follow the child's focus. This limits the child's opportunity for the richest moments to learn to talk. Spotting small gaps in early actions with objects and gestures from 9 to 16 months is the best time to get ready for preschool so children can reach their potential by kindergarten.



About our 16 by 16™ Series

This document is part of the 16 by 16™ series developed by the **FIRST WORDS® Project**. Families and others can learn important social communication milestones that develop by 16 months to launch language, literacy, and a drive for learning. Be inspired by how much children are learning even before they can say a few words. Visit www.FirstWordsProject.com and explore each Lookbook in our 16 by 16 series from your smartphone, tablet, or computer. You can also get our printable documents to download and share. We hope this information will provide a roadmap for you to support your child's early development. This information can also help you spot small delays early in order to prevent bigger delays later. Some children who are late in communicating outgrow delays, but others need extra help to reach their potential. Remember the best time to get ready for preschool is from 9 to 16 months.