



ALL TEN DEVELOPMENTAL LEAPS

The First Map

A gentle guide to your baby's leaps, from week 5 to week 75.





It is three in the morning. Last week, your baby slept peacefully. Tonight, nothing works.

She isn't sick. She isn't hungry. She just changed.

Here is what nobody tells you: in the first year and a half, your baby's brain changes ten different times. Every change feels like a storm. And every storm unlocks something amazing.

Let's walk it together.



WHAT IS HAPPENING

Growth comes in bursts

Babies don't grow a little every day. They grow in bursts.

Two researchers, Frans Plooij and Hetty van de Rijt, mapped those bursts and found ten leaps. After each one, your baby's world suddenly gets bigger. And bigger worlds can feel scary.

Imagine waking up able to see a whole new dimension. Exciting, overwhelming, and you would want someone familiar close by too.

That is why parents everywhere notice the same three things: more crying, more clinginess, worse sleep. The three C's.

BEFORE WE WALK

How to read this map

Count from the due date, not the birth date. If your baby arrived early, expect each leap a little "later" than the calendar says, and know that is exactly right.

Hold this as a map, not a stopwatch. The order of the leaps is steady and the feelings ring true, but the exact weeks wander from baby to baby. One child weathers a whole storm in a few grumpy days; another turns the house upside down for three weeks. Neither is behind. Each is exactly on her own map.

And something to note: this map was drawn from many babies, not from yours. The researchers who first charted these ten leaps gave us their best sketch of the timing, not a law of nature, and when others went looking, the shape of the road held far better than its exact mileposts. So let the weeks reassure and orient you, never worry you. There is no late here, no early, no wrong way across.



THE MAP

Ten storms. Ten leaps. One map.

Each knot on the golden thread is a leap. Some pass in days. One is long. All of them end the same way: your baby wakes up able to do something she couldn't do the day before.



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1 **Sensations**
Week 5

3 **Smooth transitions**
Week 12

5 **Relationships**
Week 26

7 **Sequences**
Week 46

9 **Principles**
Week 64

2 **Patterns**
Week 8

4 **Events**
Week 19

6 **Categories**
Week 37

8 **Programs**
Week 55

10 **Systems**
Week 75



LEAP 1 • WEEK 5

The world of sensations

The first storm usually arrives around week five. The world suddenly gets louder, brighter, closer. She cries more and wants you constantly.

✦ **On the other side:** *the first real smile, meant just for you.*

[READ MORE ABOUT THIS LEAP →](#)

LEAP 2 • WEEK 8

The world of patterns

Around week eight, your baby discovers her favourite toy: her own hands. She turns them, watches them, and starts noticing repeating shapes and sounds everywhere.

✦ **On the other side:** *a baby captivated by patterns, studying your face, the curtains, her own fingers.*





LEAP 3 • WEEK 12

The world of smooth transitions

By week twelve, she wants conversations, long before words exist. Cooing, flowing little exchanges, back and forth.

✦ **On the other side:** *the first laugh out loud.*

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LEAP 4 • WEEK 19

The world of events

Week nineteen. If you have ever heard parents whisper about the four-month sleep regression, this leap is usually why.

She is learning events: drop, bounce, roll. Soon she is reaching, grabbing and tasting absolutely everything.

It is the longest storm on the map and can last up to six weeks. If you are living through it right now: you are not failing. You are walking the hardest part of the map.

✦ **On the other side:** *a baby who reaches for the world with both hands.*



[READ MORE ABOUT THIS LEAP →](#)



LEAP 5 • WEEK 26

The world of relationships

Week twenty-six: suddenly, leaving the room becomes a tragedy. She has discovered distance, including the hardest kind, that you can leave.

Separation anxiety is exhausting. It is also a sign of a healthy, growing mind.

✦ **On the other side:** *a baby who understands near and far, in and out, here and gone.*

[READ MORE ABOUT THIS LEAP →](#)

LEAP 6 • WEEK 37

The world of categories

Week thirty-seven: everything must be squished, torn and compared. She is building categories: a dog is a dog, big or small.

Look back at that first storm. See how much smaller it feels now? You are already more than halfway across the map.

✦ **On the other side:** *a little sorter who groups her whole world.*



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LEAP 7 • WEEK 46

The world of sequences

Week forty-six: why does she keep dropping the spoon? On purpose. She is learning sequences: first this, then that. Stacking, filling, emptying.

It isn't stubbornness. It is practice.

✦ **On the other side:** *a baby who understands order, one step after another.*

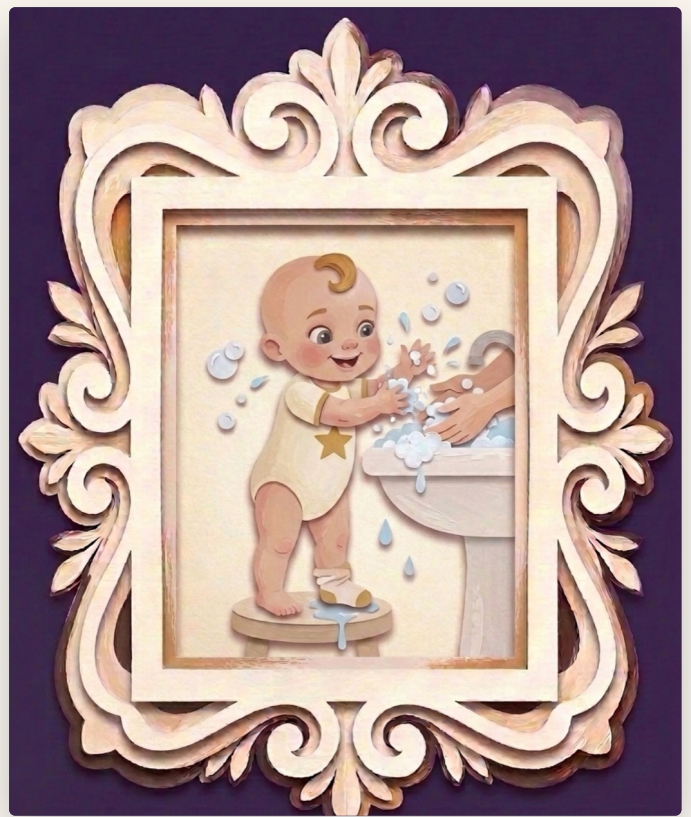
READ MORE ABOUT THIS LEAP →

LEAP 8 • WEEK 55

The world of programs

Week fifty-five, hiding just behind the first birthday: suddenly she wants to help. She grasps whole programs now, washing, dressing, tidying, and she wants in on all of it.

★ **On the other side:** *first steps and first words often land right here too.*



[READ MORE ABOUT THIS LEAP →](#)



LEAP 9 • WEEK 64

The world of principles

Week sixty-four: your toddler becomes a tiny scientist. Every tantrum, every boundary test, is another experiment.

She isn't being naughty. She is studying you.

✦ **On the other side:** *a child starting to understand rules, choices, and "what happens if".*

[READ MORE ABOUT THIS LEAP →](#)

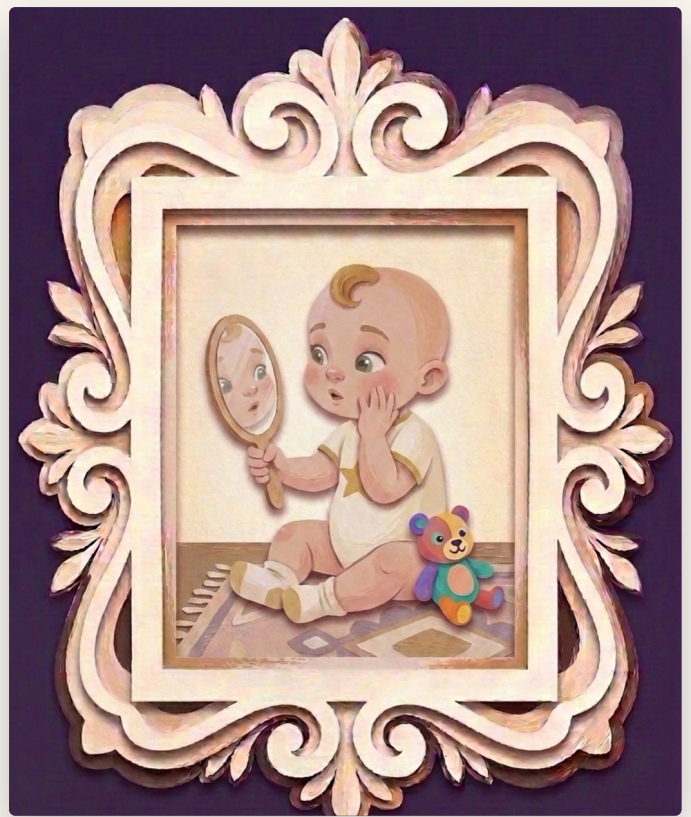
LEAP 10 • WEEK 75

The world of systems

Week seventy-five: one day, she recognises herself in the mirror. "Me" has arrived. And right behind it come the first traces of empathy: patting a crying teddy, offering a toy.

★ **On the other side:** *a child with a sense of self, and a will of her own.*

Look back down the road. Look how far you have both come.



READ MORE ABOUT THIS LEAP →

AFTER THE MAP

The road keeps going

The map ends at eighteen months. Development doesn't.

New storms come around twenty-two months, at two, and at three. And after every one: a whole new notch of growth.

The storms never truly stop. Neither does the wonder.



How to walk through a leap



Closeness isn't spoiling. It's fuel.

Carry her, cuddle her, feed her, as much as she asks.

Keep the outside world

predictable. When her inner world turns to weather, let the outer one stay calm. Lower the bar. Hold the routine.

Share the load. Take turns, accept the help. This is a marathon, not a sprint.

Trust your instincts. Not every baby follows these weeks exactly, so never measure yours against a chart. If something truly worries you, her weight, a skill she has lost, or a cry that sounds different, talk to your paediatrician.

Leaps explain a lot. Not everything.





The baby we met at three in the morning didn't become easier.

She became bigger. Bigger inside.

Every storm on this map ends the same way: your child wakes up able to do something she couldn't do before.



**That is why we don't fear
the storms. We walk
through them.**

See you on the next map.



Where is your baby right now?

Our free Developmental Leap Calculator turns your due date into the exact dates of all ten leaps, and shows you which one is happening now.

stemlittleexplorers.com/en/tools/developmental-leap-calculator