

Developmental Milestones

A Guide for Parents



The
3rd
Year

- ask to use the toilet almost every time
- enjoy being read to
- talk about feelings and mental states (e.g., remembering)
- demonstrate some shame when caught in a wrongdoing
- try to make others laugh
- play spontaneously with two or three children in a group
- assign roles in pretend social play (“You be mommy;” “I be daddy”)
- know her first and last name
- understand “I,” “you,” “he” and “she”
- believe everything centers around him (“if I hide my eyes, no one will see me”)
- answer whether she is a boy or girl

If you have questions about your child’s development or want to have your child tested,

- call your pediatrician
- the local health department
- the Make-A-Difference Information Network (They can help you find a testing location near your community.) 1-800-332-6262
- the Parent Helpline (They can help you with questions about childrearing.) 1-800-332-6378

Contact your county extension office to obtain other publications in this series or additional resources on parenting.

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The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been synthesized from a variety of professional resources to help you appreciate your child’s progress. It is not a formal, standardized measurement tool.

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

Have you ever wondered how your child is growing and developing compared to other children of the same age? How do you know if your child is “on the right track”?

Your child is going through many physical and mental changes. Although no two children grow at the same rate, experts agree there are “normal” signs of development. This brochure will provide you with a checklist of important milestones in your child’s development during the third year of life.

It is a simple tool you can use to be aware of and appreciate the dramatic changes that are occurring in your child. Watch for these signs in your child over a one month period. (Even children have “bad days.”) Remember, each child is different and may learn and grow at a different rate. However, if your child cannot do many of the skills listed for his or her age group, you should consult your pediatrician. If your child was born earlier than expected, be sure to deduct the number of months born early from his or her age. A 5-month-old born 2 months early would be expected to show the same skills as a 3-month-old who was born on his or her due date. Several additional sources of information are listed on the back of this brochure.

You are the most important observer of your child’s development. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference.

By 3 years of age does your child:

Motor Skills

- feed himself (with some spilling)
- open doors
- hold a glass in one hand
- hold a crayon well
- wash and dry hands by himself
- fold paper, if shown how
- build a tower of 5–6 blocks

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- throw a ball overhead
 - try to catch a large ball
 - put on shoes (but not tie laces)
 - dress herself with help
 - use the toilet with some help
 - walk up steps, alternating feet
 - walk on tiptoes if shown how
 - walk in a straight line
 - kick a ball forward
 - jump with both feet
 - pedal a tricycle

Sensory and Thinking Skills

- recognize sounds in the environment
- pay attention for about 3 minutes
- remember what happened yesterday
- know what is food and what is not food
- know some numbers (but not always in the right order)
- know where things usually belong
- understand what “1” is
- understand “now,” “soon” and “later”
- substitute one object for another in pretend play (as in pretending a block is a “car”)
- laugh at silly ideas (like “milking” a dog)
- look through a book alone
- match circles and squares
- match an object to a picture of that object
- match objects that have same function (as in putting a cup and plate together)
- count 2 to 3 objects
- avoid some dangers, like a hot stove or a moving car
- follow simple one-step commands

Language and Social Skills

- use 3–5 word sentences
- ask short questions
- use plurals (“dogs,” “cars,” “hats”)
- name at least 10 familiar objects
- repeat simple rhymes
- name at least one color correctly
- imitate housework or help with simple tasks