



Ways to promote cognitive development for children birth-5

Cognitive development is critical to a child's growth. It describes how a child's intellect builds and develops, and includes skills such as thinking, learning and problem-solving. It also affects other areas of a child's development, including language and social skills.

By actively encouraging a child to learn new ideas and skills, parents and caregivers can foster a child's cognitive development as he or she grows in a number of ways. Here are a few ideas to encourage this development at different ages:

- **Birth:** Talk, read and sing to the child. Hold toys at arm's length and move them around for the baby to watch.
- **3 months old:** Play peek-a-boo. Provide interesting things for the baby to see and reach for.
- **6 months old:** Lay a blanket on the floor for the baby to lay on, to reach for toys and explore surroundings.
- **9 months old:** Begin to teach cause and effect. Pick up dropped toys and hand them back to the baby, roll a ball back and forth, and move blocks into and out of containers.
- **12 months old:** Give the child crayons and paper for drawing. Ask her to talk about what she sees while riding in the car. Sing songs with actions, like "Wheels on the Bus."
- **18 months old:** Hide toys under pillows and blankets for the child to find. Encourage pretend play.
- **2 years old:** Take turns building block towers and knocking them down. Help the child with simple shape, color or animal puzzles, and talk to him about each piece as he puts them in place.
- **3 years old:** Play rhyming games, sing songs and recite rhymes. Make an activity box with paper, crayons and other art supplies. Draw lines and shapes.
- **4 years old:** Reply to the child's "why" questions patiently and responsively. Offer simple choices, such as what to play or eat as a snack. Count items, such as steps or toys.
- **5 years old:** Begin to teach time (morning, afternoon, today, tomorrow, etc.) and days of the week. Play with toys that encourage the child to put things together.



For more information on how to encourage and support a child's cognitive development, visit helpmegrowmn.org.