

Developmental Milestones for Children of Primary School Age

Year 1 – Aged 5-6

Important context: While age-based milestones are helpful guides, they're not rigid rules. Daily living skills develop at different rates, often unevenly or asynchronously, especially for neurodivergent learners. Use these milestones as a flexible reference, always considering each individual's unique profile.

Year 1 – 5-6 years

Self-Help and Independence Skills




- **Dressing:** Putting on uniforms, shoes, and managing buttons/zips independently.
- **Hygiene:** Thoroughly washing hands, brushing teeth, and brushing hair with minimal help.
- **Eating:** Using a knife and fork, opening lunchbox items, and preparing simple snacks.
- **Toileting:** Independent toileting and wiping.





Independence and Practical Skills





- **Packing Bag/Uniform:** Managing belongings (coat, bag, shoes) for school.
- **Time Management:** Following morning/evening routines with visual prompts.
- **Making Choices:** Choosing their own clothes or selecting a snack, increasing their confidence.
- **Simple Safety:** Understanding road safety rules.

How to Encourage Independence

- **Break Down Tasks:** Divide complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps (backward chaining).
- **Create Accessible Spaces:** Place clothes, shoes, and toys within their reach.
- **Provide Enough Time:** Avoid rushing them in the mornings or evenings to allow them to finish tasks themselves.
- **Use Visual Reminders:** Use picture charts for routines like "getting ready for school".

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow Practice: Practice new skills frequently, like on weekends rather than just busy mornings. <p>Emotional & Social Independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotion Management: Expressing feelings verbally rather than through tantrums. • Conflict Resolution: Learning to share, take turns, and resolve minor conflicts with peers. • Responsible Choices: Allowing them to pick from limited options (e.g., "Do you want cereal or toast?").
<p>Social and Emotional Skills</p>	<p>For Year 1 children (ages 5–6), social and emotional development is centred on settling into school life, building friendships, and beginning to manage feelings and behaviour with support. Children are still very concrete in their thinking and rely heavily on adults for guidance, but independence is starting to grow.</p> <p>Here's a clear breakdown:</p> <p> Social Skills & Friendships</p> <p>By Year 1, most children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to form early friendships, often based on shared activities or proximity • Enjoy playing with others, but may still engage in parallel play (playing alongside rather than fully together) • Are learning to share, take turns, and cooperate with adult support • Start to understand classroom rules and expectations • May need help resolving disagreements (often quickly emotional or impulsive) • Are strongly influenced by adults and familiar peers <p> Emotional Awareness & Regulation</p> <p>Children typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can identify basic emotions (happy, sad, angry, scared) • Begin to talk about feelings, especially with adult prompts • May still show strong emotional reactions (tantrums, frustration) • Are learning strategies to calm down (with adult guidance) • Begin to understand that others have feelings too, but this is emerging <p> Self-Confidence & Self-Esteem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show excitement and pride in achievements • Rely heavily on adult praise and reassurance • Can become easily upset by mistakes or failure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to develop confidence in familiar routines and tasks <p> Empathy & Understanding Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start to notice when others are happy or upset • May try to comfort others, often prompted by adults • Still largely egocentric (focused on their own perspective) • Beginning to learn that actions affect others <p> Independence & Responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow simple classroom rules and routines with reminders • Begin to take responsibility for small tasks (e.g. putting things away) • Need frequent adult support to stay organised and on task • Are learning to manage transitions between activities <p> Behaviour & Moral Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand basic ideas of right and wrong • Often see fairness in simple, personal terms (“I had it first”) • Follow rules mainly to please adults or avoid consequences • Are beginning to understand classroom expectations
Communication skills	<p>Speaking & Listening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Following simple instructions. <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking in full sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing ideas and opinions clearly. <input type="checkbox"/> Listening attentively to stories and information, and responding appropriately.
Physical Skills	<p>For Year 1 children (ages 5–6), physical development focuses on building core movement skills, coordination, balance, and early fine motor control. Children are becoming more confident movers, but skills are still developing and need practice and repetition.</p> <p>Here’s a clear breakdown:</p> <p> Gross Motor Skills (large movements)</p> <p>By Year 1, most children can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run confidently, with improving control and direction • Jump, hop, and skip (hop and skip may still be developing) • Climb and use playground equipment safely • Throw and catch large balls with some accuracy • Kick a ball in a simple direction (accuracy still developing) • Balance on one foot for short periods

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to follow simple rules in games and PE activities <p>👉 Movements are becoming more controlled, but still often energetic and less refined</p> <p> Fine Motor Skills (hand control)</p> <p>Children typically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a pencil using a comfortable grip (not always fully efficient yet) • Begin to form letters correctly, though size and spacing may vary • Draw simple shapes and figures with increasing detail • Use scissors with growing control (cutting simple lines and shapes) • Begin to copy patterns and write short words <p> Balance, Coordination & Body Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve balance during movement and stationary positions • Begin to coordinate both sides of the body (e.g. throwing with one hand while stepping forward) • Show developing control when stopping, starting, and changing direction • Sit upright for short periods, though posture may still need reminders <p> Spatial Awareness & Movement Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start to understand how their body moves in space • Avoid obstacles more successfully when running or moving • Follow simple movement instructions in PE (e.g. “jump then turn”) • Begin to copy simple movement sequences <p> Physical Confidence & Stamina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy active play and physical games • Can sustain activity for moderate periods, but tire easily compared to older children • Show enthusiasm in PE, even if skills are still developing
<p>Learning s</p> <p>(Secrets of Success)</p>	<p>Learning Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Follow simple instructions (1–2 steps) <input type="checkbox"/> Concentrate for short periods <input type="checkbox"/> Work with increasing independence <input type="checkbox"/> Ask and answer simple questions <input type="checkbox"/> Develop confidence in sharing ideas
<p>Academic Skills</p>	<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recognise and read most common phonics sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Blend sounds to read simple words (e.g. <i>c-a-t</i> → <i>cat</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing and reading simple words and short sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying common sight words (e.g., "the," "and," "it").

- Beginning to sound out words (phonics) and blending sounds together.
- Understanding the concept of a "story" (beginning, middle, end).
- Beginning to retell stories in their own words.
- Identifying characters, settings, and events in a story.

Writing:

- Writing simple sentences using correct punctuation (capital letters, finger spaces and full stops).
- Using phonetic spelling (spelling words the way they sound).
- Beginning to use capital letters for names, the start of sentences, etc.
- Writing their own name correctly.
- Starting to form letters properly and legibly.

Mathematics

Number Recognition & Counting:

- Counting to 100 (often in steps of 1, 2, 5, and 10).
- Understanding numbers and their place value (tens and ones).
- Writing numbers correctly.
- Comparing numbers (greater than, less than, equal to).

Basic Arithmetic:

- Adding and subtracting numbers up to 20, with and without objects.
- Solving simple word problems.
- Learning number bonds (e.g., $5 + 5 = 10$).
- Recognising patterns and sequences (e.g., skip counting, simple addition patterns).

Shapes and Measurement:

- Recognising and naming basic 2D shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle) and 3D shapes (sphere, cube, cone).
- Understanding simple measurements (length, weight, capacity) using non-standard units (e.g., comparing objects using a ruler or blocks).
- Understanding the concept of time (days of the week, months, telling time to the hour).

Science

Understanding the World:

- Learning about the seasons, weather, and basic environmental changes.
- Identifying animals, plants, and their habitats.

- Understanding basic human needs (food, water, shelter) and the five senses.
- Exploring materials and their properties (e.g., hard, soft, rough, smooth).
- Engaging in simple experiments (e.g., observing how things grow, mixing substances).

History & Geography

Understanding the Past and Present:

- Learning about themselves, their family, and their community.
- Understanding simple concepts of time (e.g., past, present, future).
- Learning about their local environment (e.g., where they live, the school, the community).
- Recognising important symbols (e.g., the flag of their country).

Art & Design

Creative Expression:

- Drawing, painting, and creating with various materials (e.g., clay, paper, fabric).
- Using basic techniques for coloring, cutting, and pasting.
- Learning about famous artists and their works (e.g., Van Gogh, Picasso).

ICT (Information and Communication Technology)

Basic Computing Skills:

- Learning to use a computer or tablet for simple tasks (e.g., clicking, dragging, typing).
- Using educational software or apps to support learning in various subjects.
- Understanding basic online safety rules.

Key Focus of Year 1:

- **Foundational Skills:** The main goal in Year 1 is to lay the foundation for literacy and numeracy skills that will be developed further in later years.
- **Independence:** Encouraging independence in completing tasks, both academic and personal.
- **Social Integration:** Year 1 is also about learning how to interact and work in a group setting, developing positive relationships with peers and teachers.

	<p>► End of Year 1 expectations</p> <p>By the end of Year 1, children are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be confident with basic reading and phonics• Write simple, readable sentences• Have a secure understanding of numbers to 20• Be ready for more structured learning in Year 2
<p>Suggestions if a child is falling behind or excelling</p>	<p>📖 Reading (building confidence + fluency)</p> <p>📖 1. "Little and often" reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read together for 10 minutes daily• Let your child track the words with their finger• Re-read favourite books to build fluency <p>🗣️ 2. Echo reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You read a sentence → child repeats it back with expression• Helps fluency and confidence <p>🔍 3. Spot the word</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pick a word from the book (e.g. <i>the, was</i>)• Ask them to find it on the page quickly <p>🗣️ 4. Story talk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask simple questions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ "What do you think will happen next?"◦ "How does the character feel?" <p>✍️ Writing (making it purposeful and fun)</p> <p>📝 1. Shopping lists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child writes the weekly shopping list• Encourage sounding out words (e.g. <i>bred</i> for bread is fine) <p>✉️ 2. Notes and messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leave notes for each other (e.g. "I love you", "Good morning")• Child writes replies

3. Mini stories

- Draw a picture → write 1–3 sentences about it
- Focus: capital letter, full stop, finger spaces

4. Sentence dice

- Roll a dice:
 - 1 = who
 - 2 = what
 - 3 = where
- Build silly sentences together

Maths (real-life learning)

1. Cooking maths

- Measure ingredients together
- Count spoonfuls or weigh items
- Talk about “more” and “less”

2. Shop role-play

- Use coins at home
- “This toy costs 5p—how many coins do you need?”

3. Number bonds games

- “What makes 10?” using fingers, blocks, or objects
- Quick-fire questions: $7 + ? = 10$

4. Daily time practice

- Look at clocks together:
 - “What time do we eat dinner?”
 - “What time do you go to bed?”

5. Dice games

- Roll two dice and add the numbers
- Make it competitive: “Who gets the biggest total?”

Science (curiosity at home)

1. Nature walks

- Spot plants, insects, birds
- Talk about what they see

2. Sink or float

- Test household objects in water
- Predict first, then test

3. Weather watch

- Record daily weather in a simple chart
- Talk about changes over the week

Learning skills (focus + independence)

1. "Beat the timer"

- Set 5–10 minutes for a task (reading, puzzle, writing)
- Helps build focus gently

2. Puzzles and games

- Jigsaws, memory games, matching cards
- Builds concentration and problem-solving

3. Simple routines

- Let child take responsibility:
 - Packing their bag
 - Setting the table
 - Tidying toys