

## **CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Every child's development is unique and complex. Although children develop through a generally predictable sequence of steps and milestones, they may not proceed through these steps in the same way or at the same time. A child's development is also greatly influenced by factors in his or her environment and the experiences he or she has. The information in this guide explains what child development experts consider to be "widely-held expectations" for what an average child might achieve within a given year. Please consider what you read in the context of your child's unique development.

Below is a snapshot of this year..

### **Your One Year Old**

#### **How your child may develop this year**

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- Everything is new and interesting to one-year-olds. They enthusiastically use their five senses to actively explore the world around them. They find pleasure in causing things to happen and in completing basic tasks. And once a discovery is made, one-year-olds want to make it happen again and again and again!
- Emotionally, one-year-olds are just learning to recognize and manage their feelings. They experience a wide range of emotions and have tantrums when they are tired or frustrated. They may also respond to conflict by hitting, biting, screaming, or crying. One-year-olds seek autonomy and may say, "No!" to adult suggestions or insist that they, "Do byself!" Then, moments later, they might cling to an adult's leg or ask for help.
- During this year, language skills typically progress from grunting and pointing to speaking single words and experimenting with simple word combinations. Pronunciation is quite difficult, however and familiar adults almost always need to "translate" for others. One-year-olds steadily build their vocabularies by absorbing the language around them. They are able to understand common phrases and simple directions used in routine situations.
- Even though one-year-olds have no awareness of print at this age, they take pleasure in nursery rhymes and books with single pictures of familiar and related items. They may apply their growing vocabularies by naming pictures in books read to them. Children this age also have no understanding of true "writing," but many enjoy experimenting with marks and scribbles on a surface.
- As one-year olds play, they start to build their mathematical thinking by recognizing patterns and understanding shapes. For example, they notice that night is followed by day and that socks go on feet before shoes. They begin to sort familiar objects by one characteristic, such as whether they are "hard" or "soft." They may enjoy filling and emptying containers. They know that when an object is hidden, it is still there. Many can also do simple insert puzzles when the puzzle pieces show whole objects.
- One-year-olds are just discovering their creative abilities. Their interest in art is focused on the sensory exploration of art materials, such as paint and clay. With music, they can respond with their whole bodies to rhythm, beat and melody. Children this age make an important developmental leap by beginning to pretend during play, often by imitating adult movements.
- Some of the most obvious changes that you will notice in your child this year are in the area of physical development. Most one-year-olds typically move from crawling to running by about 20 months. They hold their hands out to the side or poke their bellies out for balance. Their gait is a bit awkward and clumsy and falls are common. They use their new mobility to push and pull toys,

dance and climb. One-year-olds also improve in hand and finger coordination, but skills at this age are still immature, so they fumble and drop objects frequently.

## Your 2 year old

### **How your child may develop this year**

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- Two-year-olds enjoy using their senses and motor skills to explore the world and are highly curious about unfamiliar objects, events and phenomena. They can solve simple problems with the "trial and error" method and will practice an activity many times to master it. Children this age also pretend more during play, using familiar objects and situations to process their daily experiences.
- New discoveries are also facilitated by a two-year-old's blossoming language skills that prompt many "why," "what" and "how" questions. During the year, children this age pick up most parts of speech to form more complete sentences. They can understand and say hundreds of words, but familiar adults may need to "translate" for others due to immature pronunciation skills. They also understand simple directions and many common phrases used in routine situations.
- Children this age are laying the groundwork for reading and writing. They enjoy having books read to them and may pretend to "read" as they independently look through familiar books. Two-year-olds can sing the A-B-C song, but they don't yet understand that the letter names correspond to specific graphic designs. They also make a variety of scribble marks anywhere and everywhere and may even attempt to write the first letter of their name.
- As they play and complete their daily routines, two-year-olds learn important math skills. They can use a toy to represent another object, recognize patterns with daily activities and understand concepts of time like, "tomorrow" and "yesterday." Two-year-olds are just beginning to use logical reasoning to solve everyday problems. They can sort shapes, complete puzzles with eight pieces or less and stack a set of rings on a peg by size. They also understand addition and subtraction with the numbers "one" and "two."
  - Physically, two-year-olds explore all the ways to travel from here to there, including rolling, crawling, creeping, walking, running, jumping and climbing. They can also kick a small ball forward, catch a rolled ball and throw a ball overhand (but with little accuracy). Two-year-olds love finger play activities (e.g., "The Itsy, Bitsy, Spider"), pounding and squeezing clay, shaking rhythm instruments and scribbling. They can turn doorknobs and unscrew lids and have improved their skills using eating utensils.
  - Two-year-olds also use their motor skills to explore the creative arts. They make sounds by banging and shaking instruments and household items. They enjoy dancing upon request, doing finger plays and acting out chants and songs. Children this age are also gaining control over their voices and will join in singing the refrains of their favorite songs. With art, they enjoy the sensory pleasures of the art materials and focus on the process of creating art, rather than the final product.
- Two-year-olds enjoy playing alongside other children, but usually keep to themselves. When conflicts arise, adults need to step in to prevent aggression and teach appropriate behaviors. Children this age are beginning to label feelings that they recognize in themselves and others. Controlling emotions is still difficult, however, so frustration may trigger emotional meltdowns.

Comfort objects like blankets or teddy bears help two-year-olds cope with new situations or strong emotions.

## **Your three year old**

### **How your child may develop this year**

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- Three-year-olds learn primarily through exploring, using all the senses. While playing, they are better able to ignore distractions and focus on the task at hand. They will even persist in completing something that is a bit difficult and can think more creatively and methodically when solving problems.
  - Language for three-year-olds is taking off. They learn lots of new words and make major improvements in pronunciation. They communicate in simple sentences and are refining their use of grammar. Children this age begin to initiate conversations, want to talk about areas of interest and can relate personal experiences to others with the support of some prompting from grown-ups.
  - Three-year-olds are also able to listen to and understand conversations, stories, songs and poems. They are learning their letters, but may also refer to numbers as "letters." They notice print in the environment and may ask what it means. They also realize that print in books tells a reader what to say. During the year, scribbles begin to appear more like letters and children may string several of these "letters" together to form mock words. They become aware of the uses for writing and may dictate words for adults to write down.
- Children this age develop their logical reasoning skills as they play. They can put together simple puzzles and understand that a whole object can be separated into parts. They are able to classify and sort objects, but usually by only one characteristic at a time. Three-year-olds identify and describe objects that are the "same" or "different." They can count up to "five," and begin to recognize written numerals "0" through "9." When counting items in a collection, they can now label each object with just one number word to determine the total ("one to one correspondence").
- Physically, three-year-olds are less top-heavy than toddlers and move with greater sureness. They have improved their abilities to run, climb and perform other large-muscle activities. They can ride a tricycle or pump a swing. They can catch a large ball using two hands and their bodies. Improved finger dexterity allows them to put together simple puzzles, use tools, hold crayons with fingers instead of fists, make balls and snakes out of clay and undress without assistance.
- Emotionally, three-year-olds need familiar adults nearby for security as they explore and play. As they develop more independence, children this age begin to have real friendships with other children. When conflicts arise with peers, three-year-olds will typically seek adult assistance. They are learning to recognize the causes of feelings and will give simple help, such as a hug, to those who are upset. Three-year-olds can better manage their emotions, but may still fall apart under stress.

- Three-year-olds build on their abilities in the creative arts by developing greater control over their voices and by recognizing, naming and singing their favorite songs. They can play simple rhythm instruments with a developing ability to control beat, tempo and pitch. Their art also begins to include recognizable subjects. Three-year-olds love dramatic play and will sometimes get so involved in their imagined scenarios that they continue their roles even after the play stops. They also prefer to use real objects and costumes in their pretend play.

## **Your four year old**

### **How your child may develop this year**

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- When it comes to learning, four-year-olds are developing greater self-control and ingenuity. Their pretend play is more complex and imaginative and can be sustained for longer periods. They can also make plans and complete tasks. Four-year-olds want to try new experiences. They also want to be more self-reliant and seek to expand the areas of their lives where they can be independent decision-makers.
- The language skills of four-year-olds expand rapidly. They begin communicating in complex and compound sentences, have very few pronunciation errors and expand their vocabularies daily. They can follow multi-step directions and understand explanations given for things they can see. Four-year-olds frequently initiate conversations and are less likely to change the subject of conversation to areas of personal interest. They are also getting better at sharing personal experiences without prompts from adults.
- Four-year-olds are building their knowledge of written language. They want to know what words in their environment say and can recognize many letters. By the end of this year, many children understand that letters represent the sounds in spoken words and may associate some letters with their sounds. Most children also are capable of writing some legible letters and know that writing goes from left-to-right and top to bottom.
- Four-year-olds have an increased capacity for learning math concepts. They use logical reasoning to solve everyday problems and can effectively use language to compare and describe objects and shapes. They can count to "ten," recognize written numerals "0" to "9" and add and subtract using numbers up to "four." Four-year-olds know some variations of a circle, square, triangle and rectangle. They know days of the week, months and the seasons, but still cannot tell time.
- Children this age can engage in long periods of active play and exercise. They are skillful at walking, climbing, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching and galloping. They also are better able to throw, catch, kick and bounce balls. Improved finger dexterity allows them to hold writing tools with a more mature, tripod grip. Advances in hand-eye coordination help four-year-olds do puzzles, play with toys that have small parts and dress and undress without assistance.
- Four-year-olds approach the world with great curiosity and use their imaginations to help understand it. Hands-on explorations help them to separate reality from fantasy. They can

participate in the planning and implementation of simple scientific investigations and over the course of the year, will increase their abilities to make observations, gather information, compare data, identify patterns, describe and discuss observations and form explanations and generalizations.

- Emotionally, four-year-olds continue to learn what causes certain feelings and realize that others may react to the same situation differently. They have learned to better manage intense emotions with coping strategies like talking it out or drawing a picture. Four-year-olds also show further progress in their social interactions with peers, such as by smoothly joining in a group play situation, being sympathetic to others, or suggesting ways to resolve conflicts.
- In exploring the creative arts, children this age can identify changes in pitch, tempo, loudness and musical duration. They can sing songs of their own creation as well as memorized ones. Their art begins to be more realistic and may incorporate letters. Four-year-olds love to dance and are able to move rhythmically and smoothly. Their dramatic play is highly imaginative and now has the structure of specific scenarios, like going to the grocery store or rescuing a cat stuck in a tree.

## **Your five year old**

### **How your child may develop this year**

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- Five-year-olds are creative and enthusiastic problem solvers. They offer progressively more imaginative ideas for how to do a task, make something or solve longer-term or more abstract challenges. As they participate in a variety of new experiences, five-year-olds ask more analytical questions and weigh their choices. They are also more social as they learn new things and prefer activities that involve other children.
- The language skills of five-year-olds are well developed. They pronounce words clearly, speak in complex and compound sentences, use correct grammar for the most part and have good-sized vocabularies that continue to grow rapidly. Children this age enjoy initiating conversations, can wait their turn to speak during group conversations and are typically able to include appropriate details when sharing personal experiences.
- Five-year-olds begin to extend their oral language skills to reading and writing. They know their uppercase and most lowercase letters and understand that letters represent specific sounds in spoken words. This knowledge helps them to sound out words in print and write out words based on their sounds. They also can discuss stories and are able to tell their own tales.
- The mathematical thinking of children this age becomes more abstract and expands to include a greater understanding of the characteristics of shapes and numbers. They can count out a collection of up to "20" items, conduct simple addition and subtraction and identify which number in a set is larger. Five-year-olds understand and use words related to position, such as "under" or "behind." They sequence events chronologically and are learning to tell time. They can also sort objects based on more than one characteristic.
- Physically, five-year-olds abound with energy and seek active games and environments. Their increased abilities to balance and coordinate movements allow them to ride a bike with training wheels, swim, jump rope and perform most ball-related skills. They show mature form in walking

and running and are able to vary the direction, speed and quality of their movements. They can also use their fingers flexibly to control writing and painting tools, dress and undress dolls and manage zippers and buttons.

- Five-year-olds really want to know more about how the world works. Hands-on experiences help them to form theories to explain "how" and "why" things happen. They can use tools like thermometers and scales to gather information and are able to more independently carry out simple investigations. Five-year-olds also use increasingly descriptive language to relay information, ask questions and provide explanations.
- Children this age can manage feelings and social situations with greater independence. They might decide on their own to go to another room to calm down, or try strategies like negotiation and compromise to resolve a conflict before seeking adult help. They also have improved skills for forming and maintaining friendships with adults and other children. Being accepted by "the group" is becoming more and more important.
- In the creative arts, five-year-olds have a varied repertoire of music and are able to compose and arrange music within specified guidelines. They create realistic art with recognizable subjects and more detailed settings. They also recognize that art can tell a story. The dramatic play of five-year-olds is pre-planned, elaborate and sustained. They are able to perform simple plays, do pantomime and perform puppet shows.