

# AGES & STAGES

## 4-YEAR-OLDS

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"Energetic" and "imaginative" best describe the 4-year-old. Often impatient and silly, they discover humor and spend a great deal of time being silly and telling you "jokes." A 4-year-old's language may range from silly words such as "batty-watty" to profanity. Loud, boisterous laughter may accompany such language.

Imagination suddenly becomes greater than life for the 4-year-old, who often confuses reality and "make-believe." Wild stories and exaggerations are common.

Four-year-olds feel good about the things they can do, show self-confidence, and are willing to try new adventures. They race up and down stairs or around corners, dash on tricycles or scooters, and pull wagons at full tilt. You still need to watch them closely as they cannot estimate their own abilities accurately and are capable of trying some outlandish and dangerous tricks.

### INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

- can place objects in a line from largest to smallest
- can recognize some letters if taught, and may be able to print own name
- 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 - but not always in the right order
- understands the order of daily routines (breakfast before lunch, lunch before dinner, dinner before bed time)
- speaks in fairly complex sentences. "The baby ate the cookie before I could put it on the table."
- asks a lot of questions, including ones on birth and death
- 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, and where questions
- continues one activity for 10-15 minutes
- names 6-8 colors and 3 shapes
- follows 2 unrelated directions (put your milk on the table and get your coat on)
- has basic understanding of concepts related to number, size, weight, colors, textures, distance, position, and time
- understands immediate passage of time as in what happened yesterday, but does not understand calendar time

- has long attention span and finishes activities
- understands and remembers own accomplishments
- may add "ed" to words. "I goed to the door and put-ed the cat outdoors. He hurt-ed me."

### **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 assistance (unzip, unsnap, unbutton clothes; lace but not tie shoes)
- can feed self, brush teeth, comb hair, wash, dress, hang up clothes with little assistance
- walks a straight line
- hops on one foot
- pedals and steers a tricycle skillfully
- jumps over objects 5-6 inches high
- runs, jumps, hops, and skips around obstacles with ease
- stacks 10 or more blocks
- forms shapes and objects out of clay or play dough, sometimes human and animal figures
- threads small beads on a string
- catches, bounces, and throws a ball easily
- likes to gallop, turn somersaults, climb ladders and trees, hop on one foot

### **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- enjoys playing with other children
- takes turns and shares (most of the time); may still be rather bossy
- seeks out adult approval
- 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
- capable of feeling jealous
- persistently asks why
- boastful - 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
- may name call, tattler freely
- likes to shock others by using "forbidden" words
- expresses anger verbally rather than physically (most of the time)
- still throws tantrums over minor frustrations
- imitates parent of the same sex, particularly in play
- enjoys pretending, often with imaginary playmates
- 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
- can feel intense anger and frustration
- has vivid imagination and sometimes imaginary playmates
- enjoys dramatic play and role playing

### **IDEAS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS**

- Read aloud each day and encourage children to look at books on their own. Provide alternative reading material with a collection of outdated coupons, junk mail, newspaper ads, and old cereal boxes.
- Say nursery rhymes and fingerplays together. Encourage 4-year-olds to tell stories to younger children.
- Encourage interest in writing and words. Provide children with paper and notebooks for writing. Print letters and numerals on art work, and label toy shelves with pictures and words that describe objects.
- Provide a variety of art experiences. Make play dough. Create collages from magazine pictures, fabric, wallpaper, and newsprint. Encourage children to experiment with new media like wire and cork, soda straws, string, or yarn. Teach children to mix different colors with paint.
- Teach important number and space concepts. Sort and count everything in sight, like silverware, socks, rocks, leaves, etc. Talk about things being in, on, under, behind, beside, before and after, larger than, too far, etc.
- Teach children the correct use of the telephone.
- Four-year-olds have a strong need to feel important and worthwhile. Praise accomplishments, and provide opportunities to experience freedom and independence.
- Teach the use of landmarks to find their way around your neighborhood.
- Encourage physical development. Play follow the leader. Pretend to walk like various animals. Set up an obstacle course indoors with challenges such as crawling, climbing, leaping, balancing, and running across stepping stones. Encourage walking with a beanbag on the head.
- Promote respect for life and living things by letting them help you build a bird feeder and hang it up. Record the kinds of birds observed, and teach them to identify birds by significant characteristics like the red male and green female cardinals, the black caps and white cheeks of the chickadee.
- Encourage 4-year-olds to help you plan and plant a garden. They will love to water plants daily and will enjoy measuring plant growth.
- Encourage multicultural awareness through representative dolls, puppets, pictures, and books. Encourage cultural aspects of all the families, and learn recipes, songs, and

information about cultural celebrations.

- Expand dramatic play by providing a variety of props for themes like grocery store, pizza parlour, birthday party, and firefighter.

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