Life skills by age

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Most children can use a spoon by 2, wash their hands and dress themselves by 5, tie their shoes by 7, do a load of laundry by 12 and start driving lessons at 15 or 16. The table below gives the age most children start each of 50 skills and the age most can do it, with sources.

- Skill: Use a Spoon and an Open Cup · Start trying: 1 · Most kids can by: 2 · Who says: CDC
- Skill: Use the Potty · Start trying: 2 · Most kids can by: 4 · Who says: AAP
- Skill: Wash Your Hands · Start trying: 3 · Most kids can by: 5 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Get Dressed by Yourself · Start trying: 3 · Most kids can by: 5 · Who says: CDC
- Skill: Throw and Catch a Ball · Start trying: 3 · Most kids can by: 5 · Who says: CDC
- Skill: Do a Forward Roll · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 5 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: What to Do If You Get Lost · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 5 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Make Your Bed · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 6 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Clean Your Room · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 6 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Set the Table · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 6 · Who says: CDC
- Skill: Swing by Yourself · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 6 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Call 911 in an Emergency · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 6 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Know Your Address and Phone Number · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 6 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Get Out If There's a Fire · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 6 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Brush Your Teeth · Start trying: 3 · Most kids can by: 7 · Who says: ADA
- Skill: Ride a Bike · Start trying: 4 · Most kids can by: 7 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Tie Your Shoes · Start trying: 5 · Most kids can by: 7 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Make a Sandwich · Start trying: 5 · Most kids can by: 7 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Crack an Egg · Start trying: 5 · Most kids can by: 7 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Ride a Scooter Safely · Start trying: 5 · Most kids can by: 7 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Unload the Dishwasher · Start trying: 5 · Most kids can by: 8 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Fold Laundry · Start trying: 5 · Most kids can by: 8 · Who says: CDC
- Skill: Jump Rope · Start trying: 6 · Most kids can by: 8 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Open a Web Browser and Visit a Website · Start trying: 6 · Most kids can by: 8 · Who says: Typical age

- Skill: Tell Time on a Clock · Start trying: 6 · Most kids can by: 8 · Who says: Common Core
- Skill: Do a Cartwheel · Start trying: 6 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Use Chopsticks · Start trying: 6 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Whistle · Start trying: 6 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Clean a Cut and Put On a Bandage · Start trying: 6 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Take a Shower by Yourself · Start trying: 7 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Load the Dishwasher · Start trying: 7 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Vacuum a Room · Start trying: 7 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Stay Safe Online · Start trying: 7 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Count Money and Make Change · Start trying: 7 · Most kids can by: 9 · Who says: Common Core
- Skill: Cross the Street Safely · Start trying: 5 · Most kids can by: 10 · Who says: Safe Kids Worldwide
- Skill: Shuffle Cards · Start trying: 7 · Most kids can by: 10 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Use a Yo-Yo · Start trying: 7 · Most kids can by: 10 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Floss Your Teeth · Start trying: 8 · Most kids can by: 10 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Use a Microwave Safely · Start trying: 8 · Most kids can by: 10 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Search the Web · Start trying: 8 · Most kids can by: 10 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Make a Strong Password · Start trying: 8 · Most kids can by: 10 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Send an Email · Start trying: 9 · Most kids can by: 11 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Juggle Three Balls · Start trying: 8 · Most kids can by: 12 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Sew On a Button · Start trying: 9 · Most kids can by: 12 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Do a Load of Laundry · Start trying: 10 · Most kids can by: 12 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Scramble Eggs · Start trying: 10 · Most kids can by: 12 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Make a Budget · Start trying: 10 · Most kids can by: 13 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Tie a Tie · Start trying: 12 · Most kids can by: 14 · Who says: Typical age
- Skill: Mow the Lawn · Start trying: 12 · Most kids can by: 16 · Who says: AAP
- Skill: Drive a Car: Your First Lesson · Start trying: 15 · Most kids can by: 18 · Who says: State laws

"Start trying" is when most children are ready to begin, usually with help. "Most kids can by" is the age by which most children can do it on their own. Both are typical ages, not tests: plenty of children are earlier or later, and that's normal.

Ages 2 to 3

Under 2, the skills are a baby's own: the CDC's milestones have most children drinking from a cup without a lid (with spills) by 18 months and eating with a spoon by 2. Everything here is done beside a grown-up.

- Use a Spoon and an Open Cup (start 1, most by 2): Scoop, lift, yum! And sip from a big-kid cup.

Ages 4 to 5

Four- and five-year-olds want to do it themselves, and most of the self-care skills land here. By 5 the CDC's checklist includes simple chores at home, like matching socks or clearing the table.

- Use the Potty (start 2, most by 4): Your body tells you when it's time to go. Here's what to do next!
- Wash Your Hands (start 3, most by 5): Germs are too small to see, but soap and twenty seconds wash them away!
- Get Dressed by Yourself (start 3, most by 5): Shirt, pants, socks, coat: you can do the whole thing yourself!
- Throw and Catch a Ball (start 3, most by 5): Eyes on the ball, hands ready. Catch!
- Do a Forward Roll (start 4, most by 5): Tuck, roll, and up on your feet! The forward roll is gymnastics step one.
- What to Do If You Get Lost (start 4, most by 5): Lost? Stop, stay put, and find a helper. Your grown-up is looking for you.

Ages 6 to 7

Six- and seven-year-olds can follow a whole sequence of steps alone, which is why shoes, a bed, a bike and the dishwasher arrive together.

- Make Your Bed (start 4, most by 6): A made bed makes the whole room look tidy, and it takes three minutes.
- Clean Your Room (start 4, most by 6): A messy room is just lots of little jobs. Do them one at a time!
- Set the Table (start 4, most by 6): Fork on the left, knife and spoon on the right. You're the table boss!
- Swing by Yourself (start 4, most by 6): No push needed! Pump your legs and swing yourself up high.
- Call 911 in an Emergency (start 4, most by 6): If someone is badly hurt or in danger, you can call for help. Here's how.
- Know Your Address and Phone Number (start 4, most by 6): Your address and a grown-up's phone number: two things to know by heart.

• Get Out If There's a Fire (start 4, most by 6): Get out, stay out, and call for help. Make your family's fire plan.
• Brush Your Teeth (start 3, most by 7): Two minutes, two times a day, and your teeth stay strong and shiny.
• Ride a Bike (start 4, most by 7): Balance first, pedals second. You'll be riding before you know it!
• Tie Your Shoes (start 5, most by 7): Two bunny ears, one knot, and no more tripping on your laces!
• Make a Sandwich (start 5, most by 7): Bread, filling, bread. Lunch is served, chef!
• Crack an Egg (start 5, most by 7): Tap, crack, open! And no shell in the bowl.
• Ride a Scooter Safely (start 5, most by 7): Push, glide, steer, stop. Scooting is fast fun, helmet first!

Ages 8 to 9

Eight and nine is the age of practice: the fine-motor skills (flossing, chopsticks, a yo-yo) get good, and the first online skills arrive, always with a grown-up's rules.

• Unload the Dishwasher (start 5, most by 8): Clean dishes, back where they belong. Your family will cheer!
• Fold Laundry (start 5, most by 8): Towels, T-shirts and socks: fold them flat and your drawer stays neat.
• Jump Rope (start 6, most by 8): Swing, hop, swing, hop. Find the beat and keep it going!
• Open a Web Browser and Visit a Website (start 6, most by 8): The browser is your door to the web. Here's how to open it and go somewhere.
• Tell Time on a Clock (start 6, most by 8): Little hand, big hand: read any clock in the house.
• Do a Cartwheel (start 6, most by 9): Hand, hand, foot, foot! Turn like a wheel.
• Use Chopsticks (start 6, most by 9): Pinch, lift, eat! Two sticks make one clever tool.
• Whistle (start 6, most by 9): Pucker up and blow gently. Can you make a note?
• Clean a Cut and Put On a Bandage (start 6, most by 9): A little scrape? Clean it, cover it, and you're back to playing.
• Take a Shower by Yourself (start 7, most by 9): Shampoo, soap, rinse, done: a shower all by yourself.
• Load the Dishwasher (start 7, most by 9): Plates face the middle, cups go on top. You'll be the dishwasher expert!
• Vacuum a Room (start 7, most by 9): Vroom! A vacuum eats crumbs, dust and fluff, and you're the driver.
• Stay Safe Online (start 7, most by 9): The internet is full of good stuff, and a few tricks. Know the rules.

- Count Money and Make Change (start 7, most by 9): Penny, nickel, dime, quarter: count it up and pay at the store.

Ages 10 to 12

From 10, children can run whole jobs: a load of laundry, a pan of eggs with a grown-up at the stove, a budget, a button. Safe Kids Worldwide's advice that children under 10 cross streets with an adult ends here.

- Cross the Street Safely (start 5, most by 10): Stop, look left, right and left again, then walk. With a grown-up, until you're older.
- Shuffle Cards (start 7, most by 10): Mix the deck like a pro: the overhand shuffle first, then the riffle.
- Use a Yo-Yo (start 7, most by 10): Down and up, down and up! Then make it sleep.
- Floss Your Teeth (start 8, most by 10): Your toothbrush can't reach between your teeth. Floss can!
- Use a Microwave Safely (start 8, most by 10): Beep beep! Warm up food the safe way.
- Search the Web (start 8, most by 10): Ask the internet a question, then find the best answer, not just the first one.
- Make a Strong Password (start 8, most by 10): A long, silly password is hard to guess and easy to remember.
- Send an Email (start 9, most by 11): Write it, address it, send it: a real message to a real person.
- Juggle Three Balls (start 8, most by 12): One, then two, then three. Juggling is just throwing and catching, in order.
- Sew On a Button (start 9, most by 12): A button fell off? You can fix it in fifteen minutes.
- Do a Load of Laundry (start 10, most by 12): Sort it, wash it, dry it, fold it. Clean clothes, made by you!
- Scramble Eggs (start 10, most by 12): Your first real cooking at the stove: soft, fluffy scrambled eggs.

Ages 13 to 15

The early teens bring the jobs with real risk, done with a grown-up first: the AAP says 12 for a push mower. A tie and a budget join the list.

- Make a Budget (start 10, most by 13): Money in, money out, and some saved for the big thing you want.
- Tie a Tie (start 12, most by 14): For a wedding, a concert or a big day: the four-in-hand knot.

Ages 16 to 18

Sixteen to eighteen is driving and independence: in most US states a learner's permit comes at 15 or 16, and a learner always drives with a licensed adult.

- Mow the Lawn (start 12, most by 16): A big job for a big kid: mowing, the safe way.
- Drive a Car: Your First Lesson (start 15, most by 18): A learner's permit in your pocket and a licensed grown-up beside you: start in an empty parking lot.

Where the ages come from

12 of the 50 ages have a named source, and the table says which: CDC, AAP, ADA, Safe Kids Worldwide, Common Core and State laws. The rest are typical ages gathered from common guidance and marked "Typical age". What each source says, in our words:

- Use a Spoon and an Open Cup (CDC): By 18 months many children drink from a cup without a lid, spilling sometimes; by 2 they eat with a spoon.
- Use the Potty (AAP): Most children are ready to start somewhere between 18 months and 3 years, and each child's time is different.
- Brush Your Teeth (ADA): Brush twice a day for two minutes, with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste from age 3.
- Get Dressed by Yourself (CDC): By 3 many children put on some clothes by themselves, like loose pants or a jacket; by 5 they button some buttons.
- Set the Table (CDC): By 5 many children do simple chores at home, like matching socks or clearing the table after eating.
- Fold Laundry (CDC): By 5 many children do simple chores at home, like matching socks.
- Throw and Catch a Ball (CDC): By 4 many children catch a large ball most of the time.
- Cross the Street Safely (Safe Kids Worldwide): Children under 10 should cross the street with an adult.
- Tell Time on a Clock (Common Core): Time to the hour and half hour in 1st grade, to five minutes in 2nd, to the minute in 3rd.
- Count Money and Make Change (Common Core): Word problems with dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels and pennies in 2nd grade.
- Mow the Lawn (AAP): At least 12 years old for a push mower, and 16 for a riding mower.
- Drive a Car: Your First Lesson (State laws): Most US states issue a learner's permit at 15 or 16 (a few at 14), and a learner always drives with a licensed adult.

Questions parents ask

What should a 6-year-old be able to do?

Most 6-year-olds can dress themselves, wash their hands and brush their teeth (with a grown-up checking), make their bed and set the table, and many are learning to how to tie

your shoes, how to ride a bike and how to jump rope. The checklist shows the full list for any age.

My child can't do something on this list yet. Are they behind?

Almost certainly not. These ages are when most children manage a skill, so many are later, and skills like tying shoes or riding a bike depend more on practice than age. If you're worried about the baby and toddler milestones, the CDC's milestone checklists and your child's doctor are the place to start.

How do I teach a skill without doing it for them?

Break it into steps, show one step at a time, do it together, then watch and stay quiet. Every skill here is laid out that way, and the blog post on teaching life skills goes through it.

Is it free?

Peabody is free through the end of 2026, with no ads, and Life Skills needs no sign-up at all. What a child ticks and learns stays on their own device and is never sent anywhere.

Free at peabody.kids/life-skills-by-age