

AGES & STAGES

3-YEAR OLDS

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The 3-year-old is full of wonder and spends a lot of time watching, observing, and imitating. Their days are filled with busy exploration of their world.

Three-year-olds are interested in perfecting motor skills, and it is common for them to spend the entire morning going down the slide or riding a favorite tricycle.

Three-year-olds have very little memory for past events and do not understand "yesterday" and "tomorrow" the way adults do. They often repeat activities or may do and undo actions such as putting a puzzle together. These sequences are important to later understandings of change and consistency.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

- talks so that 75 to 80 percent of his speech is understandable
- talks in complete sentences of 3-5 words. "Mommy is drinking juice. There's a big dog."
- stumbles over words sometimes - usually not a sign of stuttering
- enjoys repeating words and sounds
- listens attentively to short stories and books
- likes familiar stories told without any changes in words
- enjoys listening to stories and repeating simple rhymes
- able to tell simple stories from pictures or books
- enjoys singing and can carry a simple tune
- understands "now, soon, and later"
- asks who, what, where, and why questions
- stacks 5-7 blocks
- enjoys playing with clay or play dough (pounds, rolls, and squeezes it)
- can put together a 6-piece puzzle
- draws a circle and square
- recognizes common everyday sounds
- matches an object to a picture of that object
- identifies common colors such as red, blue, yellow, green
- can count 2-3 objects
- can solve problems if they are simple, concrete, real, and immediate, and if wants to
- interested in similarities and differences
- can distinguish, match, and name colors
- interested in features of animals that make them unique
- has good self-knowledge; can understand difference between self and younger children, but not between self and older children
- can say his age

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- weight: 25-44 pounds
- height: 34-43 inches
- develops a taller, thinner, adult-like appearance
- develops a full set of baby teeth
- needs approximately 1,300 calories daily
- sleeps 10-12 hours at night
- sleeps through most nights without wetting the bed (occasional accidents are still quite common)
- uses the toilet with some help (many boys may not be ready for toilet learning until sometime during their third year)
- puts on shoes (but cannot tie laces)
- dresses self with some help (buttons, snaps, zippers)
- feeds self (with some spilling)
- tries to catch a large ball
- throws a ball overhead
- kicks a ball forward
- hops on one foot
- walks short distance on tiptoes
- climbs up and down a small slide by self
- pedals a tricycle
- walks on a line
- can stand, balance, and hop on one foot
- jumps over a 6" barrier
- can feed self with spoon and small fork; often butters bread with knife
- can use toilet independently
- can brush teeth, wash hands, get a drink
- interested in handling food and cooking procedures

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- seeks attention and approval of adults
- sometimes shows preference for one parent (often the parent of the opposite sex)
- accepts suggestions and follows simple directions
- enjoys helping with simple household tasks
- can make simple choices between two things
- enjoys making others laugh and being silly
- enjoys playing alone but near other children
- spends a great deal of time watching and observing
- enjoys playing with other children briefly, but still does not cooperate or share well
- enjoys hearing stories about self
- enjoys playing "house" enjoys imitating other children and adults
- answers whether he is a boy or a girl
- expresses interest in ethnic identities of self and others if exposed to a multicultural setting

IDEAS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- Be patient with toileting. Many children (especially boys) will not be ready for toilet learning until after age 3. Accidents will happen for a while; treat accidents calmly and matter of factly. Avoid shaming a child.
- Encourage development of hand-eye coordination by providing large buttons or old beads to string on a shoe lace.
- Play ball - show children how to throw, catch, and kick balls of different sizes.
- Show children how to hop like a rabbit, tiptoe like a bird, waddle like a duck, slither like a snake, and run like a deer.
- Talk frequently with children; use short sentences, ask questions, and listen.
- Add new information to your children's sentences. "Yes that's a flower - it's a tall, red flower and it smells so good."
- Teach children to memorize first and last names.
- Provide books for children to read, and read the same books to them. Read poetry and nursery rhymes. Encourage a child to repeat a story and discuss the ideas and events. Read titles and point to important words on pages, packages, and street signs.
- Encourage interest in reading and writing by sharing a grocery list or note for parents. Provide paper, small notebooks, and markers for use in dramatic play.
- Count objects of interest; for example cookies, cups, napkins, or dolls. When possible, move one at a time as you and the children count. Measure, and have children help measure and count as you follow a recipe.
- Explain why and how things happen with the help of a reference book. Help them do simple science activities like magnetic attraction, freezing water, planting seeds, making a terrarium, and flying kites on a windy day.
- Provide sets - toys and other objects that go together. Discuss similarities and differences. For example, point out sequences in cooking. Let children experiment with faucets, tools, light switches, knobs, latches, and toys that come apart.
- Sing simple songs. Make simple rhythm instruments: oatmeal box or coffee can drums, rattles of dry beans in a box, etc. Encourage a variety of body movements and dance to music of many kinds. Play musical games such as "London Bridge," "Ring-around-the-Rosie," and "Farmer in the Dell."
- Encourage free expression in art projects. Avoid asking "what" children are drawing. Three-year-olds may not know or care, but simply enjoy the process of drawing.
- Ask parents to bring baby pictures. Talk about "When you were a baby."

- Draw a face on an old sock and show children how to "talk" with puppets.
- Talk about colors, numbers, and shapes in your everyday conversation. "We need ONE egg. That's a RED car. The butter is in this SQUARE box."
- Ask for help with very simple household tasks such as putting the napkins by each plate, putting socks in the drawer, watering plants, or stirring the muffin batter.

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FORMAT AVAILABLE:: Print - 296 pages

DOCUMENT REVIEW:: Level 2 -Iowa State University Extension

ENTRY DATE:: February 1995