



Hurray For Baby's Firsts!

Your baby's first year is a whirlwind of exciting firsts... first laugh, first crawl, first wobbly stand! No two babies are on the same schedule, so keep in mind that the when isn't as important as the wow! Here are some "firsts" to cheer on and celebrate. And share them with others by creating your very own Keepsake Storybook of Baby's Firsts, which can be found at HuggiesBabyNetwork.com/tools/ks

Crawling: Catch Me If You Can

Crawling generally begins in the 9 to 12 month range, and styles can vary greatly from one baby to the next. In fact, a few babies skip crawling altogether!

What baby will do: He will generally show his readiness to crawl by pushing himself up from a tummy position to a hands-and-knees posture, and rocking back and forth in place.

What you can do: Give him plenty of tummy time each day. When he does push up to hands and knees, know that he'll be mobile in no time. If you haven't childproofed the house yet, do it pronto, and be sure he can't access the stairs. When he's on hands and knees, encourage him by placing something interesting in front of him, just out of reach.

And don't be surprised if... he doesn't move from a rocking position, or he travels backwards at first. Once he's on the move, he may not crawl in the classic way – there are plenty of scooters, sliders, creepers, rollers and crab-walkers out there! The important thing is that baby uses his arms and legs on both sides of his body to get where he wants to go. (If you have concerns about crawling or any developmental milestone, discuss them with baby's pediatrician.)

Standing: Sooo Big

Starting at just a few months, babies may enjoy "standing" on your lap (with you supporting their body weight) and bouncing up and down. They generally start standing on their own between 9 and 12 months.

What baby will do: She'll probably start by pulling herself up on something convenient, like a couch, a chair or a bookcase. As her balance improves, she'll stand for short periods of time with no help. As her comfort level increases and her balance continues to improve, she'll stand for longer periods – all leading up to "cruising" and walking.

What you can do: Be sure she has safe places to pull herself up. Ensure that bookcases are solid or secured to walls and that nothing can fall on her. Move any items she shouldn't touch to an out-of-reach spot. If she wants to pull up on a dining chair, provide some counterweight on the back to ensure it doesn't tip over on her. Encourage her efforts with lots of praise!

And don't be surprised if... one morning you discover baby in her crib, standing for the first time, gripping the rails with a huge, proud grin on her face! With unsteady standing comes sudden, swift dropping onto her bottom with a whomp – the unexpectedness of this may startle her and cause her to cry, so comfort her and applaud her bravery.



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Walking: And They're Off!

Walking independently generally starts at around 12 months, though toddling can begin as early as 9 months and as late as 16 months. Solo walking usually starts after a confidence-boosting, muscle-building period of "cruising."

What baby will do: Baby will enjoy cruising – gripping the furniture and carefully moving alongside it. (Picture a non-swimmer making his way down the edge of a deep pool, or your very first time in a roller-skating rink!) He'll also enjoy walking with you, grasping both your index fingers for support.

What you can do: Set up a safe cruising zone for him. Temporarily rearrange the furniture to create a closed corral – the couch, the loveseat, the chair, the coffee table. (Pad any sharp table edges.) Cheer him as he completes "laps" around the cruising course. Baby's first genuine solo steps will be lurching and dramatic, and completely thrilling – so have the cameras ready! Once he's found his feet, he might enjoy a sturdy walking toy, or a chance to push his own stroller – just be sure you're there to supervise.

And don't be surprised if... once he starts walking, he still prefers crawling for awhile – a faster and surer method of self-transport. New walkers all take a few tumbles, so keep his surroundings as safe as possible. You may also find that stroller rides are not the peaceful and efficient trip they used to be. He may kick his feet and cry in protest, insulted to be a passenger. From now on, it will take a bit longer to get from Point A to Point B. Congratulations, you've got a "toddler"!

Talking: Now Hear This

Talking is one final step in a progression of vocalizations that begin shortly after birth. This is an area where babies vary dramatically, with some chatting away at 10 months, and others remaining fairly tight-lipped until 15 months or beyond.

What baby will do: Those delightful gurgles, coos and squeals that start in the first few months begin to sound different at about 4 months, when baby discovers that changing the shape of her mouth affects the sound. By 5 or 6 months, she may be in full babbling mode, experimenting with loudness and pitch, and highly amused by her own voice. (And so is everyone in the grocery checkout line!) By around 9 months, she'll mimic noises you make, like coughing and silly raspberries. Her first word – whenever it is uttered – is apt to be something she feels enthusiastic about.

What you can do: Much of what parents can do to encourage speech comes naturally. Face her when you talk, speak clearly and slowly, and let her watch your mouth and lips. Play "what's that?" on your own face and baby's face, pointing to mouth, nose, ears, and eyes while naming each fascinating part. Narrate your daily actions with emphasis on familiar objects. Bear in mind that baby may be in no rush to talk.

And don't be surprised if... her first word isn't "mama" or "daddy." It may be "dog" or "kitty" or even "airplane." Babies put words to things that excite them – and if you're ever-present, you're not quite as novel as the family cat. Don't fret... your turn will come!

Self-Feeding: Don't Mind If I Do!

At 6 to 9 months, baby's skills begin to develop and cooperate in a magical way. He can sit unsupported, point at objects, reach accurately, and grasp what he desires. All signs point to self-feeding!



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What baby will do: Self-feeding won't begin elegantly or efficiently. He may start with more of a clawing or raking motion, capturing items in his palm and bringing them to his mouth. But practice makes perfect, and he'll soon become adept with that delicate thumb-and-index-finger maneuver.

What you can do: Let him perfect his technique on his own. Resist the urge to do his work for him or manipulate his fingers. Self-feeding will be a messy sport rather than a survival skill for a while, so continue to spoon-feed him his meals and offer finger foods as a recreational "extra." Stock up on round cereal, and offer other baby-safe morsels such as small, soft cubes of baked sweet potato, banana and soft crackers.

And don't be surprised if... he's suddenly pickier about what he eats. Now that he's choosing, preferences will emerge, along with his budding independence. Prepare for a mess on the floor – self-feeding means lots of dropping. Throw down some newspapers under his highchair, or let the family dog handle the cleanup!

First Haircut: Shear Excitement

To cut or not to cut... that is the question! There's no set time for baby's first barbering. You might be influenced by the quality of your baby's hair – you might be more inclined to trim fine, flyaway fuzz than full, thick curls.

What baby will do: There's absolutely no telling how your little mop-top will react to a first haircut. The calmest, most placid babies may begin crying – while feisty, temperamental sorts may sit quietly and stare in amazement.

What you can do: If you cut baby's hair yourself, do it when she's calm and happy, and you are, too. If you're going to a salon, remain flexible and allow the stylist to suggest what might work best. You'll have your hands full, so bring along dad or grandma to take photos. Be sure to keep some of those tresses for the scrapbook!

And don't be surprised if... you're sad to see those downy locks drift to the floor. The first haircut is a bittersweet step away from babyhood that can make your little one seem suddenly older.

Baby's First Birthday: The Big One

It will be here before you know it! This is an exciting day for your family, and how you celebrate this proud milestone is all up to you.

What baby will do: As far as baby is concerned, today is a regular day with a bit of added commotion and colorful balloons. He's likely to find the wrapping paper and boxes more interesting than the gifts, and he may seek out the comfort and security of your lap.

What you can do: Celebrate at a time of day when baby will be well rested and at his best. You know his temperament and what's apt to overwhelm him – this can be a low-key affair if you want it to be. If he will enjoy his first taste of cake on the big day, let him eat it his way, and have those cameras ready!

And don't be surprised if... you're astonished at how that first year flew by. It did!

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