

# Developmental Milestones: Your Child at 3 Years

## What are developmental milestones?

Developmental milestones are skills most children achieve by a certain age. Developmental milestones include physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and communication skills that are appropriate for the child's age. Milestones give important clues about a child's health and well-being. Any child whose milestones are delayed should be evaluated by a health or developmental professional.

- **Social and emotional** milestones include how children learn about their own emotions and the emotions of others. These milestones also involve learning how to interact and play with other people.
- **Language and communication** milestones involve language, speech, and nonverbal communication (for example, hand gestures or facial expressions). These milestones include a baby's babbling, their first words, and even the art of listening to others and holding a conversation.
- **Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)** milestones are centered on a child's ability to think, learn, and solve problems. Cognitive milestones include an infant learning how to react to different facial expressions and a preschooler learning to say the alphabet.
- **Movement/physical development** involves both gross motor skills and fine motor skills. Gross motor skills are typically the first to develop. They include your child's ability to support their head, sit up, stand, crawl, and walk. Fine motor skills involve precise movements such as grasping a spoon, picking up small objects, and drawing.

As a parent or caregiver, you spend the most time with your child and know them the best. If your child is not meeting these age-related milestones, or if you think there could be a problem with the way your child plays, learns, speaks, or acts, it is important to tell your child's primary care provider so they can assess your child's development. Discuss these concerns with them at your child's 3-year well-child exam.

Here are the milestones to expect from your child based on what most children do at this age:

## Social/emotional

- Copies adults and friends
- Shows affection for friends without prompting
- Takes turns in games
- Shows concern for crying friend
- Understands the idea of "mine" and "his" or "hers"
- Shows a wide range of emotions
- Separates easily from Mom and Dad
- May get upset with major changes in routine
- Dresses and undresses self

## Language/communication

- Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps
- Can name most familiar things
- Understands words like "in," "on," and "under"
- Says first name, age, and sex

# Developmental Milestones: Your Child at 3 Years

- Names a friend
- Says words like “I,” “me,” “we,” and “you” and some plurals (“cars,” “dogs,” “cats”)
- Talks well enough for strangers to understand most of the time
- Carries on a conversation using 2 to 3 sentences

## **Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)**

- Can work toys with buttons, levers, and moving parts
- Plays make-believe with dolls, animals, and people
- Does puzzles with 3 or 4 pieces
- Understands what “2” means
- Copies a circle with pencil or crayon
- Turns book pages one at a time
- Builds towers of more than 6 blocks
- Screws and unscrews jar lids or turns door handle

## **Movement/physical development**

- Climbs well
- Runs easily
- Pedals a tricycle (3-wheel bike)

Tell your child’s doctor if you notice any signs of developmental delay for this age. Most communities have early childhood intervention programs that can help assess your child. Additional developmental evaluation and services for preschool children are available through your local school district.

## **Resources and References:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/concerned.html>

<https://www.texasprojectfirst.org/PreschoolProg.html>