

## Parents As Advocates

An advocate is a person who knows and supports another. As parents, we are our children's first and best advocates. You've been advocating for your child since long before they were born and you know your child better than anyone else. You are your child's best advocate!

[Being your child's advocate](#) is your job for life. Pollywog is here to help with three tips for developing your advocacy skills, for now and as your child grows.

### **Tip One: Know your child!**

Your child is unique and one of a kind. They have likes and dislikes, abilities and limitations, that make them the special person they are. The frustrating part of this is that all of these things can, and will, change as your child grows and develops!

Long before your child can talk, they can communicate and understand the world around them. [Talk to your child](#), as much as possible! Ask questions, narrate yours or their actions, and include them in everything as much as possible.

Sometimes we focus on what our child cannot do. This can be important at times, and it's even more important to focus on what your child can do. Find ways to include your child in your activities.

When you talk to your child and involve them in your daily work, they know they matter to you and you will take care of their needs.

### ***Advocate for yourself, too!***

What's good for your child is good for you. Know yourself and seek to understand your strengths and joys. Be gentle with yourself, especially right now. Give yourself the same care as for your child: healthy food, plenty of sleep, time to play, and time to relax.



### **Tip Two: Know child development!**

Are you unsure of what your child can do? As an advocate for your child, it's good to know what to expect of your child developmentally. It can feel exhausting to keep up with [your child's development](#) because they are growing and changing so quickly! But that is the exact reason it's vital.

Learning about child development is as easy as downloading an app. Two great science-based apps that help parents be aware of their child's developmental stages are [Vroom](#) and [Milestones Tracker](#) from the CDC. Both are free and give information specific to your child's age.

Another great way to understand your child's development is to use [Ages and Stages Questionnaires](#) (ASQs). Many pediatricians' offices ask parents to fill these out for well-child visits. Sometimes home visiting programs, like Healthy Families, will complete ASQs with families. You can access them online through [The Oregon Screening Project](#). Completing an ASQ, which involves answering easy questions about what your child is doing, is a fun way to check your child's development.

(Continued...)

**Tip Three: Know where and when to get help**

Every [child develops in their own way](#) and time, and usually development is within an expected timeframe. But sometimes a child's development is delayed, and there are many reasons.

Our job as our child's advocate is to follow their development, encourage them to learn new skills, and get help if they need it. That's why it's so important to know your child and know typical child development! Many developmental delays can be reversed when they are spotted early and addressed.

If you suspect your child's development is not in the typical range, your go-to expert for developmental questions is your child's doctor. Friends and family can offer great support, but a pediatrician's advice is critical to your advocacy role.

The best way your child's pediatrician can help you be your child's advocate is to see your child for regular check-ups. This is especially important now, with changes socially due to COVID-19. Pediatric offices have taken many precautions to ensure your

**3 Mini Tips for Child Development**

- 1) Comparing your child to your friend's child isn't helpful.
- 2) Focus on [teachable moments](#) throughout the day.
- 3) Always [prioritize play!](#)

child's doctors visit is safe, so be sure to keep those well-child appointments. Plus, missing check-ups can mean missing important vaccination boosters.

In addition to regular doctor appointments, regular dental appointments can also help ensure your child's development is on track. Dental development is important for learning to talk and getting proper nutrition. Check with your dentist to see when your child should have their first appointment.

More resources for help with development and differences:

- [Pollywog](#) - find classes for parents and children, resources of all kinds, and our Parent Voice blog.
- [Family Connections](#)
- [Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education](#) for Linn/Benton/Lincoln
- Home visiting services like Public Health Nurses, Relief Nursery, Healthy Families, and Early Head Start/Head Start
- Physical/occupational/mental health therapists recommended by your child's doctor
- [FACT Oregon](#) - a parent support resource for families experiencing disability
- [Reach Out Oregon](#) - support and advocacy for families experiencing emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges.

 [Pollywog Facebook](#)

 [Pollywog Website](#)

 [Pollywog YouTube](#)

Pollywog Family  
6500 Pacific Blvd. SW, LM-132  
Albany, OR 97321  
541-917-4884