

# Infant and ▶ Toddler Skills for Action

## Stages in learning to sit

### Stages in learning to sit with good balance

Before the age of 5-6 months young infants do not have the strength and control to sit erect. If you prop them up in the sitting position their backs are flexed but they manage to hold their heads up.

At this stage we often hold the infant in the sitting position on our laps and provide them with the support they need to stay erect and not fall over. This early sitting practice is important for developing the infants' ability to support the head and trunk in an upright position and for developing strength for sitting.



At around the age of 5-6 infants are able to sit briefly when they prop themselves up on their arms.

**At 6-7 months** infants can sit briefly without support, but their balance is poor and they

quickly topple over.

However, with a little bit of support around the hips the infant is able to keep his or her balance and start to reach for toys.

**At 7-8 months** typically developing infants sit with good balance and are able to reach for toys in all directions.



They can also lift and move large objects without losing their balance.

As their balance improves, infants learn to twist their

head and trunk to look and reach for toys behind them.



They also start to reach across the midline - this action involves twisting the trunk.

At 8-10 months, when their balance is sitting is reliable, infants start to move from the sitting onto all fours.



**Low tone and hypermobile infants do not**

### **reach and twist in sitting**

Low tone infants, especially if there is tightness in the hips, will often sit with a very flexed trunk.

Infants who are very flexible are able to reach far forwards, and sometimes quite far sideways.

However, they may be less willing to reach sideways or across the body, as this action disturbs their stability and balance.

Here you see Roan, who is very flexible, but also has good trunk control, reaching across her body to reach a toy.



Instead of twisting the head and trunk to reach or look behind, they will often swivel on the spot.



**Monitoring your infant's**



**sitting development**

Infants only learn to sit independently

once they have developed the strength and control needed for keeping the head and trunk upright and steady when supported in sitting. Once they have achieved this the next step is to learn to balance in sitting.

Tracking your infants progress

	The infant is able to hold the head up briefly when supported in sitting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Supports head and looks around when held and carried upright.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Infant sits very briefly propping on arms.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Has no balance, falls sideways or forwards very quickly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Able to steady head when tipped back from sitting into lying.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Able to lift up the head when pulled up into sitting position from lying.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	May assist movement by pulling with arms.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Holds head and trunk erect when supported around the chest in sitting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Pam Versfeld [www.developmentalgym.com](http://www.developmentalgym.com)

Infants progress through ability levels on their way to towards the sitting milestone with a wide range in the age at which infants master each new level.

### **When to start training sitting**

If your infant is still having difficulties sitting on her own by 8 months you will want to start some sitting training to help her gain the strength and balance needed for sitting. And once your infant can sit on her own, it is important that she becomes active in sitting and is able to reach in all direction and starts to move into the crawling position.

### **Independent sitting is very important for attention and language development**

An infant who can sit independently is able to look around and watch what is happening in their environment. They start to use their hands to manipulate toys in more complex ways and also start to use their hands to communicate using gestures. Newly sitting infants do lots of shaking and banging of toys and these repeated rhythmical movements are linked to the onset of babbling.

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#### *Activities for Training Sitting*

Available to Infant Training Guide Subscribers [Read more](#)



#### *First sitting: on a caregiver's lap*

An infant's first experience of sitting is usually sitting on a caregiver's lap. The caregiver provides enough support to allow the infant to keep the trunk and head erect. From this position the infant can look around and start reaching for toys.



#### *Sitting with chest high support*

Some infants have difficulty sitting erect without some support around the chest. Learn how to use foam cushions to support your infant in sitting and then encourage active looking and reaching.



### *Learning to sit with support around the hips and pelvis*

Infants who are having difficulty learning to balance in sitting often just need a little bit of support at the hips.

Learn how to use foam blocks to provide just enough support to help your infant balance in sitting and start to reach for toys.



### *Sitting games to improve balance*

Suggestions for activities to improve your infant's sitting balance and strengthen the trunk (core) muscles.



### *Moving from sitting to kneeling*

Learn how to use a low foam step or your legs to encourage your infant to move from sitting into the crawling position.



### Lap sitting games for strength and stability