



First Steps

19 Months

Advice to Mom

- It takes time to make a good friend. Take some time this month to reach out to an old friend or to make a new one.
- Is your house getting too cluttered with toys your child has outgrown? Sort through her toys and make up a bag to give to a charity that supplies mothers and children.

Key Thought

Nineteen month olds are natural mimics both of speech and actions. They also love to do things with you. Take advantage of this time and teach your little one how to help with chores and lots of new vocabulary. Make a game of learning and cooperating.

What Your Toddler is Learning

Physically:

Motion is still her favorite activity. By now she probably is able to walk sideways and backwards well. She is running may seem more like galloping, but she is definitely faster than before. She has no sense of distance and cannot stop as fast as she needs to sometimes. It is still important to keep gates at the top and bottom of stairs for safety, though she can walk up with a little help and slide down on her tummy or seat.

She builds towers of two to four blocks now. Her grasp is quite precise, but her release is still inaccurate, so towers will tend to lean and be a lot more fun to knock down than to build.

Language:

Although toddlers don't differ much in their physical and social development, there may be a great deal of difference in their ability to communicate. Girls tend to be more advanced in speech than boys. But all children learn more language and communication skills when they have many opportunities to experience new things and spend time with people who talk to them a lot.

She will use her hands and is self centered in her communication. She will point to what she wants and pull or push you to see what interests her. Things that don't relate to her here and now, she's not interested in learning. She has a private sense of humor. She mumbles to herself and then laughs at her joke that no one else understands.

She mimics everything she hears. Not only does she copy the words, but also the inflections. She's aware that everything and everyone has a name and that using those words gives her some control over her world. She is making noun-verb combination sentences now.

The word "no" has taken on enormous importance. She uses it constantly. Since it is her favorite word, it is wise to use statements rather than questions she can answer with "no." Just tell her what you want her to do, don't ask her if she will. Pretty soon, you will also hear "yes" occasionally. Take heart!



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She now hears all the syllables in a word, but she may mix them up when repeating the word. Spaghetti becomes Gahspetti. She may also be swapping one consonant for another, leaving out certain sounds, or repeating syllables. Don't worry, she just needs more practice.

Social:

At nineteen months, she may not be trying to be the center of attention as much as last month, but she will still expect a response from you for her antics. If you scold her or are impatient, she may cry and come to you for a hug and reassurance. She thrives on your attention and wants lots of reassurance from you.

She is eager to help and loves to do small errands like picking things up and carrying them. She wants to help more than she is able to, so you will need to give her the part of the job she is able to do. She sees no difference between work and play and this is a good time to encourage her to help you whenever possible.

She has begun to grasp the concept of identity and personal possession. She often says "mine." She also knows when something belongs to someone else. Although she still is totally self absorbed in play, she may cry when her playmate leaves.

Concepts:

Relationships between things and how they are used and where things belong, fascinate toddlers. When she puts a toy down, she can remember where she put it and return to it later. She learns how things are used by imitating. Her imitations are much better than just a short while ago as she can duplicate much better what she sees.

She can judge the relative size of two objects well now. She enjoys putting many small things into a bigger container. She is learning how to get the largest number of small items into one big container. When using a shape sorter, she will still try brute force first, but when it doesn't work, she will try turning the shape to fit the hole. Her visual judgment is still not dominant. When trying a new task, she will still rely heavily on her sense of touch to lead her eyes rather than her eyes directing her hand motion.

Ways You Can Help

Chores:

Take advantage of this time that she wants to do things with you and for you to begin teaching her to do chores. She won't be the most efficient helpers, but give her some responsibilities. Teach her to be part of the team and that her part is important. Doing chores at the same time each day helps to form a good habit.

When it is time for picking up toys, ask her to put all her blocks in one container, while you are lining her books on the shelf. Doing the job together makes it fun and gets the job done faster and better. Sing a song or dance around while you work for even more fun. Don't forget to congratulate each other on a job well done.



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Potty Training—Ready or Not?

A few children are ready to begin potty training at nineteen months, but most aren't until two or even three years of age. Instead of being influenced by others' potty training or your own desire to be done with diapers, watch for signs of readiness. Do not to start too early!

Signs of *approaching* readiness to potty train include awareness that her diaper is wet or soiled. Being aware that everything has its place and that her urine and stool belong in the toilet, is another important concept for her to achieve.

But until she has gained the muscle control to wait until she gets to the toilet when she knows that she needs to empty her bladder and bowels, she is *not* ready to potty train.

Until then, get a potty chair and keep it in the bathroom. Allow her to sit on it, fully clothed whenever you use the toilet. Toddlers learn much by imitation. You may allow her to pretend her favorite toy is using the potty. Don't allow her pleasure in this copycat behavior to tempt you to try potty training her before she is truly ready, though.

The good news is that when she is ready, potty training will take a very short time to accomplish and it won't be because you are trained to put her on the potty chair at the right time.

Is A New Baby Coming Soon?

Your toddler has been the star of the show as long as she's been around. Now she will have some competition for your attention and time. You cannot totally avoid her negative feelings, but you can begin to prepare her as you prepare yourself for the new baby.

Begin preparing her for the new baby about a month ahead of time. She has no conception of time, so it isn't necessary to begin much before that. Let her get involved in preparing the baby's crib, clothes, and blankets. Talk to her about all the preparations you are making and let her know she still has a special place too. Let her practice loving a baby with a baby doll. She can "feed" her baby doll with a bottle and cover it nicely and put it to bed. She can begin to practice gently touching her baby doll. Reading a book or making a scrapbook about the new baby can help to prepare her too.

When the new baby comes, it is not unusual for toddlers to regress to some infantile behavior like wanting a bottle or only eating if you feed her bite at a time. Give her some time to regress if she chooses too. It won't last long and she will want to go back to her "big girl" behaviors.

The other common negative response can be anger or hostility toward the new baby. Again, the best response is not to treat anger harshly. Talk to her quietly and put her feelings in words. Your peaceful attitude and relaxed voice will reassure her that you understand and help her accept the changes. With your direction, she can become a big help to you with the new baby.



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Marriage and Childrearing

Raising children is a complicated process best accomplished with the co-operation and involvement of both parents. Of course it is possible for one parent to raise good children, but it is much more difficult. Some two-parent families are actually raising their children as though they are single parents.

Some moms have the idea that child rearing is their personal responsibility. Perhaps it is from her culture and experience in her own home growing up. Perhaps it is born out of fear that if she doesn't do it all perfectly she will be judged a bad mom. Perhaps it is because her husband has not gotten involved. He may believe childrearing is the mom's responsibility and refuse to get involved or he may have felt left out of the pregnancy and delivery process and continued to stay out of childrearing. But, whatever the reason this pattern of parenting started, the result will be that the children come between their parents. Husbands begin to feel the children are more important to his wife than he is. Eventually he will feel isolated, unimportant, disrespected, and resentful.

Wise moms take active steps to build their marriage and help their husbands be more involved and effective as fathers.

Loneliness is deadly to a marriage. When you married, you expected the companionship of your spouse. If you spend all your time catering to your children and their needs, your husband can feel isolated and lonely. If his companionship needs are not being met by you, you are leaving him open to temptation outside.

- Spend some time every day alone with your husband. For most couples, the only possible time is in the evening after the children are asleep. Therefore, you must teach your children to go to sleep before you do.
- You need some private times for intimacy. Although you may not be intimidated by having your children in your room, your spouse may be. Consider having your children sleep in their own room, if you have not already done this. If this is not possible, arrange times away alone with your husband to refresh your intimacy.

What is most important to you? What do you talk about the most? Who is the center of your attention?

- Share your child's accomplishments and *together* enjoy your child's development.
- Celebrate your husband's accomplishments with as much or more enthusiasm as your child's.
- Be ready to welcome him home with affection and joy. If he gets home first, come in with a smile and kiss for the most important man in your life.
- Remember birthdays and anniversary and celebrate with your husband.

Strong marriages are built on mutual respect. Children learn respect as it is modeled for them.

- Notice the things your husband does to help you, your family, and your home. Thank him and teach your children to thank him for what he does.
- Don't use humor that belittles or embarrasses your husband.
- Never talk negatively about your husband to your children. If you have a complaint against him, talk to him privately and settle your disagreement.
- If your husband does things that belittle or disrespect you, talk to him privately and come to a resolution.



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Whenever people live together there will be irritations, disagreements, and hurts. It is vital for your unity and mutual involvement in childrearing to settle these.

- First consider whether you are being too touchy or irritable with your husband? Do you think your children's quirks are cute or funny, but your husband's are disgusting or foolish? Maybe you need to lighten up and not make an issue of these things.
- Consider whether your complaint is worth the potential harm it can cause to the relationship. However, don't be afraid of his reaction if it is an issue that is hurting your marriage or the children.
- Forgive one another. You will each need to be forgiven from time to time. Don't hold back from forgiving. The cost is too high for holding resentment.
- Learn to compromise. Compromise is best understood as mutual adjustment for the sake of improvement. Don't look at it as "giving in" or "giving up," but rather as cooperating together.
- If you cannot solve the problem, seek a wise counselor to help you before it becomes a very serious breach in your relationship.

One final suggestion. Remember the tender, affectionate names you used to use for one another? You may have slipped into the habit of calling your husband, "Dad" or "Daddy." He isn't your Dad and he'll feel he's really special to you when you call him by his name or favorite nickname.

The best foundation for life that you can give your children is a solid, mutually respectful marriage. The small sacrifices your children have to make to allow your relationship to grow and develop, will be richly rewarded with the love and involvement of both parents throughout their childhood.

What to Expect Next

- Washes and dries own hands with help
- Takes off own clothes
- Learns words at a rate of ten or more a day

Prayer

Heavenly father, we know we haven't done everything right in raising our child. Please forgive me for the things I've done wrong and help me to do better in the future. Help me to forgive my spouse for things they have done wrong too. Help us to be good stewards of this child you have blessed us with. In Jesus' name, Amen