

# IELG Standards - Approaches to Learning

Age	Sub-domain	Age Descriptor	Indicators for children	Strategies for interaction
0-9 months	Curiosity & Initiative	Children are discovering the world through exploration and social interaction. Children react with special interest to new objects, people, and experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Observes the environment and people; tracks a toy as it moves from one point to another</li> <li>•Shows interest in him- or herself, e.g., gazes at hands, places feet in mouth</li> <li>•Actively explores new objects found in the environment, e.g., touches, pats, and mouths</li> <li>•Attempts to initiate interaction with others, e.g., smiles, reaches for a caregiver</li> <li>•Participates in joint attention with caregiver(s), e.g., focuses on the same object</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an inviting environment for the child to explore; change materials and toys in the child's environment on a regular basis</li> <li>• Create opportunities in which the child can explore his or her outside environment; talk with the child about what is happening</li> <li>• Provide a variety of sensory materials, e.g., books that incorporates different textures, toys that shake or rattle</li> <li>• Respond thoughtfully and promptly to the child's attempts for interaction</li> </ul>
7-18 months	Curiosity & Initiative	Children's newly acquired physical control allows them to explore and initiate interactions in a more purposeful and meaningful manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Demonstrates an interest in new objects by manipulating and turning the object</li> <li>•Uses familiar objects in new ways, e.g., places a toy basket on head</li> <li>•Moves toward a new activity by crawling or walking</li> <li>•Begins to demonstrate preferences for objects and/or materials, e.g., selects a book to read when given options</li> <li>•Engages familiar adults in meaningful interactions, e.g., points to favorite toy, brings a book over to be read</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an environment that allows the child to pick and choose what activity or toys he or she would like to play with</li> <li>• Provide materials and objects that can be used in more than one way</li> <li>• Encourage activities that are meaningful to the child, e.g., a favorite book or a favorite song</li> </ul>

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16-24 months	Curiosity & Initiative	Children become increasingly curious about new experiences and activities that include peers and adults; they begin to interact and seek involvement with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Demonstrates an interest in new activities and a willingness to try out new experiences</li> <li>•Engages in active exploration in new environments, e.g., walks over to a toy shelf in an unfamiliar home or classroom</li> <li>•Initiates play with others, e.g., a grandparent, sibling, or teacher</li> <li>•Experiments with different ways to use materials and objects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the child with different choices for play and activities throughout the day</li> <li>• Encourage the child to participate in a new activity but do not force</li> <li>• Model positive interaction with the child throughout the day</li> <li>• Encourage the child to notice what other children are doing, e.g., “Annie and Steve are making a pizza out of their play dough”</li> </ul>
21-36 months	Curiosity & Initiative	Children demonstrate initiative by participating and maintaining engagement in novel experiences. Children use observation, communication, and inquiry to make sense of these experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Observes other children in play</li> <li>•Enjoys accomplishing simple goals, e.g., completing a puzzle, blowing a bubble</li> <li>•Asks questions while interacting with others, e.g., “why,” “what,” “how”</li> <li>•Participates in a broader array of experiences, e.g., outdoor jungle gyms, art projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the child when he or she is trying something new and/or taking reasonable risks; remain sensitive to the child’s temperament and provide support as needed</li> <li>• Engage in conversations with the child and answer their questions clearly and honestly</li> <li>• Build upon the child’s interest by introducing books and other activities</li> <li>• Extend interactions by introducing</li> </ul>
0-9 months	Problem Solving	Children are building the foundation for problem solving through active exploration and social interaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Focuses on getting a caregiver’s attention through the use of sounds, cries, gestures, and facial expressions</li> <li>•Enjoys repeating actions, e.g., continues to drop toy from highchair after it is picked up by a caregiver or sibling</li> <li>•Communicates the need for assistance through verbal and/or nonverbal cues, e.g., pointing, reaching, vocalizing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond thoughtfully and promptly to the child’s attempts for attention</li> <li>• Provide interesting and age-appropriate toys and objects for exploration</li> <li>• Engage and interact with the child frequently during the day</li> </ul>

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7-18 months	Problem Solving	Children begin to discover that certain actions and behaviors can be solutions to challenges and obstacles they encounter. Children also recognize how to engage their caregiver(s) to assist in managing these challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Repeats actions over and over again to figure out how an object works</li> <li>•Begins to recognize that certain actions will draw out certain responses, e.g., laughing and smiling will often result in an adult responding in the same manner</li> <li>•Attempts a variety of physical strategies to reach simple goals, e.g., pulls the string of a toy train to move it closer or crawls to get a ball that has rolled away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate how to try things in different ways and encourage the child to do the same, e.g., using a plastic bucket as a drum</li> <li>• Gently guide the child in discovering and exploring, while allowing him or her enough independence to try new things</li> <li>• Respond thoughtfully and promptly to the child's communication attempts</li> </ul>
16-24 months	Problem Solving	Children have an enhanced capacity to solve challenges they encounter through the use of objects and imitation. Children may take on a more autonomous role during this stage, yet, reach out to caregiver(s) in most instances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Imitates a caregiver's behavior to accomplish a task, e.g., attempts to turn a doorknob</li> <li>•Increases ability to recognize and solve problems through active exploration, play, and trial and error, e.g., tries inserting a shape at different angles to make it fit in a sorter</li> <li>•Uses objects in the environment to solve problems, e.g., uses a pail to move numerous books to the other side of the room</li> <li>•Uses communication to solve problems, e.g., runs out of glue during an art project and gestures to a caregiver for more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validate and praise the child's attempts to find solutions to challenges</li> <li>• Narrate while assisting the child in figuring out a solution, e.g., "Let's try to turn the puzzle piece this way"</li> <li>• Provide the child with opportunities to solve problems with and without your help; minimize the possibility for the child to become frustrated</li> <li>• Respond to the child's communication efforts</li> </ul>

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21-36 months	Problem Solving	Children begin to discriminate which solutions work, with fewer trials. Children increasingly become more autonomous and will attempt to first overcome obstacles on their own or with limited support from caregiver(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Asks for help from a caregiver when needed</li> <li>•Begins to solve problems with less trial and error</li> <li>•Refuses assistance, e.g., calls for help but then pushes a hand away</li> <li>•Shows pride when accomplishing a task</li> <li>•Uses increasingly refined skills while solving problems, e.g., uses own napkin to clean up a spill without asking an adult for help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the child’s lead and pay attention to his or her cues when assisting in a task</li> <li>• Share in the child’s joy and accomplishments</li> <li>• Model and narrate problem-solving skills through play</li> <li>• Provide the child with blocks of uninterrupted time to work on activities</li> <li>• Be available for the child and recognize when he or she needs guidance</li> </ul>
0-9 months	Confidence and Risk-Taking	Children begin to build confidence through the everyday interactions they experience with their caregivers. These interactions form special relationships, which in turn build the “secure base” for children to take risks and try new experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Cries and/or uses body language to signal and get needs met, e.g., averts gaze, arches back</li> <li>•Explores new objects with eagerness, e.g., squeals and/or squeezes a toy</li> <li>•Uses different approaches for accomplishing a simple task, e.g., reaching, kicking, vocalizing</li> <li>•Attempts new skills on his or her own while “checking in” with a familiar adult, e.g., a new crawler begins to move, then turns toward the caregiver for reassurance before crawling away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide nurturing and consistent care in order to build the child’s self-confidence</li> <li>• Create an environment where the child has access to age-appropriate toys</li> <li>• Use nonverbal and verbal cues to encourage and support the child as he or she engages in a new activity, e.g., smile, nod, clap</li> <li>• Provide support in new situations, while allowing the child room to explore new objects</li> </ul>

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7-18 months	Confidence and Risk-Taking	Children begin to use their developing confidence to engage in simple risk-taking behavior as they physically explore their environment in the context of a secure relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Begins to take great risks with little regard for danger, e.g., lunging off a couch to reach for an object</li> <li>•Becomes more intentional and confident when playing and interacting, e.g., grabs, pushes, throws</li> <li>•Uses trial and error to solve a problem, e.g., tries different angles when attempting to place a shape in a shape sorter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an interesting and safe environment for the child to explore; remain watchful and intervene when needed to keep the child safe</li> <li>• Recognize that the child needs time to adjust to new skills, e.g., the child can suddenly become frightened by his or her expanding capabilities</li> <li>• Encourage the child to try new ways of doing things</li> </ul>
16-24 months	Confidence and Risk-Taking	Children increase their confidence in the context of a secure relationship, and begin to engage in more complex tasks and seek out new situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Plays and explores farther away from attachment figure; continues to “check in” for reassurance, e.g., plays across the room and glances toward caregiver, then re-engages in playing</li> <li>•Seeks out assistance and reassurance from familiar others</li> <li>•Demonstrates confidence in abilities and achievements, e.g., cheers or claps when accomplishing a goal such as completing a simple puzzle</li> <li>•Joins in a new activity after cautiously observing at first</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain available for the child during play; use reassuring cues to encourage the child to explore, e.g., smile, nod, and clap</li> <li>• Provide materials and activities that are challenging but not frustrating, e.g., large blocks, a simple puzzle</li> <li>• Be sensitive to the child’s temperament; recognize that the child may need some time to engage in a new experience; allow the child to observe until he or she is ready to take part</li> </ul>

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21-36 months	Confidence and Risk-Taking	Children use their confidence to begin taking emotional risks in addition to physical risks, with support from their caregiver(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Attempts to independently resolve social conflicts without automatically running to the caregiver, e.g., tries to retrieve an object that was taken away by a peer</li> <li>•Demonstrates eagerness and determination when problemsolving during new tasks, e.g., the child who pushes the caregiver’s hand away and refuses help until he or she is ready to ask for it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validate the emotions the child is feeling, e.g., “I can see you are upset that your toy was taken away from you.”</li> <li>• Model thoughtful and polite behavior through everyday interactions</li> <li>• Provide the child with opportunities to problem-solve on their own, intervening only when the child appears to become frustrated and/or asks for help</li> </ul>
0-9 months	Persistence, Effort &	Children observe, explore, attend and interact with the world around them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Establishes and sustains eye contact with caregiver(s)</li> <li>•Eofocuses attention on sounds, people, and objects</li> <li>•Repeats interesting actions over and over</li> <li>•Indicates preferences by using nonverbal cues, e.g., turning head, kicking feet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage and play with the child often</li> <li>• Provide interesting and age-appropriate toys and objects for exploration without overstimulating the child; limit the number of toys, colors, and sounds found in the environment</li> <li>• Acknowledge and respond thoughtfully to the child’s communication efforts</li> </ul>
7-18 months	Persistence, Effort &	Children begin to become more persistent in interacting with people, exploring objects, and accomplishing tasks. While their ability to sustain attention increases, they are still easily distracted by other objects and events in the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Participates in back-and-forth interactions, e.g., plays peek-a-boo with an adult</li> <li>•Repeats activities over and over, e.g., successfully inserts all the shape sorter’s pieces, dumps them out, and starts again</li> <li>•Begins to attempt assisting in self-help activities, e.g., feeding, grooming</li> <li>•Demonstrates preferences, e.g., gestures to the bean bag and says “no” when presented with something else</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share in the accomplishments of the child; encourage him or her throughout the process of working through tasks</li> <li>• Engage and play with the child on a daily basis</li> <li>• Follow the child’s lead when engaging in activities</li> <li>• Allow the child to help in self-help activities when he or she demonstrates an interest</li> <li>• Acknowledge when the child demonstrates a preference, e.g., “You want the blue cup, here it is.” Or “I can see that you want to read a book, but now it is time to eat.”</li> </ul>

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16-24 months	Persistence, Effort &	Children increase their ability to remain focused on goal-oriented tasks. At this stage, persistence is evidenced by the process the child engages in to discover how to accomplish the goal, instead of by the end result.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses for longer periods of time on activities</li> <li>• Engages for longer periods of time when trying to work through tasks, e.g., fits puzzle pieces together</li> <li>• Repeats experiences he or she enjoys, e.g., says “more” after reading his or her favorite book</li> <li>• Demonstrates preferences for activities, e.g., reads with a caregiver, plays at the sand table, prefers to sit by certain caregivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the child with different manipulatives that he or she can explore independently, e.g., puzzles, peg boards, books</li> <li>• Celebrate the child’s accomplishment in a genuine manner</li> <li>• Offer support and guidance if the child becomes frustrated when playing; respond promptly if the child calls for assistance</li> <li>• Recognize the child’s favorite activities and use them to identify other toys and materials that he or she will be interested in</li> </ul>
21-36 months	Persistence, Effort &	Children attend to tasks for longer periods of time with more abilities to persist in increasingly difficult tasks. They can now attend to more than one event in their environment; this enables them to stay focused even with distractions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes choices based on preferences, and at times, in opposition to adult choices, e.g., “No milk, want juice”</li> <li>• Attempts to try a difficult task for an increasing amount of time</li> <li>• Practices an activity many times in order to master it, even if setbacks occur</li> <li>• Shows interest in completing routine tasks independently, e.g., zips up coat, puts on shoes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the child to make certain choices throughout the day</li> <li>• Provide the child with blocks of uninterrupted time to work on activities</li> <li>• Support the child in building attention by extending interactions, e.g., adding a new experience to the current interaction</li> <li>• Assess how to best support the child in completing complex tasks; take into account varying abilities of each child</li> <li>• Provide the child with a small amount of responsibility, e.g., setting the cups out for snack time or holding the door for peers</li> </ul>

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0-9 months	Creativity, Inventiveness &	Children observe and interact with their surrounding environment, and begin to build the skills needed to manipulate objects and materials in different ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Observes materials, objects, and people with curiosity</li> <li>•Actively explores new objects found in the environment by touching, patting, and mouthing</li> <li>•Reaches for objects in close proximity</li> <li>•Imitates sounds, movements, and facial expressions, e.g., moves body up and down after caregiver initially moves in that manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an inviting environment for the child to explore; change materials and toys in the child's environment on a regular basis</li> <li>• Follow the child's lead during play</li> <li>• Engage with the child while he or she is exploring, e.g. demonstrate what the object or toy does</li> <li>• Provide toys and experiences that have a variety of colors, textures, sounds, and smells</li> </ul>
7-18 months	Creativity, Inventiveness &	Children first begin using most objects and materials for their intended use. As they develop, children begin to experiment with using these objects and materials in new and unexpected ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Imitates a peer's actions, e.g., bangs on table with cup</li> <li>•Uses objects as they're intended to be used, e.g., rolls a toy car</li> <li>•Spends increasing amounts of time exploring and learning about objects, e.g., will attend to a new toy for longer periods of time in order to make sense of it</li> <li>•Begins to use objects in new and unexpected ways, e.g., places a basket on head</li> <li>•Imitates actions of other people in a playful manner, e.g., wags finger at baby doll and says, "no, no, no"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond enthusiastically when the child demonstrates new uses for objects he or she has discovered</li> <li>• Provide materials that can be used in more than one way</li> <li>• Change objects and toys frequently for the child</li> <li>• Play with the child often and encourage creativity</li> <li>• Imitate the child in a genuine manner during play</li> </ul>

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16-24 months	Creativity, Inventiveness &	Children begin to expand how they use creativity, imagination, and inventiveness through the use of symbolic representation in play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Pretends one object is really another by using substitution, e.g., using a toy car to brush hair</li> <li>•Engages in pretend play with familiar objects and experiences, e.g., places baby doll in stroller and pushes the stroller</li> <li>•Engages familiar adults in pretend play, e.g., hands the adult a play cup and pretends to pour “tea” into it</li> <li>•Communicates in creative ways, e.g., plays with words by rhyming, chanting, or making up songs; uses movement and dance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play with the child; follow the child’s lead</li> <li>• Narrate the child’s play, e.g., “Are you taking the baby for a walk to the store?”</li> <li>• Encourage the child’s creative and inventive attempts</li> <li>• Actively engage with the child while playing; demonstrate enthusiasm and delight</li> </ul>
21-36 months	Creativity, Inventiveness &	Children incorporate their use of creativity, inventiveness, and imagination in a more complex manner while they play, communicate, and problem solve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Expands use of objects and toys in new and unexpected ways; makes a road out of a few blocks; or substitutes an object for another to solve a problem</li> <li>•Takes on familiar roles during play, e.g., cooks in the pretend kitchen</li> <li>•Expresses inventive ideas to peers while playing; becomes directive, e.g., “You will be the police officer and you have to wear this.”</li> <li>•Creates an art project and creates a simple story to accompany the artwork</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interact with the child during pretend play and follow his or her lead</li> <li>• Ask open-ended questions while playing with the child in order to expand on thoughts and language</li> <li>• Encourage the child to think of new ideas, e.g., “What do you think happens after the butterfly flies away?”</li> </ul>