

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: Birth to Age 3

Self-Regulation: A Foundation of Development

Children demonstrate the emerging ability to process stimuli, focus and sustain attention, and maintain engagement in accordance with social and cultural contexts.

- 1 Birth to 9 months PR.1
 - 1 Begins to demonstrate a pattern in sleep-wake and feeding cycles PR.1.1
 - 2 Signals for needs, e.g., cries when hungry, arches back in discomfort PR.1.2
 - 3 Disengages when overstimulated, e.g., turns head, glances away, falls asleep, spits up PR.1.3
 - 4 Uses sucking to assist in sleeping PR.1.4
 - 2 7 months to 18 months PR.2
 - 1 Demonstrates consistent sleeping and feeding times throughout the day PR.2.1
 - 2 Increasingly organized and consolidated internal schedule for sleep/wake, elimination, and feeding, e.g., decreases the number of naps but extends the length of the naps PR.2.2
 - 3 Communicates with a wide range of signals as crying diminishes, e.g., smiles, gestures, uses words PR.2.3
 - 4 Begins to exhibit certain behaviors when overstimulated and/or unfocused, e.g., becomes aggressive, lashes out, bites PR.2.4
 - 5 Increased desire for independence and control PR.2.5
 - 3 16 months to 24 months PR.3
 - 1 Uses gestures and symbolic actions to demonstrate feelings and needs, e.g., lays head on caregiver's lap when tired PR.3.1
 - 2 Becomes frustrated and displays regressive behaviors when overstimulated, e.g., temper tantrums PR.3.2
 - 3 Communicates needs with one or two words, e.g., says or gestures "milk" for "I want milk" PR.3.3
 - 4 Begins to have an awareness of bodily functions and begins to demonstrate an interest in toileting, e.g., recognizes a "potty" PR.3.4
 - 4 21 months to 36 months PR.4
 - 1 Calms down in order to sit and read a book with a caregiver PR.4.1
 - 2 Uses movement to express an emotion, e.g., jumps up and down when excited, stomps feet when upset PR.4.2
 - 3 Recognizes patterns throughout the day, e.g., grabs a pillow and blanket after lunch, when it is nap time PR.4.3
 - 4 Communicates needs more thoroughly, e.g., "I am hungry" PR.4.4
 - 5 Manages overstimulation in a more organized manner, e.g., disengages, walks away PR.4.5
 - 6 Demonstrates a readiness to begin toilet training PR.4.6
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Children demonstrate the emerging ability to identify and manage the expression of emotion in accordance with social and cultural contexts.

- 1 Birth to 9 months **ER.1**
 - 1 Signals needs by sounds and movement **ER.1.1**
 - 2 Able to use cues to signal overstimulation , e.g., turns head, gaze aversion **ER.1.2**
 - 3 Begins to use self-soothing strategies, e.g., sucks on hands, grasps an object in order to calm self **ER.1.3**
 - 4 Vocalizes and uses facial cues to get caregiver’s attention, e.g., cries, gazes, initiates eye contact **ER.1.4**
- 2 7 months to 18 months **ER.2**
 - 1 Communicates needs to an adult, e.g., points, shakes head **ER.2.1**
 - 2 Able to self-soothe more effectively, e.g., sucks thumb, holds on to stuffed toy **ER.2.2**
 - 3 Uses social referencing in uncertain situations, e.g., looks at a caregiver’s face for reassurance in the presence of a new person **ER.2.3**
 - 4 Prefers physical proximity to familiar adults in unknown situations, e.g., follows caregiver when he or she leaves the room **ER.2.4**
 - 5 Seeks out caregiver through physical actions, e.g., reaches for the caregiver’s hand or moves closer to them when frightened **ER.2.5**
 - 6 Uses comfort objects, e.g., a stuffed animal or blanket, to help calm down **ER.2.6**
- 3 16 months to 24 months **ER.3**
 - 1 Uses caregiver’s facial cues and body language to assist in novel and uncertain situations, e.g., sees a dog for the first time and uses the adult’s smile as a cue to cautiously pat the dog **ER.3.1**
 - 2 Uses play to sort out feelings and gain control over them, e.g., projects feeling onto an object, grasps a ball and hugs it tightly to chest when excited **ER.3.2**
 - 3 Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to signal the need for their caregiver, e.g., calls by name, crawls into a familiar adult’s lap **ER.3.3**
 - 4 Names some emotions, e.g., “me sad” **ER.3.4**
 - 5 Begins to use “private speech” in order to assist in regulating their emotions, e.g., utters “bear, where is bear” to self **ER.3.5**
- 4 21 months to 36 months **ER.4**
 - 1 Communicates wants and needs verbally, e.g. “pick me up” **ER.4.1**
 - 2 Engages in pretend play to manage uncertainty and fear, e.g., plays doctor and gives someone a “shot” **ER.4.2**
 - 3 Seeks caregiver support when feeling overwhelmed by emotion; may reject support as well **ER.4.3**
 - 4 Expresses emotions through the use of play **ER.4.4**

5 Holds on to a special object during certain times of the day, e.g., blanket, picture, book, stuffed toy ER.4.5

Attention Regulation AR

Children demonstrate the emerging ability to process stimuli, focus and sustain attention, and maintain engagement in accordance with social and cultural contexts.

- 1 Birth to 9 months AR.1
 - 1 Focuses on objects in the environment during alert states AR.1.1
 - 2 Initiates and briefly maintains social interactions with adults, e.g., establishes eye contact, coos to receive attention AR.1.2
 - 3 Explores environment through senses, e.g., touches and mouths objects AR.1.3
 - 4 Focuses attention on novel objects and familiar caregiver(s) AR.1.4
 - 5 Plays with one object for a few minutes before focusing on a different object AR.1.5
- 2 7 months to 18 months AR.2
 - 1 Engages in joint attention with a caregiver, e.g. joins in looking at the same object or shifts gaze to where someone is pointing AR.2.1
 - 2 Maintains more advanced levels of engagement, e.g., repeats actions over and over when enjoying the reaction and result of the experience AR.2.2
 - 3 Focuses on one object or activity for a brief period of time, even with other objects close in proximity; still easily distracted AR.2.3
 - 4 Shifts attention from adults to peers AR.2.4
 - 5 Relies on routines and patterns to maintain an organized state in order to focus AR.2.5
- 3 16 months to 24 months AR.3
 - 1 Works to find solutions to simple problems and/or obstacles, e.g., attempts to climb onto a piece of furniture in order to retrieve a toy AR.3.1
 - 2 Works on solving increasingly difficult activities, e.g., attempts to solve a simple, three-piece puzzle AR.3.2
 - 3 Remains focused for longer periods of time while engaged in self-initiated play AR.3.3
 - 4 Attends and stays engaged to often reach a goal, e.g., places all the shapes in the shape sorter AR.3.4
- 4 21 months to 36 months AR.4
 - 1 Attention expands and stays focused on an activity or object even when distractions are present AR.4.1
 - 2 Uses self-talk to extend play, e.g., says “now sleepy” to the baby doll after feeding it a bottle AR.4.2
 - 3 Plays independently before moving on to a new activity, e.g., engages in block play, reads a book AR.4.3
 - 4 Wait time increases, e.g., participates in turn-taking activities AR.4.4

- 5 Transitions between what he or she is engaged in and what is happening in the background, e.g., makes a comment in regard to a conversation happening between another child and adult, while engaged in completing a puzzle [AR.4.5](#)
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Children demonstrate the emerging ability to manage and adjust behaviors in accordance with social and cultural contexts.

- 1 Birth to 9 months BR.1
 - 1 Cries when hungry, tired, uncomfortable, or bored BR.1.1
 - 2 Uses physical movements to disengage from interaction, turns head, averts gaze BR.1.2
 - 3 Physically explores environment through touch, e.g., sucking, gnawing, hitting, pulling, banging BR.1.3
 - 4 Shows curiosity and limited restraint when exploring the environment, e.g., reaches for objects that adults or other children are holding BR.1.4
- 2 7 months to 18 months BR.2
 - 1 Explores environment while unaware of boundaries and limits, e.g., crawls toward a shelf and attempts to climb it BR.2.1
 - 2 Reads cues and body language of caregiver(s) and familiar others to guide reactions and behaviors in novel and uncertain situations BR.2.2
 - 3 Demonstrates frustration, e.g., cries, bites BR.2.3
 - 4 Has difficulty channeling excitement, e.g., screams, jumps, squeezes, bites BR.2.4
 - 5 Chooses between two options, e.g., “You can have the red ball or the blue ball” BR.2.5
 - 6 Completes a forbidden action regardless of referencing a caregiver’s reaction, e.g., looks toward their caregiver before touching the forbidden object and then touches it anyway BR.2.6
- 3 16 months to 24 months BR.3
 - 1 Communicates “mine” when another child takes a toy away BR.3.1
 - 2 Communicates “no” to self when reaching for forbidden objects BR.3.2
 - 3 Begins to respond to caregiver’s cues and modifies behavior, e.g., does not touch the forbidden object, once recognizing the caregiver is discouraging the action BR.3.3
- 4 21 months to 36 months BR.4
 - 1 Increases the use of private speech in everyday play and interactions BR.4.1
 - 2 Increasingly reacts appropriately to adults’ facial expressions, tone, and affect, before acting on an impulse BR.4.2
 - 3 Identifies situations where he or she needs the caregiver to support in controlling behavior, e.g., holds caregiver’s hand when crossing the street BR.4.3
 - 4 Transitions smoothly if is prepared ahead of time BR.4.4
 - 5 Checks in with caregiver through nonverbal and verbal communication, e.g., glances, waves, points, says name, asks a question, all without having to be in close proximity BR.4.5

6 Demonstrates an awareness of expectations, e.g., approaches and gently touches a baby, waits for brief periods of time when turn-taking [BR.4.6](#)