

Developmental Milestones: Your Child at 4 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 their ability to listen to others and hold 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 4-year well-child exam.

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

Social/emotional

- Enjoys doing new things
- Plays "Mom" and "Dad"
- Is more and more creative with make-believe play
- Would rather play with other children than play alone
- Cooperates with other children
- Often can't tell what's real and what's make-believe
- Talks about their likes and interests

Developmental Milestones: Your Child at 4 Years

Language/communication

- Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as correctly using “he” and “she”
- Sings a song or says a poem from memory, such as the “Itsy Bitsy Spider” or the “Wheels on the Bus”
- Tells stories
- Can say first and last name

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Names some colors and some numbers
- Understands the idea of counting
- Starts to understand time
- Remembers parts of a story
- Understands the idea of “same” and “different”
- Draws a person with 2 to 4 body parts
- Uses scissors
- Starts to copy some capital letters
- Plays board or card games
- Tells you what they think is going to happen next in a book

Movement/physical development

- Hops and stands on one foot up to 2 seconds
- Catches a bounced ball most of the time
- Pours, cuts with supervision, and mashes own food

Tell your child's doctor if you notice any signs of developmental delay for this age. 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>