

Approaches to Play and Learning (APL)

Curiosity, Information-Seeking, and Eagerness

1 Children show curiosity and express interest in the world around them. [APL-1](#)

Infants Birth: to 12 months

- a** Show interest in others (smile or gaze at caregiver, make sounds or move body when other person is near). [APL-1A](#)
- b** Show interest in themselves (watch own hands, play with own feet). [APL-1B](#)
- c** React to new sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and touches (stick out tongue at first solid food, turn head quickly when door slams). [APL-1C](#)

Younger Toddlers: 8 to 21 months

- d** Imitate what others are doing [APL-1D](#)
- e** Show curiosity about their surroundings (with pointing, facial expressions, words). [APL-1E](#)
- f** Show pleasure when exploring and making things happen (clap, smile, repeat action again and again). [APL-1F](#)

Older Toddlers: 18 to 36 months

- g** Show pleasure in new skills and in what they have done. [APL-1G](#)
- h** Discover things that interest and amaze them, and seek to share them with others. [APL-1H](#)
- i** Watch what others are doing and often try to participate. [APL-1I](#)

Younger Preschoolers: 36 to 48 months

- j** Communicate interest to others through verbal and nonverbal means (take teacher to the science center to see a new animal). [APL-1J](#)
- k** Discover things that interest and amaze them, and seek to share them with others. [APL-1K](#)
- l** Show interest in a growing range of topics, ideas, and tasks. [APL-1L](#)

Older Preschoolers: 48 to 60+ months

- m** Communicate interest to others through verbal and nonverbal means (take teacher to the science center to see a new animal). [APL-1M](#)
- n** Discover things that interest and amaze them, and seek to share them with others. [APL-1N](#)
- o** Show interest in a growing range of topics, ideas, and tasks. [APL-1O](#)
- p** Demonstrate interest in mastering new skills (e.g., writing name, riding a bike, dance moves, building skills). [APL-1P](#)

2 Children actively seek to understand the world around them. [APL-2](#)

Infants Birth to 12 months

- a** Explore the indoor and outdoor environment using all available senses — smell, hear, see, feel, and taste. [APL-2A](#)
- b** With appropriate supports, move toward interesting people, sounds, objects, and activities. [APL-2B](#)

Younger Toddlers 8 to 21 months

- c** Initiate activities that interest them and try to get others involved. [APL-2C](#)
- d** Use toys and other objects to make things happen (kick a ball, push a button on a toy). [APL-2D](#)
- e** Move toward people and things that are new and/or interesting. [APL-2E](#)

Older Toddlers 18 to 36 months

- f** Seek more information about people and their surroundings (“study” an object carefully, stare for long moments, become absorbed in figuring out a situation). [APL-2F](#)
- g** Use their whole body to learn (get mud or paint on themselves from head to toe, fit themselves into a big, empty box). [APL-2G](#)
- h** Communicate what they want to do or know using gestures, facial expressions, or words (ask “What dat?”). [APL-2H](#)

Younger Preschoolers 36 to 48 months

- i** Ask questions about the people and things around them. [APL-2I](#)
- j** Use all available senses, tools, and a variety of strategies to explore the environment (drop objects in water to see if they sink or float). [APL-2J](#)
- k** Purposely try different ways of doing things to see what and how they work (adjust blocks used as a ramp to make a ball roll faster and farther). [APL-2K](#)

Older Preschoolers 48 to 60+ months

- l** Ask questions to find out more about the things that interest them, including questions about future events. [APL-2L](#)
 - m** Choose among different ways to explore the environment based on experience (use a magnifying glass that the class used before to explore something new). [APL-2M](#)
 - n** Use what they know from experience to understand what is happening now (get an umbrella to go outside because it is raining). [APL-2N](#)
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Play and Imagination

3 Children engage in increasingly complex play. [APL-3](#)

Infants Birth to 12 months

- a** Show interest in other children playing (watch, turn toward). [APL-3A](#)
- b** Imitate sounds, facial expressions, or gestures (cover face with hands, hands up for “so big”). [APL-3B](#)
- c** Play with simple objects, using them to make sounds and other interesting results. [APL-3C](#)
- d** Begin to participate in give-and-take exchanges of sounds and gestures (“serve and return”). [APL-3D](#)

Younger Toddlers 8 to 21 months

- e** Play alongside other children, sometimes imitating their actions. [APL-3E](#)
- f** Imitate adult actions with objects, first with real objects and then with objects that are used to represent another object (talk on phone, feed doll, use a chair as pretend car). [APL-3F](#)
- g** Take turns in simple games (pat-a-cake, peek-a-boo). [APL-3G](#)
- h** Offer toys and objects to others. [APL-3H](#)

Older Toddlers 18 to 36 months

- i** Try to involve other children in play. [APL-3I](#)
- j** Make believe, pretend, and act out familiar life scenes, sometimes using objects to represent something else (a shoe becomes a phone). [APL-3J](#)
- k** Play with others with a common purpose (play a chase game).
- l** Communicate about what is happening during pretend play (“He eating,” point to a picture on a communication board when feeding a toy baby with a spoon; “Now go work,” after putting on shoes and necktie). [APL-3L](#)

Younger Preschoolers 36 to 48 months

- m** Engage in dramatic play themes that include interacting with other children, but often are not coordinated. **APL-3M**
- n** Talk to peers and share materials during play. **APL-3N**
- o** Engage in make-believe play with imaginary objects. **APL-3O**
- p** Use language to begin and carry on play with others. **APL-3P**
- q** Express knowledge of their everyday lives and cultures through play (use chopsticks to eat, pretend to fix hair the way their family styles hair). **APL-3Q**

Older Preschoolers 48 to 60+ months

- r** Develop and sustain more complex pretend play themes in cooperation with peers. **APL-3R**
- s** Use more complex and varied language to share ideas and influence others during play. **APL-3S**
- t** Choose to use new knowledge and skills during play (add features to dramatic play scene related to class project, write list, build structure like displayed picture). **APL-3T**
- u** Demonstrate their cultural values and “rules” through play (tell another child, “That’s not what we eat for breakfast.”). **APL-3U**

4 Children demonstrate creativity, imagination, and inventiveness. **APL-4**

Infants Birth to 12 months

- a** Use everyday household objects for play (spoons, pots and pans, plastic bowls). **APL-4A**
- b** Try a familiar action with a new object or person (try to bounce a block, wave bye-bye to a toy, make a sound to get a new adult’s attention). **APL-4B**
- c** React to unexpected events with laughter and interest. **APL-4C**

Younger Toddlers 8 to 21 months

- d** Do new things with familiar objects or combine them in unusual ways (use a dress-up boa as a snake, pound a drum with a plastic bottle, try to stack bears). **APL-4D**
- e** Do new things with familiar objects or combine them in unusual ways (use a dress-up boa as a snake, pound a drum with a plastic bottle, try to stack bears). **APL-4E**
- f** Pretend to be somebody or something other than themselves. **APL-4F**
- g** Pretend one object is really something different (use Legos® as food while stirring a pot) **APL-4G**

Younger Preschoolers 36 to 48 months

- h** Offer new ideas about how to do or make things. [APL-4H](#)
- i** Add new actions, props, or dress-up items to pretend play. [APL-4I](#)
- j** Use materials (e.g., art materials, instruments, construction paper, writing implements) or actions to represent experiences or ideas in novel ways. [APL-4J](#)
- k** Experiment with language, musical sounds, and movement. [APL-4K](#)

Older Preschoolers 48 to 60+ months

- l** Plan play scenarios (dramatic play, construction), and use or create a variety of props or tools to enact them. [APL-4L](#)
- m** Expand the variety of roles taken during dramatic play and add more actions, language, or props to enact roles. [APL-4M](#)
- n** Use materials or actions in increasingly varied and resourceful ways to represent experiences or ideas. [APL-4N](#)
- o** Make up stories, songs, or dances for fun during play. [APL-4O](#)
- p** Invent new games. [APL-4P](#)

Risk-Taking, Problem-Solving, and Flexibility

5 Children are willing to try new and challenging experiences. [APL-5](#)

Infants Birth to 12 months

- a** Explore new experiences both indoors and outdoors (toys, foods, people, spaces) with support of a familiar trusted adult. [APL-5A](#)
- b** Try to do things that are hard for them (stretch to reach toy, work to crawl or walk, try to capture tiny crumb with pincer grasp). [APL-5B](#)
- c** Look to adult for cues and, when reassured, proceed. [APL-5C](#)

Younger Toddlers 8 to 21 months

- d** Try unfamiliar experiences and interact with new people with a familiar adult nearby. [APL-5D](#)
- e** Move away from a familiar adult to explore, but check in frequently. [APL-5E](#)
- f** Show interest in and try to operate toys that offer a challenge. [APL-5F](#)

Older Toddlers 18 to 36 months

- g** Explore freely without a familiar adult nearby. [APL-5G](#)
- h** Try out new skills in a familiar environment (learn to climb steps and then try to climb ladder to the slide). [APL-5H](#)
- i** Approach a challenge with confidence (try to lift a heavy object, work on a difficult puzzle, “I can do it.”). [APL-5I](#)
- j** Want to do things their own way (say “Me do it!”, push an adult’s hand away if the person is trying to help). [APL-5J](#)

Younger Preschoolers 36 to 48 months

- k** Express a belief that they can do things that are hard. [APL-5K](#)
- l** Choose to participate in an increasing variety of familiar and new experiences. [APL-5L](#)
- m** Accept new challenges when offered. [APL-5M](#)
- n** Try things they are not sure they can do, while avoiding dangerous risks. [APL-5N](#)

Older Preschoolers 48 to 60+ months

- o** Express a belief that they can do things that are hard. [APL-5O](#)
- p** Approach new experiences independently. [APL-5P](#)
- q** Ask to participate in new experiences that they have observed or heard about. [APL-5Q](#)
- r** Independently seek new challenges. [APL-5R](#)

6 Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems. [APL-6](#)

Infants Birth to 12 months

- a** Try one or two strategies to get what they want (make noise, move or reach toward things, reject unwanted item). [APL-6A](#)
- b** Try a familiar action in a new activity (hit a button on a new toy, try to open a visitor's purse). [APL-6B](#)
- c** Use trial and error to get something done, get what they want, or solve simple problems. [APL-6C](#)

Younger Toddlers 8 to 21 months

- d** Try one or two strategies to get what they want or solve a problem (try giving a peer an alternate toy to get a toy from him/her; try to put a ball in a box—if it will not fit, get a bigger box). [APL-6D](#)
- e** Use available resources to accomplish a goal or solve a problem (push a stool to a counter to reach for something). [APL-6E](#)
- f** After unsuccessful attempts to solve a problem, ask for help from an adult (point, gesture, speak). [APL-6F](#)
- g** Vary actions on purpose to solve a problem (when fitting a shape into a shape sorter, turn the shape to fit; when opening a drawer, shake, then pull its handle). [APL-6G](#)

Older Toddlers 18 to 36 months

- h** Try a variety of strategies to get what they want or solve a problem. [APL-6H](#)
- i** Use language to obtain help to solve a problem (tell adults, "My car broke."). [APL-6I](#)
- j** Use materials in new ways to explore and solve problems (bring a big spoon to the sand table when all of the shovels are in use, pile blocks on a towel and drag them across the floor when there are too many to carry). [APL-6J](#)

Younger Preschoolers 36 to 48 months

- k** Seek and make use of ideas and help from adults and peers to solve problems (“How can I make this paint get off my pants?”). **APL-6K**
- l** Purposefully use a variety of strategies to solve different types of problems. **APL-6L**
- m** Talk to themselves to work through the steps to solve a problem. **APL-6M**

Older Preschoolers 48 to 60+ months

- n** Seek and make use of ideas and help from adults and peers to solve problems (“How can I make this paint get off my pants?”). **APL-6N**
- o** Describe the steps they will use to solve a problem. **APL-6O**
- p** Evaluate different strategies for solving a problem and select the strategy they feel will work without having to try it. **APL-6P**
- q** Explain how they solved a problem to another person. **APL-6Q**

Attentiveness, Effort and Persistence

7 Children demonstrate initiative. **APL-7**

Infants Birth to 12 months

- a** Communicate with sounds or movements to indicate preferences (make excited sound for food they like, push away food they don’t like). **APL-7A**
- b** Independently explore the different qualities of an object (notice the sound of a rattle, then be drawn to the “feel” of it, exploring it with mouth or hand). **APL-7B**

Younger Toddlers 8 to 21 months

- c** Express choices with actions or simple language (choose Cheerios® or a cracker). **APL-7C**
- d** Seek to repeat experiences they enjoy or succeed at (do shape sorter over and over, climb up and down stairs). **APL-7D**

Older Toddlers 18 to 36 months

- e** Select and carry out activities (choose to set the table; gather play dishes and food, and then feed the dolls). **APL-7E**
- f** Show increasing interest in performing tasks independently (put on jacket and try to zip it up). **APL-7F**
- g** Show and/or tell others what they have done. **APL-7G**

Younger Preschoolers 36 to 48 months

- h** Show increasing independence and purpose when making choices (“I want to go to blocks.”). **APL-7H**
- i** Express goals or plans and follow through on them (“I’m going to draw my house.”). **APL-7I**
- j** Make decisions about materials needed to carry out a task. **APL-7J**

Older Preschoolers 48 to 60+ months

- k** Show increasing independence and purpose when making choices (“I’m going to the block area to make a track for my race car.”). [APL-7K](#)
 - l** Independently identify and seek things they need to complete activities or tasks (gather supplies and make a birthday card with a message). [APL-7L](#)
 - m** Set simple goals that extend over time, make plans and follow through (“Let’s make a rocket ship. We need blocks.”). [APL-7M](#)
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8 Children maintain attentiveness and focus. [APL-8](#)

Infants Birth to 12 months

- a** Focus and attend to people and things around them. [APL-8A](#)
- b** Repeat interesting actions over and over (push button to make toy pop up). [APL-8B](#)
- c** Notice when the expected does not happen. [APL-8C](#)

Younger Toddlers 8 to 21 months

- d** Focus on selfselected activity for a short period of time (decide to play in the sandbox and stay there for a couple of minutes). [APL-8D](#)
- e** Focus on an interesting activity or interaction shared with adults for a short period of time. [APL-8E](#)

Older Toddlers 18 to 36 months

- f** Focus on a person or a hands-on activity for a short period of time (participate in singing a song, stay focused long enough to build a block tower). [APL-8F](#)
- g** Keep working on interesting activities with other things going on around them. [APL-8G](#)

Younger Preschoolers 36 to 48 months

- h** Focus on ageappropriate activities for a short period of time, even with interruptions (continue working on a puzzle even though another child sitting nearby is laughing and talking). [APL-8H](#)
- i** Remain engaged in more complex activities that they have chosen. [APL-8I](#)
- j** Maintain focus and return to an activity after a break. [APL-8J](#)

Older Preschoolers 48 to 60+ months

- k** Sometimes able to focus on what is relevant to a task (sort multicolored wooden beads by shape). [APL-8K](#)
 - l** Consistently remain engaged in selfdirected activities. [APL-8L](#)
 - m** Shift attention back to a task after having been diverted from it. [APL-8M](#)
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9 Children persist in challenging activities. [APL-9](#)

Infants Birth to 12 months

- a** Try over and over to make things happen (make sounds to get attention, work to get to something that is out of reach). [APL-9A](#)

Younger Toddlers 8 to 21 months

- b** Keep trying to accomplish tasks that they are not able to do immediately (put on a jacket, engage a busy adult in play). **APL-9B**

Older Toddlers 18 to 36 months

- c** Seek help from others to complete a challenging activity. **APL-9C**
- d** Keep working on an activity even after setbacks (block structure collapses, puzzle piece does not fit). **APL-9D**

Younger Preschoolers 36 to 48 months

- e** Seek help from others to complete a challenging activity (ask a teacher for help putting a puzzle away on a high shelf; ask a friend for help in naming an unfamiliar animal in a picture). **APL-9E**
- f** When something does not work, try different ways to complete the task (when a block tower falls, try putting the blocks together in a different way to build the tower again). **APL-9F**
- g** Keep working to complete tasks, including those that are somewhat difficult. **APL-9G**

Older Preschoolers 48 to 60+ months

- h** Seek help from others to complete a challenging activity (ask a teacher for help putting a puzzle away on a high shelf; ask a friend for help in naming an unfamiliar animal in a picture). **APL-9H**
- i** When something does not work, try different ways to complete the task (when a block tower falls, try putting the blocks together in a different way to build the tower again). **APL-9I**
- j** Plan and follow through on longer-term tasks (planting a seed and caring for the plant). **APL-9J**
- k** Keep trying until a challenging activity is complete despite distractions or interruptions (multi-piece puzzle started before lunch and completed later). **APL-9K**