

*See What I'm Saying*

# Babble-Scribble Stage/Sequence



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## Babble-Scribble Stage/Sequence

### Around 18 Months to 2½ Years

In the preceding chapters, we presented information, posed questions, and gave some answers about what you can learn from children's drawings. We promised that Chapters 4 through 7 would include an in-depth discussion of developmental indicators that can be expressed through children's artistic productions. To help you make this delightful journey through the developmental stages of childhood, we have created twins, Adam and Lisa. We will follow these imaginary siblings as they grow from infancy to age 11. A glimpse at their behavior during these periods of growth will help you to understand how children normally interact with people and objects in their environment and how the proper responses from important adults can stimulate learning. As we travel with the twins and their real-life counterparts, there will be many examples and illustrations to help you recognize these signs of normal growth in creative work produced by children.

The First 18 Months, Adam and Lisa enter the world without any complications, and their parents are glad to know that the children have no physical abnormalities. All the necessary parts are in place and their first cries are strong. Soon after birth, the twins discover their mouths and the pleasure derived from putting something into them. They prefer food, but as the months go by they discover wonderful substitutes—pacifiers, blankets, sleeves of clothing, soft toys, an offered finger from an adult. In these early months the twins learn by instinct. They announce certain discomforts, later identified as “hungry” and “wet,” by loud cries for attention. Gradually, the babies learn that the discomforts fade when they are touched, caressed, fed, or when their soiled diapers are changed. This early intelligence is acquired on a sensory level.

Initially the twins are not aware that comforting feelings come as a result of something done by something separate from themselves. Gradually, they come to know that a certain sound signals that relief is on the way. Most likely this sound is Mommy's or Daddy's footsteps when they enter the babies' room. Around 6 months of age, the twins begin to be aware that some things they feel, touch, and hear are not part of themselves. This understanding is known as the beginning of ego development. The ego is not

something that we can see or feel, but most of us acknowledge that the “ego” is “self” and that the ego is shaped and formed through interactions with the environment.

About 4 to 6 months, Adam and Lisa learn to turn over and sit up; they may try to pull themselves to their feet by holding on to the bars of the crib or playpen. Boys often achieve these accomplishments a little earlier than girls, but having Adam to copy probably inspires Lisa to develop a little faster. In the past, boys were encouraged to be more active physically, and not too many years ago it was believed that the active baby girl would grow up to be a “tomboy”—not exactly acceptable for a girl. Fortunately, this view is changing among enlightened parents, and Lisa is encouraged to test her arms and legs as much as Adam.

However, children, even identical twins, are not all born alike. Some are naturally more active than others; some are more content to lie quietly and participate in their surroundings by seeing and listening. Adam wants to sit quietly at times, and his parents have learned to match and respond to his movements. This security makes Adam trustful and willing to venture into his small but enlarging world. As Adam and Lisa begin to explore spaces around them, their experience reassures them that someone is there if needed.

Around 8 months, Adam and Lisa become very upset when they are with strangers. This reaction is typical for this age, but by about 14 to 16 months they outgrow it.

The twins begin to walk around 1 year of age, moving their arms and legs more purposefully. They know when to hold on to objects to steady themselves, and the growing strength of their grasp gives them confidence. They discover that a familiar face can disappear and reappear; a ball can roll behind a couch and not be lost forever. In fact, the twins’ expanded mobility now makes it possible for them to follow that ball and make it known that they need help to retrieve it. They can also follow Mommy and Daddy into the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom.

Now that they can grasp more tightly, Adam and Lisa find that feeding themselves is an event. At first they learn by trial and error. They can push the plate, smear food with the spoon, and make something that they do not like disappear by dropping it or throwing it. They also learn that playing with food does not make Mommy or Daddy smile. The twins are discovering new accomplishments and

creating new tasks to master. This ongoing process is fundamental to learning.

### 18 Months to 2½ Years

Adam, age 18 months, is sitting in the sandbox. He picks up a toy, examines it, and discards it for another. He pushes the sand around and watches it fall through his fingers. Occasionally he glances at his twin sister, Lisa, but he is much more interested in his own activity. Lisa puts some sand in her mouth and realizes that it does not taste very good, but this causes another problem—the sand is sticking to her wet fingers and she does not like this feeling. She tries to remove the sand from her fingers by rubbing her hands together. When that is not successful, she uses her shirt, as if it were a towel, to clean off the sand. Giving up the struggle, she reaches for a toy. Her brother's play attracts her attention and she moves swiftly, trying to snatch the bucket he is holding. Adam is very angry and swings the bucket at Lisa. Fortunately, Mommy has been supervising closely. She moves Lisa to another place in the sandbox and gives Lisa another bucket.

Adam and Lisa are behaving like most 18-month-old children. Their attention span is short, and the children are distracted easily. They are not yet ready to share toys or play together, and they are unable to communicate with words. Adam may know a few words, but not enough to tell Lisa what he thinks about her reaching for his toy. He can make his feelings known with body movements, and he can call an adult to rescue him. Both Lisa and Adam will babble to themselves and to others. Their acquisition of language will depend largely on how much they are encouraged to learn words.

Around this same age, the twins are becoming aware that they can resist certain expectations from the adults who care for them. They can master the word “no” and use it so often that this period—and the next 6 months to a year is often referred to as the “negative stage.” Parents have called it the “terrible twos.” This is a necessary stage—the child is testing limits in an effort to define acceptable behavior and establish independence.

Around age 2, the twins will gradually be faced with either submitting to toilet training or displeasing the adults they have come to trust. Toilet training is a normal battle for control and an important time for Adam and Lisa to learn how far they can go before Mommy and Daddy say “no.” Lisa may become toilet trained a little earlier than Adam, which is not unusual. While the development of sphincter control is generally equal in boys and girls, boys usually are slower in complying. Both children will have “accidents” for months and maybe years to come, which also is to be expected.

The twins delight in being given crayons and paper. If they sit close to each other, they will draw on each other's paper. At first they will not be able to stay within the edges of the paper, and they will make marks on any available surface. Someone must watch to make sure that they do not put the crayons in their mouths. By the time the twins are 2, they should enjoy making lines in all directions, interspersing them with dots. The children recognize colors and eventually learn to say the names of these colors, with the help of Mommy and Daddy. With prodding they will name their scribbles, although they probably did not have a particular object in mind when they started to draw.

The following are examples of scribble drawings from the twins' real-life counterparts.

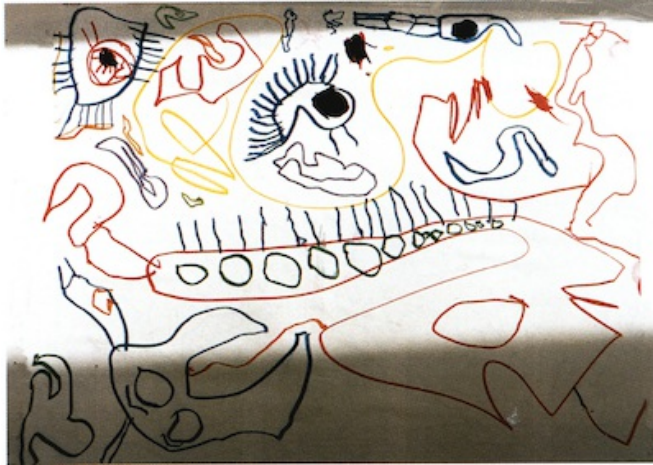
Holly's mother is an artist, and crayons and paper are always available. Holly, at 2, spontaneously produces many scribble pictures (Fig. 40).



**Figure 40**

While Holly's scribbling traveled all over her paper, Hal also 2, preferred to draw separate pictures in different sections of the paper (Fig. 41). Hal has just been introduced to paints and, with close supervision, handles them remarkably well for his age.





**Figure 41**

At 2 years and 10 months, Joey is able to use a crayon in different ways—rapidly and loosely to fill in the area at the top, and more tightly and slowly to create the form at the bottom (Fig. 42). When his mother asked him to describe the picture, he said it was “a steam shovel with a man inside.”



**Figure 42**

The way small children progress in handling various art materials tells us how well they are developing fine motor control—the ability to progress from drawing loose random lines with crayons to drawing fine controlled lines with pencils or felt-tipped pens. Some children will develop this fine motor control faster than others.

Child development experts believe that children do not have a plan in mind when they begin to scribble; therefore, we would not expect to be able to detect any danger signals in scribbled images. However, we might have some cause for concern if a child were not interested in “playing” on paper with crayon by age 2. This kind of situation could reflect other developmental delays and should be investigated.