

Executive Function Milestones

Executive functioning includes attention, planning, organisation, memory, and flexibility — all key to learning and daily tasks.

Birth to 1 years

- Engages in short play bursts
- Shows awareness of routine and cause-and-effect
- Shows anticipatory excitement
- Looks toward sounds or familiar faces
- Plays peek-a-boo
- Looks for names of family members

1 to 2 years

- Understands colours
- Sorts objects
- Follows simple 1-step instructions
- Begins problem-solving with trial and error
- Uses basic tools (e.g. spoon, blocks) with purpose

2 to 3 years

- Follows 2-step instructions
- Matches shapes and primary colours
- Completes 2-4 piece puzzle
- Starts planning basic tasks (e.g. build a tower)
- Recognises when something is missing

3 to 4 years

- Sorts and categorises toys
- Anticipates simple routines and events
- Begins using flexible thinking during play
- Begins to have a basic sense of time
- Follows simple 2-step instructions.
- Approaches problem solving from one point of view

4 to 5 years

- Follows 3-step simple instructions
- Plans basic tasks (e.g. setting table)
- Remembers and retells short stories
- Recalls recent event
- Understands opposites (e.g. big and small)
- Shifts between tasks with prompting

6+ years

- Organises belongings and starts using checklists
- Sets simple goals and works toward them
- Starts managing time for tasks or homework



This flyer is intended as a **general guide** to support understanding of developmental skills across age ranges. It is **not a diagnostic tool** and should not be used to make formal assessments or diagnoses.

Children develop at different rates, and variation is normal. However, **persistent challenges in one or more areas** may suggest an underlying difference or condition.