



# Developmental Milestones: 3 to 4 Year Olds

## What are some of the developmental milestones my child should reach by three to four years of age?

With your child's third birthday, the "terrible twos" are officially over and the "magic years" of three and four begin—a time when your child's world will be dominated by fantasy and vivid imagination. During the next two years, he'll mature in many areas.



Here are some milestones to look for.

### Movement milestones

- Hops and stands on one foot up to five seconds
- Goes upstairs and downstairs without support
- Kicks ball forward
- Throws ball overhand
- Catches bounced ball most of the time
- Moves forward and backward with agility

### Milestones in hand and finger skills

- Copies square shapes
- Draws a person with two to four body parts
- Uses scissors
- Draws circles and squares
- Begins to copy some capital letters

### Language milestones

- Understands the concepts of "same" and "different"
- Has mastered some basic rules of grammar
- Speaks in sentences of five to six words
- Speaks clearly enough for strangers to understand
- Tells stories

### Cognitive milestones

- Correctly names some colors
- Understands the concept of counting and may know a few numbers
- Approaches problems from a single point of view
- Begins to have a clearer sense of time
- Follows three-part commands
- Recalls parts of a story
- Understands the concept of same/different
- Engages in fantasy play

### Social and emotional milestones

- Interested in new experiences
- Cooperates with other children
- Plays "Mom" or "Dad"

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- Increasingly inventive in fantasy play
- Dresses and undresses
- Negotiates solutions to conflicts
- More independent
- Imagines that many unfamiliar images may be "monsters"
- Views self as a whole person involving body, mind, and feelings
- Often cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality

## Developmental health watch

Because each child develops in his own particular manner, it's impossible to tell exactly when or how he'll perfect a given skill. The developmental milestones listed here will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect as your child gets older, but don't be alarmed if his development takes a slightly different course. Alert your pediatrician, however, if your child displays any of the following signs of possible developmental delay for this age range.

- Cannot throw a ball overhand
- Cannot jump in place
- Cannot ride a tricycle
- Cannot grasp a crayon between thumb and fingers
- Has difficulty scribbling
- Cannot stack four blocks
- Still clings or cries whenever his parents leave him
- Shows no interest in interactive games
- Ignores other children
- Doesn't respond to people outside the family
- Doesn't engage in fantasy play
- Resists dressing, sleeping, using the toilet
- Lashes out without any self-control when angry or upset
- Cannot copy a circle
- Doesn't use sentences of more than three words
- Doesn't use "me" and "you" appropriately

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**Source** Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5 (Copyright © 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics)

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