

WHY AND HOW SHOULD LEARNING FOR PRESCHOOLERS CONTINUE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Developmental Milestones & Skills for 3-year-olds

At a Glance

- This year, kids typically start to use up to five or six words in a sentence.
- Three-year-olds also start getting better at small muscle movements, like when using markers.
- Kids this age might start to be more interested in playing with other kids, instead of near them.

Turning 3 years old is a big milestone. Kids suddenly go from being toddlers to pre-schoolers. It can be hard not to expect a sudden change in abilities, too.

But kids develop at different rates. Turning 3 doesn't mean a child is going to gain all the **preschool skills** right away.

Check out these developmental milestones to get an idea of how skills typically develop in 3-year-olds.

Physical milestones

This year, kids really work hard to refine the motor skills they developed as 2-year-olds. They start doing some new things, too, especially with fine motor skills (small muscle movement).

Most 3-year-olds learn to do things like these by the time they turn 4:

Gross motor skills

- Run and walk without tripping over their own feet
- Jump, hop, and stand on one foot
- Walk backwards and climb stairs one foot after the other
- Kick and throw a small ball
- Catch a big ball (most of the time)
- Climb
- Start pedaling a tricycle or bike

Fine motor skills

- Draw a circle with a crayon, pencil, or marker
- Play with toys that have small moving parts and/or buttons
- Turn the pages of a book one at a time
- Build with Mega Bloks and create towers of six or more blocks
- Work door handles and open twist-on bottle tops

Cognitive milestones

This year, kids start thinking about the world in new ways. You may see some creative approaches to tackling tasks and activities. By the end of this year, kids typically can:

- Name the eight colors in a crayon box (red, yellow, blue, green, orange, purple, brown, black)
- Recite numbers to 10 and start counting groups of things
- Start understanding time in terms of morning, night, and days of the week
- Remember and retell favorite stories
- Understand and talk about things that are “the same” and “different”
- Follow simple three-step directions (“Brush your teeth, wash your face, and put on your pajamas.”)

Language milestones:

Three-year-olds have a lot to say. They also understand more of what you say — even though they may not always follow your directions .

Kids this age typically can:

- Use the basic rules of grammar, but make mistakes with words that don't follow the rules, like saying “mouses” instead of “mice”
- Speak well enough that most strangers understand what they're saying
- Use five or six words in a sentence and have a two- to three-sentence conversation
- Tell you their name, the name of at least one friend, and the names of most common objects
- Understand words like *in*, *on*, *behind*, and *next*
- Ask “wh” questions like “Why?” to get more information about things

Social and emotional milestones:

At this age, kids show an interesting mix of independence, playfulness, and fearfulness. As they approach age 4, most 3-year-olds do these things:

- Be interested — although hesitant — about going new places and trying new things
- Start to play with other kids (as opposed to only playing side-by-side)
- Start being able to comfort and show concern for an unhappy friend without prompting
- Take turns while playing (even if they don't like to!)
- Play “real life” with toys like play kitchens
- Start finding simple ways to solve arguments and disagreements
- Show (but maybe not name) a variety of emotions beyond happy, sad, and mad

Reading Skills

- Know the correct way to hold and handle a book

- Understand that words are read from left to right and pages are read from top to bottom
- Start noticing words that rhyme
- Retell stories
- Recognize about half the letters of the alphabet
- Start matching letter sounds to letters (like knowing *b* makes a /b/ sound)
- May start to recognize their name in print and other often-seen words, like those on signs and logos

Writing Skills

- Draw wavy lines across the page that look like lines of text from a book
- Make distinct marks that look like letters and that are separated from each other
- Write some actual letters, especially the letters in their name
- May write their name
- May try different kinds of writing, like writing a list or a card
- May start to draw pictures and label them using letters or letter-like marks

Math Skills

- Recognize shapes in the real world
- Start sorting things by colour, shape, size, or purpose
- Compare and contrast using classifications like height, size, or gender
- Count up to at least 20 and accurately point to and count items in a group
- Understand that numerals stand for number names (5 stands for *five*)
- Use spatial awareness to put puzzles together
- Start predicting cause and effect (like what will happen if they drop a toy in a tub full of water)

All kids develop on their own timetable. But if a child is approaching age 4 and isn't able to do many of these things, it's a good idea to look into why. Parents, teachers, and health care providers can work together to find answers.

Reference:

Morin, A., n.d. *Understood - For learning and thinking differences*. [online] Understood.org. Available at: <<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/signs-symptoms/developmental-milestones/skill-development-from-birth-to-age-5>> [Accessed 23 April 2021].