

Developmental Milestones: 3 to 4 Year Olds

What are some of the developmental milestones my child should reach by three to four years of age?

With your child's third birthday, the "terrible twos" are officially over and the "magic years" of three and four begin—a time when your child's world will be dominated by fantasy and vivid imagination. During the next two years, he'll mature in many areas.

Here are some milestones to look for.

Movement milestones

- Hops and stands on one foot up to five seconds
- Goes upstairs and downstairs without support
- Kicks ball forward
- Throws ball overhand
- Catches bounced ball most of the time
- Moves forward and backward with agility

Milestones in hand and finger skills

- Copies square shapes
- Draws a person with two to four body parts
- Uses scissors
- Draws circles and squares
- Begins to copy some capital letters

Language milestones

- Understands the concepts of "same" and "different"
- Has mastered some basic rules of grammar

- Speaks in sentences of five to six words
- Speaks clearly enough for strangers to understand
- Tells stories

Cognitive milestones

- Correctly names some colors
- Understands the concept of counting and may know a few numbers
- Approaches problems from a single point of view
- Begins to have a clearer sense of time
- Follows three-part commands
- Recalls parts of a story
- Understands the concept of same/different
- Engages in fantasy play

Social and emotional milestones

- Interested in new experiences
- Cooperates with other children
- Plays “Mom” or “Dad”
- Increasingly inventive in fantasy play
- Dresses and undresses
- Negotiates solutions to conflicts
- More independent
- Imagines that many unfamiliar images may be “monsters”
- Views self as a whole person involving body, mind, and feelings
- Often cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality

Developmental health watch

Because each child develops in his own particular manner, it's impossible to tell exactly when or how he'll perfect a given skill. The developmental milestones listed in this book will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect as your child gets older, but don't be alarmed if his development takes a slightly

different course. Alert your pediatrician or consider a referral for screening and evaluation however, if your child displays any of the following signs of possible developmental delay for this age range.

- Cannot throw a ball overhand
- Cannot jump in place
- Cannot ride a tricycle
- Cannot grasp a crayon between thumb and fingers
- Has difficulty scribbling
- Cannot stack four blocks
- Still clings or cries whenever his parents leave him
- Shows no interest in interactive games
- Ignores other children
- Doesn't respond to people outside the family
- Doesn't engage in fantasy play
- Resists dressing, sleeping, using the toilet
- Lashes out without any self-control when angry or upset
- Cannot copy a circle
- Doesn't use sentences of more than three words
- Doesn't use "me" and "you" appropriately

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Developmental Milestones: 4 to 5 Year Olds

What are some of the developmental milestones my child should reach by four to five years of age?

Before you know it, the somewhat calm child of three becomes a dynamo of energy, drive, bossiness, belligerence, and generally out-of-bounds behavior. You may be reminded of the earlier trials and tribulations you went through when he was two. Also obvious during this time is the tremendous spurt of imaginative ideas that spring from children's minds and mouths. All of this behavior and thinking will help your youngster build a secure foundation as he emerges into the world of kindergarten.

Here are some other milestones to look for.

Movement milestones

- Stands on one foot for ten seconds or longer
- Hops, somersaults
- Swings, climbs
- May be able to skip

Milestones in hand and finger skills

- Copies triangle and other geometric patterns
- Draws person with body
- Prints some letters
- Dresses and undresses without assistance
- Uses fork, spoon, and (sometimes) a table knife
- Usually cares for own toilet needs

Language milestones

- Recalls part of a story
- Speaks sentences of more than five words
- Uses future tense
- Tells longer stories
- Says name and address

Cognitive milestones

- Can count ten or more objects
- Correctly names at least four colors
- Better understands the concept of time
- Knows about things used every day in the home (money, food, appliances)

Social and emotional milestones

- Wants to please friends
- Wants to be like her friends
- More likely to agree to rules
- Likes to sing, dance, and act
- Shows more independence and may even visit a next-door neighbor by herself
- Aware of sexuality
- Able to distinguish fantasy from reality
- Sometimes demanding, sometimes eagerly cooperative

Developmental health watch

Because each child develops in her own particular manner, it's impossible to predict exactly when or how your own preschooler will perfect a given skill. The developmental milestones listed here will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect as your child gets older, but don't be alarmed if her development takes a slightly different course. Alert your pediatrician, however, if your child displays any of the following signs of possible developmental delay for this age range.

- Exhibits extremely fearful or timid behavior
- Exhibits extremely aggressive behavior
- Is unable to separate from parents without major protest
- Is easily distracted and unable to concentrate on any single activity for more than five minutes
- Shows little interest in playing with other children
- Refuses to respond to people in general, or responds only superficially
- Rarely uses fantasy or imitation in play
- Seems unhappy or sad much of the time
- Doesn't engage in a variety of activities
- Avoids or seems aloof with other children and adults
- Doesn't express a wide range of emotions
- Has trouble eating, sleeping, or using the toilet
- Can't differentiate between fantasy and reality
- Seems unusually passive
- Cannot understand two-part commands using prepositions ("Put the cup on the table"; "Get the ball under the couch.")
- Can't correctly give her first and last name
- Doesn't use plurals or past tense properly when speaking
- Doesn't talk about her daily activities and experiences
- Cannot build a tower of six to eight blocks
- Seems uncomfortable holding a crayon
- Has trouble taking off her clothing
- Cannot brush her teeth efficiently
- Cannot wash and dry her hands

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