

DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS

STANDING & WALKING

Babies generally learn to walk between 8 and 17 months. This is a fairly wide range of “normal” because all babies achieve this important milestone at their own pace.

Babies start by pulling up to stand while holding onto furniture or their cribs anywhere between 8 and 12 months. Next, babies move on to cruising or furniture walking and experimenting with standing unsupported, showing off their balance. Finally, they're ready to take their first unsupported steps on their own!

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The significance of standing & walking:

- Babies begin to explore subtle weight shifts and minute adjustments in position to maintain their balance in sitting. In standing, they get to experiment with these same concepts in a new position.
- As with sitting, postural control in a standing position requires the activation and contraction of many core muscles at once. So standing equals strengthening!
- When babies begin to cruise along the furniture and walk around the room with push toys, they get crucial experience with reciprocal movements of the body. This bilateral coordination ensures that both sides of the body can work together in a fluid way.
- Standing and walking offer a different visual and spatial vantage point for babies, contributing to the development of visual motor and visual perceptual skills.
- Walking means mobility! And mobility means that babies have greater access to their surroundings, which results in more opportunities to develop even more complex motor skills.

How to encourage standing & walking:

- Place toys and other interesting baby-safe objects on higher surfaces for baby to reach and pull up to see.
- Use movement songs to encourage longer periods of standing (e.g. Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes or If You're Happy and You Know it).
- Place toys and other objects along the length of a couch or coffee table to encourage cruising along the furniture.
- Place pieces of furniture with just enough space between them that babies have to take a few steps to get to the next couch or low table.
- Offer push toys that babies can use to practice balance and moving one foot in front of the other.
- Weight a laundry basket with a stack of books and let baby push it around the house.
- Use a beach ball or a balloon and motivate the baby to chase it.