

3 Year Olds

Ideas for Parents

- Be patient with toilet training. Accidents may still occur for a while.
- Encourage independence. Buy clothes that your child can pull on and off.
- Play make-believe with your child. Encourage a creative imagination.
- Allow your child to help with chores, putting toys and clothes away, clearing the table and making the bed.
- Teach your child his first and last name.
- Read to your child and encourage your child to tell you stories.
- Play outside (throw and catch balls, ride a tricycle, play in a sand box). Encourage physical activity.
- Allow times for your child to finger-paint, draw on paper and other art activities.
- Let your child brush their teeth every day.
- Give your child choices and let them choose.
- Encourage your child to count items, name counting (may know some numbers).

Physical Development

- Climbs upstairs and downstairs without support
- Throws a ball overhand
- Moves forward and backward with agility
- Rides a tricycle; pedals
- Improved small motor control such as holds pencil and utensils well
- Can dress and undress self (may need help with zippers, buttons)
- Builds a tower of more than six blocks

Cognitive Development

- Draws crude, but recognizable pictures
- Copies shapes (e.g. circles and squares)
- Speaks clearly enough that strangers can understand
- Speaks in sentences of 3-5 words
- Correctly names some colors
- Begins to understand concept of objects and tell what color things are
- Listens to and recalls parts of a story
- Has mastered some basic rules of grammar (e.g. plurals)

Social Development

- Cooperates with other children
- Increasingly inventive in make believe play
- Becomes more independent
- Assumes a gender identity
- Uses words to express emotions

What To Expect: Sharing

Sharing is an important skill to be mastered. Although preschool children are egocentric by nature, at age three, they can begin to understand the concept of sharing. Learning to share does not come naturally, but you can help your child learn.

Tips to Encourage Sharing

- Do not force your child to share. When friends come to play, help put away the special toys your child does not want to share
- Help your child select "share toys" that won't break or get used up
- Buy or collect toys that are good for sharing such as construction sets, blocks, swings, slides, puzzles, toy telephones and tea sets. When there are plenty of items to go around, it is easier to share.
- Model sharing. Offer to share with your child. Ask your child to share and give praise for being a good sharer.
- Play games which require taking turns and cooperation
- Don't expect perfection. Learning to share takes time and practice

Toys

- Make believe props (dress up clothes, play kitchen items, etc.)
- Puppets, dolls
- Riding toys, tricycle
- Balls of all sizes
- Play dough, crayons, paint, paint brushes, chalk, etc.
- Large piece puzzles (3-6 pieces)
- Books
- Music tapes, tape player

4 Year Olds

Ideas for Parents

- Read to your child every day. Visit your local library and encourage your child to choose books. Encourage your child to tell you stories.
- Say nursery rhymes and finger plays together. Sing songs.
- Allow your child to practice writing. Have your child copy shapes, letters and numbers.
- Foster your child's creativity by allowing her to paint and color. Provide materials such as play dough, chalk, glue and crayons. Allow your child to use scraps to make collages.
- Praise your child's accomplishments. Foster independence by encouraging self-reliance.
- Encourage physical activity by playing follow the leader (run, jump, hop, skip and swing).
- Expand dramatic play by providing a variety of props for themes such as grocery store, beauty salon, restaurant and birthday parties.

Physical Development

- Runs, jumps, hops, summersaults, may be able to skip
- Throws and catches a ball
- Swings and climbs
- Cuts on a line
- Copies geometric shapes (circles, squares, triangles, etc.)
- Draws a person with some body parts
- Dresses and undresses by self
- Usually toilet-trained completely
- Uses fork, spoon and dinner knife without assistance
- Brushes teeth

Cognitive Development

- Recalls parts of a story, tells own story
- Says name and address
- Can count ten or more objects
- Correctly names at least four colors
- Combines two or more sentences
- Understands meanings of words
- Makes use of words and rhymes
- Asks questions "Why?" and "How?"
- Follows simple rules

Social and Emotional Development

- Likes to imagine and is able to distinguish fantasy from reality
- Likes to sing, dance and act
- Is able to play with a group
- More likely to agree to rules; can begin to understand games
- Learns to express sympathy
- Shares with others
- Seeks out playmates
- Shows more independence
- Aware of sexuality

What To Expect: School Readiness

Success in school readiness involves good health, being socially and emotionally mature, having good language, problem solving and creative thinking skills, and a general knowledge about the world.

Prepare Your Child by Focusing On

- Physical well being: Be sure your child eats nutritious meals and gets plenty of sleep and exercise. Regular medical care and immunizations are important. Regular dental checkups should begin at age three.
- Social and emotional preparation: Children are often not socially and emotionally mature when they enter kindergarten, but it is important that they have an opportunity to be developing confidence, motivation, independence, curiosity, persistence, cooperation, self-control and empathy. You can help your child by setting good examples (e.g. treating everyone with respect and sharing). Your child will also know if you have a positive attitude toward learning and school. Encourage self-reliance to foster independence. Provide chances for your child to socialize with other children and adults who are not family members.

5 Year Olds

Ideas for parents

- Provide space and opportunities for your child to run, hop, skip, jump and other large motor skills.
- Give your child opportunities to sort, count and match items in the house. Let him help match socks in the laundry, count the number of settings at the table, etc.
- Help your child learn to follow rules by playing simple games in a small group
- Listen to your child. Ask and answer questions. Be honest with your child.
- Be understanding of your child's fears and anxieties. Reassure your child's safety and give lots of comfort.
- Give your child praise for good deeds and accomplishments. Be specific (e.g. "You did a great job putting the toys away!").
- Provide a place for your child to be alone and have privacy.
- Help your child to express feelings with "I" messages (e.g. "I feel angry" or "I feel sad", etc.

Physical Development

- Can run, hop, skip and jump
- Favors one hand over the other
- Has increased poise and coordination
- Begins to lose baby teeth and acquire secondary teeth
- Dresses and undresses with little assistance (can button and zip)
- Can throw and catch a ball
- Ascends stairs with alternating feet

Cognitive Development

- Has a rapidly expanding vocabulary (approximately 2000 words)
- Knows full name, address and age
- Can order events (before and after)
- Loves to learn
- Knows basic colors
- Can repeat stories and likes to tell stories
- Can usually separate fact from fantasy

Social and Emotional Development

- Has a basic sense of right and wrong
- Cooperates and takes turns, but doesn't always like to
- Protects younger siblings
- Invents games with simple rules
- Can be bossy
- Understands when he/she is being praised or punished

What To Expect: Off to Kindergarten

The transition from child care to kindergarten can be scary for children. Entering a new school with unfamiliar faces can produce terror and clinging in a youngster who was happy and independent in child care.

“Separation anxiety” is normal for children at this age, just as it is for toddlers. Some signs of stress include changes in sleeping and eating habits, being unusually quiet, and clinging when it is time for you to leave. These signs normally disappear after your child has been in school a few weeks.

Tips to Make the Adjustment Easier

- Prepare your child for transition – Talk to your child about the changes that will take place.
- Give a lot of attention to your child.
- Reassure your child that learning new things and going to school is fun. Be positive about school. Be sure your child understands there will be friends and fun at school. Talk about your own school days.
- Visit the school before classes start so your child can see where he/she will be going.
- Listen to your child – be there to answer questions and ask about the school day. What did your child do and learn and like about school today? Be interested. Display school work where people can see it. Praise accomplishments. Become involved with parent groups at school.
- Maintain a routine schedule – be sure your child has a regular bedtime and is well-rested for school. Nutritious meals, regular medical checkups and daily physical activity will help to keep your child healthy and ready to succeed in school.

Toys

- Board games, card games, puzzles
- Blocks, building sets
- Play dough, scissors, glue, paint, crayons, markers, books
- Dress up clothes and props

Language and general knowledge

It is important for children to learn to solve problems and communicate with others. You can help foster these skills by providing opportunities to play, answering questions and listening to your child. Reading aloud and monitoring television viewing are also important.

School readiness depends on a combination of many aspects of child development. It does not mean your child needs to know the alphabet, colors, shapes, numbers and how to read.

Toys

- Dolls, puppets
- Balls
- Trucks, tractors, trains
- Blocks
- Dramatic play props
- Blunt scissors, washable markers, crayons, paint
- Sewing cards
- Simple board games
- Books
- Play dough