

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: Birth to Age 3

Approaches to Learning

Curiosity & Initiative **CI**

Children demonstrate interest and eagerness in learning about their world.

- 1 Birth to 9 months **CI.1**
 - 1 Observes the environment and people; tracks a toy as it moves from one point to another **CI.1.1**
 - 2 Shows interest in him- or herself, e.g., gazes at hands, places feet in mouth **CI.1.2**
 - 3 Actively explores new objects found in the environment, e.g., touches, pats, and mouths **CI.1.3**
 - 4 Attempts to initiate interaction with others, e.g., smiles, reaches for a caregiver **CI.1.4**
 - 5 Participates in joint attention with caregiver(s), e.g., focuses on the same object **CI.1.5**
 - 2 7 months to 18 months **CI.2**
 - 1 Demonstrates an interest in new objects by manipulating and turning the object **CI.2.1**
 - 2 Uses familiar objects in new ways, e.g., places a toy basket on head **CI.2.2**
 - 3 Moves toward a new activity by crawling or walking **CI.2.3**
 - 4 Begins to demonstrate preferences for objects and/or materials, e.g., selects a book to read when given options **CI.2.4**
 - 5 Engages familiar adults in meaningful interactions, e.g., points to favorite toy, brings a book over to be read **CI.2.5**
 - 3 16 months to 24 months **CI.3**
 - 1 Demonstrates an interest in new activities and a willingness to try out new experiences **CI.3.1**
 - 2 Engages in active exploration in new environments, e.g., walks over to a toy shelf in an unfamiliar home or classroom **CI.3.2**
 - 3 Initiates play with others, e.g., a grandparent, sibling, or teacher **CI.3.3**
 - 4 Experiments with different ways to use materials and objects **CI.3.4**
 - 4 21 months to 36 months **CI.4**
 - 1 Observes other children in play **CI.4.1**
 - 2 Enjoys accomplishing simple goals, e.g., completing a puzzle, blowing a bubble **CI.4.2**
 - 3 Asks questions while interacting with others, e.g., “why,” “what,” “how” **CI.4.3**
 - 4 Participates in a broader array of experiences, e.g., outdoor jungle gyms, art projects **CI.4.4**
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Problem Solving PS

Children attempt a variety of strategies to accomplish tasks, overcome obstacles, and find solutions to tasks, questions, and challenges.

- 1 Birth to 9 months PS.1
 - 1 Focuses on getting a caregiver's attention through the use of sounds, cries, gestures, and facial expressions PS.1.1
 - 2 Enjoys repeating actions, e.g., continues to drop toy from highchair after it is picked up by a caregiver or sibling PS.1.2
 - 3 Communicates the need for assistance through verbal and/or nonverbal cues, e.g., pointing, reaching, vocalizing PS.1.3
 - 2 7 months to 18 months PS.2
 - 1 Repeats actions over and over again to figure out how an object works PS.2.1
 - 2 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 PS.2.2
 - 3 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 PS.2.3
 - 3 16 months to 24 months PS.3
 - 1 Imitates a caregiver's behavior to accomplish a task, e.g., attempts to turn a doorknob PS.3.1
 - 2 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 PS.3.2
 - 3 Uses objects in the environment to solve problems, e.g., uses a pail to move numerous books to the other side of the room PS.3.3
 - 4 Uses communication to solve problems, e.g., runs out of glue during an art project and gestures to a caregiver for more PS.3.4
 - 4 21 months to 36 months PS.4
 - 1 Asks for help from a caregiver when needed PS.4.1
 - 2 Begins to solve problems with less trial and error PS.4.2
 - 3 Refuses assistance, e.g., calls for help but then pushes a hand away PS.4.3
 - 4 Shows pride when accomplishing a task PS.4.4
 - 5 Uses increasingly refined skills while solving problems, e.g., uses own napkin to clean up a spill without asking an adult for help PS.4.5
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Children demonstrate a willingness to participate in new experiences and confidently engage in risk-taking.

- 1 Birth to 9 months CRT.1
 - 1 Cries and/or uses body language to signal and get needs met, e.g., averts gaze, arches back CRT.1.1
 - 2 Explores new objects with eagerness, e.g., squeals and/or squeezes a toy CRT.1.2
 - 3 Uses different approaches for accomplishing a simple task, e.g., reaching, kicking, vocalizing CRT.1.3
 - 4 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 CRT.1.4
 - 2 7 months to 18 months CRT.2
 - 1 Begins to take great risks with little regard for danger, e.g., lunging off a couch to reach for an object CRT.2.1
 - 2 Becomes more intentional and confident when playing and interacting, e.g., grabs, pushes, throws CRT.2.2
 - 3 Uses trial and error to solve a problem, e.g., tries different angles when attempting to place a shape in a shape sorter CRT.2.3
 - 3 16 months to 24 months CRT.3
 - 1 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 CRT.3.1
 - 2 Seeks out assistance and reassurance from familiar others CRT.3.2
 - 3 Demonstrates confidence in abilities and achievements, e.g., cheers or claps when accomplishing a goal such as completing a simple puzzle CRT.3.3
 - 4 Joins in a new activity after cautiously observing at first CRT.3.4
 - 4 21 months to 36 months CRT.4
 - 1 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 CRT.4.1
 - 2 Demonstrates eagerness and determination when problem-solving 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 CRT.4.2
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Persistence, Effort, & Attentiveness PEA

Children demonstrate the ability to remain engaged in experiences and develop a sense of purpose and follow-through.

- 1 Birth to 9 months PEA.1
 - 1 Establishes and sustains eye contact with caregiver(s) PEA.1.1
 - 2 Focuses attention on sounds, people, and objects PEA.1.2
 - 3 Repeats interesting actions over and over PEA.1.3
 - 4 Indicates preferences by using nonverbal cues, e.g., turning head, kicking feet PEA.1.4
 - 2 7 months to 18 months PEA.2
 - 1 Participates in back-and-forth interactions, e.g., plays peek-a-boo with an adult PEA.2.1
 - 2 Repeats activities over and over, e.g., successfully inserts all the shape sorter's pieces, dumps them out, and starts again PEA.2.2
 - 3 Begins to attempt assisting in self-help activities, e.g., feeding, grooming PEA.2.3
 - 4 Demonstrates preferences, e.g., gestures to the bean bag and says "no" when presented with something else PEA.2.4
 - 3 16 months to 24 months PEA.3
 - 1 Focuses for longer periods of time on activities PEA.3.1
 - 2 Engages for longer periods of time when trying to work through tasks, e.g., fits puzzle pieces together PEA.3.2
 - 3 Repeats experiences he or she enjoys, e.g., says "more" after reading his or her favorite book PEA.3.3
 - 4 Demonstrates preferences for activities, e.g., reads with a caregiver, plays at the sand table, prefers to sit by certain caregivers PEA.3.4
 - 4 21 months to 36 months PEA.4
 - 1 Makes choices based on preferences, and at times, in opposition to adult choices, e.g., "No milk, want juice" PEA.4.1
 - 2 Attempts to try a difficult task for an increasing amount of time PEA.4.2
 - 3 Practices an activity many times in order to master it, even if setbacks occur PEA.4.3
 - 4 Shows interest in completing routine tasks independently, e.g., zips up coat, puts on shoes PEA.4.3
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Children demonstrate the ability to use creativity, inventiveness, and imagination to increase their understanding and knowledge of the world.

- 1 Birth to 9 months CII.1
 - 1 Observes materials, objects, and people with curiosity CII.1.1
 - 2 Actively explores new objects found in the environment by touching, patting, and mouthing CII.1.2
 - 3 Reaches for objects in close proximity CII.1.3
 - 4 Imitates sounds, movements, and facial expressions, e.g., moves body up and down after caregiver initially moves in that manner CII.1.4
- 2 7 months to 18 months CII.2
 - 1 Imitates a peer's actions, e.g., bangs on table with cup CII.2.1
 - 2 Uses objects as they're intended to be used, e.g., rolls a toy car CII.2.2
 - 3 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 CII.2.3
 - 4 Begins to use objects in new and unexpected ways, e.g., places a basket on head CII.2.4
 - 5 Imitates actions of other people in a playful manner, e.g., wags finger at baby doll and says, "no, no, no" CII.2.5
- 3 16 months to 24 months CII.3
 - 1 Pretends one object is really another by using substitution, e.g., using a toy car to brush hair CII.3.1
 - 2 Engages in pretend play with familiar objects and experiences, e.g., places baby doll in stroller and pushes the stroller CII.3.2
 - 3 Engages familiar adults in pretend play, e.g., hands the adult a play cup and pretends to pour "tea" into it CII.3.3
 - 4 Communicates in creative ways, e.g., plays with words by rhyming, chanting, or making up songs; uses movement and dance CII.3.4
- 4 21 months to 36 months CII.4
 - 1 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 CII.4.1
 - 2 Takes on familiar roles during play, e.g., cooks in the pretend kitchen CII.4.2
 - 3 Expresses inventive ideas to peers while playing; becomes directive, e.g., "You will be the police officer and you have to wear this." CII.4.3
 - 4 Creates an art project and creates a simple story to accompany the artwork CII.4.4