

# 3-Year-Olds



# AGES & STAGES

The 3-year-old is full of wonder, and spends a lot of time observing and imitating. They love to spend time with parents and enjoy helping out with simple household tasks.

## Physical development

- weight: 25-44 pounds
- height: 34-43 inches
- develops a taller, thinner, adult-like appearance
- develops a full set of baby teeth
- sleeps 10-12 hours at night
- sleeps through most nights without wetting the bed (occasional accidents are still quite common)
- uses the toilet with some help (many boys may not be ready for toilet learning until age 3½)
- puts on shoes (but cannot tie laces)
- dresses self with some help (buttons, snaps, zippers)
- feeds self (with some spilling)
- tries to catch a large ball
- throws a ball overhead
- kicks a ball forward
- hops on 1 foot
- walks short distance on tiptoe
- climbs up and down a small slide by self
- pedals a tricycle

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Make brushing teeth a part of your child's daily routine.
- Be patient with toileting — accidents will still happen for a while.
- Purchase easy-to-dress clothing.
- Provide large buttons or old beads to string on a shoe lace.
- Encourage sand and water play.
- Show your child how to throw, catch, and kick a ball.
- Show your child how to hop like a rabbit, tiptoe like a bird, waddle like a duck, slither like a snake, and run like a deer.
- Talk frequently, use short sentences, ask questions, and listen.
- Add new information to your child's sentences. "Yes, that's a flower—it's a tall, red flower and it smells so good."
- Teach your child to memorize his or her first and last name.
- Ask your child to tell you a story during your reading time.
- Sing simple songs with your child.
- Look at baby pictures together and talk about "When you were a baby."
- Talk about colors, numbers, and shapes in your everyday conversation. "We need ONE egg. That's a RED car. The butter is in this SQUARE box."
- Ask for help with simple tasks such as putting the napkins by each plate, socks in the drawer, or stirring the muffin batter.

## Mental and language development

- 75-80 percent of speech is understandable; talks in complete sentences of 3-5 words. "Mommy is drinking juice."  
"There's a big dog."
- stumbles over words sometimes — usually not a sign of stuttering
- listens attentively to short stories; likes familiar stories told without any changes in words



- repeats words and sounds
- enjoys listening to stories and repeating simple rhymes
- able to tell simple stories from pictures or books
- enjoys singing and can carry a simple tune
- understands “now,” “soon,” and “later”
- asks who, what, where, and why questions
- stacks 5-7 blocks
- enjoys playing with clay or play dough (pounds, rolls, and squeezes it)
- puts together a 6-piece puzzle
- draws a circle and square
- recognizes everyday sounds
- matches object and picture
- identifies common colors
- can count 2-3 objects

## Social and emotional development

- accepts suggestions and follows simple directions
- sometimes shows preference for one parent (often the parent of the opposite sex)
- enjoys helping with simple household tasks
- can make simple choices between two things
- enjoys making others laugh and being silly
- enjoys playing alone, but near other children
- spends a great deal of time watching and observing
- enjoys playing with other children briefly, but still does not cooperate or share well
- enjoys hearing stories about self, playing “house,” imitating
- can answer the question, “are you a boy or a girl?”

# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Your Baby and Child, From Birth to Age Five,*  
Penelope Leach

*Caring for Your Baby and Young Child, Birth to Age Five,* American Academy of Pediatrics,  
Steven P. Shevlov, ed.

## Books for children

*Caps For Sale,* Esphyr Slobodkina

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar,* Eric Carle

*Is It Red? Is It Yellow? Is It Blue?,* Tana Hoban

*All by Myself,* Mercer Mayer

*I Just Forgot,* Mercer Mayer

*I'm Sorry,* Sam McBratney

*A Tree Is Nice,* Janice Udry



## Toys

- nesting toys, cups that stack, puzzles (3-6 pieces)
- matching games, small pegs, pegboard
- large wheeled toys, tricycle, slide, wagon

- small table and chairs, crayons, felt tip markers, play dough, glue and paper, paint, paint brushes, stickers
- puppets, toy animals, dolls
- balls (different sizes), large blocks

## A word on development

Your child is unique. Children’s learning and growth rates differ from other children their age. If, however, your child is unable to do many of the skills listed for his or her age group, you may wish to talk to an early childhood specialist. You are the best person to notice developmental problems, if any, because of the time you spend with your child. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference. If you have questions about your child’s development or want to have your child assessed, contact:

- Your pediatrician or health care professional
- Area Education Agency—Early Childhood Special Education Department
- Iowa Compass 1-800-779-2001.

Contact your county Extension office to obtain other publications about children and parenting. Also visit the ISU Extension Web site at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu>.

The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been compiled from a variety of professional resources to help you understand your child’s overall growth. It is not a standardized measurement tool.

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

File: Family life 8

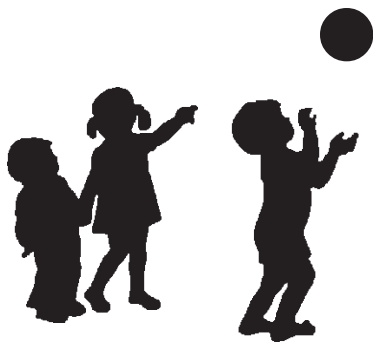
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# 4-Year-Olds



# AGES & STAGES

Energetic and imaginative best describes four-year-olds. They are able to learn new words quickly, and use them in chatting with you, telling you jokes and wild stories.

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

### Physical development

- weight: 27-50 pounds
- height: 37-46 inches
- uses a spoon, fork, and dinner knife skillfully
- needs 10-12 hours sleep each night
- dresses self without much help
- walks a straight line
- hops on 1 foot
- pedals and steers a tricycle skillfully
- jumps over objects 5-6 inches high
- runs, jumps, hops, skips around obstacles with ease
- stacks 10 or more blocks
- forms shapes and objects out of clay or play dough
- threads small beads on a string
- catches, bounces, and throws a ball easily

### Mental development

- can place objects in a line from largest to smallest
- can recognize some letters if taught and may be able to print name

- Read aloud each day and encourage your child to help you tell the story.
- Talk about reading. Show your child that words are everywhere: grocery labels, restaurant menus, department store signs, etc.
- Encourage your child to play with words by providing old coupons, junk mail, newspaper ads, and old cereal boxes.
- Ask your child to deliver short messages to family members.
- Say nursery rhymes and fingerplays together.
- Make playdough, play follow the leader.
- Cut out magazine pictures of different shapes, colors, or animals.
- Talk about things being in, on, under, behind, beside, etc.
- Pretend to walk like various animals.
- Sort and count everything in sight like silverware, socks, rocks.
- Teach your child the correct use of the telephone.
- Let your child help you plan activities and make lists for groceries, errands, etc.

- recognizes familiar words in simple books or signs (STOP sign)
- understands the concepts of tallest, biggest, same, more, on, in, under, and above
- counts 1-7 objects out loud
- understands order of daily routines (breakfast before lunch, lunch before dinner, dinner before bedtime)
- speaks fairly complex sentences. "The baby ate the cookie before I could put it on the table."
- enjoys singing simple songs, rhymes, and nonsense words
- adapts language to listener's level of understanding. To baby sister: "Daddy go bye bye." To Mother: "Daddy went to the store to buy food."



- learns name, address, and phone number if taught
- asks and answers who, what, when, why, where questions
- continues 1 activity for 10-15 minutes
- names 6-8 colors and 3 shapes
- follows two unrelated directions: "Put your milk on the table and get your coat on"

## Social and emotional development

- takes turns and shares (most of the time); may still be bossy
- understands and obeys simple rules (most of the time)
- changes the rules of a game as she goes along
- likes to talk and carries on elaborate conversations
- persistently asks why; may name call, tattle freely
- enjoys showing off and bragging about possessions
- fearful of the dark and monsters
- begins to understand danger — at times can become quite fearful
- has difficulty separating make-believe from reality
- lies sometimes to protect self and friends, but doesn't truly understand the concept of lying — imagination often gets in the way
- likes to shock others by using "forbidden" words
- still throws tantrums over minor frustrations
- expresses anger verbally rather than physically (most of the time)
- pretending goes far beyond "playing house" to more elaborate settings like fire station, school, shoe store, ice cream shop
- loves to tell jokes that may not make any sense at all to adults

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# BOOKS

## Books for children

*Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!* Mem Fox

*Bedtime for Frances*, Russell Hoban and Lillian Hoban

*On Monday When It Rained*, Cherryl Kachenmeister

*Leo the Late Bloomer*, Robert Kraus


*What Do You Do With A Kangaroo?*, Mercer Mayer

*If You Give A Mouse A Cookie*, Laura Joffe Numeroff

*The Hello, Goodbye Window*, Norton Juster and Chris Raschka

*Imogene's Antlers*, David Small

*Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, Mo Williams



## Toys

- matching games, puzzles 12-15 pieces, board games, dominoes, play money, pretend cash register
- plastic blocks, balls (all sizes)
- glue, crayons, paint, scissors and paper, washable markers, colored chalk, play dough
- trucks and cars, bicycle with training wheels, dress-up clothes
- puppets, books, bean bags, doll with clothes

## A word on development

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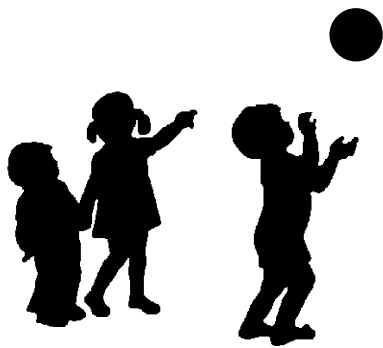
Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

File: Family life 8

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# 5-Year-Olds



# AGES & STAGES

The 5-year-old is cheerful, energetic, and enthusiastic. Fives enjoy planning and discussing who will do what. A “best friend” is very important, but hard to keep as social skills are not well developed yet.

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

### Physical development

- weight: 31-57 pounds
- height: 39-48 inches
- sleeps 10-11 hours at night
- may begin to lose baby teeth
- able to dress self with little assistance
- learns to skip
- throws ball overhead
- catches bounced balls
- rides a tricycle skillfully, may show interest in riding a bicycle with training wheels
- uses a fork and knife well
- cuts on a line with scissors
- hand dominance is established
- jumps over low objects

### Mental development

- knows basic colors like red, yellow, blue, green, orange
- able to memorize address and phone number
- understands that stories have a beginning, middle, and end
- enjoys telling his or her own stories
- understands that books are read from left to right, top to bottom
- enjoys riddles and jokes
- draws pictures that represent animals, people, and objects

- Encourage physical development by playing follow the leader with skipping, galloping, and hopping.
- Help your child learn to use a pair of scissors by asking him or her to help you cut out coupons.
- Stop before the end of a familiar story and ask your child to add his or her own ending.
- Ask your child to tell you a story. Write it down and post it on the wall or refrigerator.
- Ask “what if” questions. What if there were five little pigs instead of three? What if Goldilocks stayed home?
- Involve children in writing “thank you” notes, holiday greeting cards, and letters. If your child likes to copy letters, let him or her dictate a short message and copy it from your writing.
- Give your child opportunities to sort, group, match, count, and sequence with real-life situations such as setting the table, counting the number of turns, and sorting out socks.
- Help children understand and cope with strong feelings by giving them words to use when they are angry. “I can see you are sad about going home, angry at your friend ....”
- Observe how your child plays with other children. Teach him or her to request, bargain, negotiate, and apologize.
- Specific praise helps your child understand the true value of his or her actions. Say “I like the way you stacked the toys neatly on the shelf” rather than “You did a good job!”
- Provide a comfortable place to be alone. A large cardboard box makes a wonderful hideaway.



- enjoys tracing or copying letters
- sorts objects by size
- identifies some letters of the alphabet and a few numbers
- understands more, less, and same
- counts up to 10 objects
- understands before and after, above and below
- is project minded—plans buildings, play scenarios, and drawings
- interested in cause and effect

## Social and emotional development

- invents games with simple rules
- organizes other children and toys for pretend play
- still confuses fantasy with reality sometimes
- can take turns and share but doesn't always want to
- often excludes other children in play — best friends only
- uses swear words or “bathroom words” to get attention
- can be very bossy sometimes
- likes to try new things and take risks
- likes to make own decisions
- notices when another child is angry or sad—more sensitive to feelings of others
- likes to feel grown up; boasts about self to younger less capable children
- has a very basic understanding of right and wrong
- understands and respects rules—often asks permission
- understands and enjoys both giving and receiving
- enjoys collecting things
- sometimes needs to get away and be alone

File: Family life 8

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Edited by Muktha Jost. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer

# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Caring for Your Baby and Young Child, Birth to Age 5*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Steven P. Shevlov, ed.

*Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five*, Penelope Leach

## Books for children

*Ira Sleeps Over*, Bernard Waber

*Little Bear*, Else Holmelund Minarik

*Whistle for Willie*, Ezra Jack Keats

*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Judith Viorst

*Are You My Mother?*, Philip D. Eastman

*Harry and the Terrible Whatzit*, Dick Gackenbach



## Toys

- board games, card games, dominoes, puzzles (12 -15 pieces)
- blocks (plastic or wooden); play dough
- glue, scissors, paper, washable markers, crayons, water colors
- puppets; doll, clothes, doll-house; dress-up clothes
- trucks, cars, large cardboard boxes (large appliance size)
- child-size tools; camping equipment

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