

Important Milestones By The End Of 3 Years (36 Months)

Children develop at their own pace, so it's impossible to tell exactly when yours will learn a given skill. The developmental milestones below will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect as your child gets older, but don't be alarmed if your child takes a slightly different course.

Movement

- Climbs well
- Walks up and down stairs, alternating feet (one foot per stair step)
- Kicks ball
- Runs easily
- Pedals tricycle
- Bends over easily without falling

Hand and Finger Skills

- Makes up-and-down, side-to-side, and circular lines with pencil or crayon
- Turns book pages one at a time
- Builds a tower of more than six blocks
- Holds a pencil in writing position
- Screws and unscrews jar lids, nuts, and bolts
- Turns rotating handles

Language

- Follows a two- or three-part command
- Recognizes and identifies almost all common objects and pictures
- Understands most sentences
- Understands placement in space ("on," "in," "under")
- Uses 4- to 5-word sentences
- Can say name, age, and sex
- Uses pronouns (I, you, me, we, they) and some plurals (cars, dogs, cats)
- Strangers can understand most of her words

Cognitive

- Makes mechanical toys work
- Matches an object in her hand or room to a picture in a book
- Plays make-believe with dolls, animals, and people

- Sorts objects by shape and color
- Completes puzzles with three or four pieces
- Understands concept of "two"

Social

- Imitates adults and playmates
- Spontaneously shows affection for familiar playmates
- Can take turns in games
- Understands concept of "mine" and "his/hers"

Emotional

- Expresses affection openly
- Expresses a wide range of emotions
- By 3, separates easily from parents
- Objects to major changes in routine

Developmental Health Watch

Alert your child's doctor or nurse if your child displays any of the following signs of possible developmental delay for this age range.

- Frequent falling and difficulty with stairs
- Persistent drooling or very unclear speech
- Cannot build a tower of more than four blocks
- Difficulty manipulating small objects
- Cannot copy a circle by age 3
- Cannot communicate in short phrases
- No involvement in "pretend" play
- Does not understand simple instructions
- Little interest in other children
- Extreme difficulty separating from mother or primary caregiver
- Poor eye contact
- Limited interest in toys

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Learn the Signs. Act Early.