

Expected Development at 3 years old

Communication and Language

Listening, Attention and Understanding

- Can identify objects by function, e.g. 'Which one do we eat with?'
- Understands descriptive concepts such as 'big', 'wet', 'hot', 'the same' etc.
- Listens eagerly to stories and demands favourites over and over again.
- Knows several nursery rhymes to repeat and sometimes sing.
- Shifts from one task to another when gaining their attention by saying the child's name, e.g. 'Jason, can you stop now? We're tidying up'.
- Follows instructions with three key words, e.g. 'can you wash dolly's face?'
- Gives full name and sex and, sometimes, age.
- Shows that they understand action words by pointing to the right picture in a book, e.g. 'who's jumping?'

Speaking

- Speech modulating in loudness and range of pitch.
- Large vocabulary intelligible even to strangers, but speech still contains many immature sounds, substitutions, and unconventional grammatical forms.
- Uses personal pronouns (I, you, me, he etc.) and plurals correctly.

PSE Development

Self-Regulation

- General behaviour is more amenable – can be affectionate and confiding.
- Sometimes able to defer satisfaction of wishes to the future, e.g. 'You can play with the cars after dinner'.
- Settles to some activities for a while. (Often of own choosing).

Managing Self

- Eats with a fork and spoon.
- Washes hands but needs adult supervision with drying.
- Can pull pants down and up but needs help with buttons and other fastenings.
- May be dry through the night, although this is very variable.
- Makes an effort to keep surroundings tidy.

Building Relationships

- Vividly realised make-believe play, including invented people and objects.
- Sometimes manage to share or take turns with others, with adult guidance and understanding 'yours' and 'mine'.
- Enjoys playing on the floor with bricks, boxes, toy trains and dolls, etc., alone or in company with siblings and peers.
- Joins in active make-believe play with other children.
- Shows affection for younger siblings.
- Likes to help adults with domestic activities including gardening, shopping, etc.
- Starts to enjoy the company of other children and want to play with them.

Physical Development

Gross Motor Skills

- Walks alone up stairs using alternating feet one foot to each step and can carry large toy. (using handrail).
- Comes down stairs two feet to a step and can carry large toy. (using handrail).
- Usually jumps from bottom step with two feet together.
- Climbs nursery apparatus with agility.
- Can turn around obstacles and corners while running and also while pushing and pulling large toys.
- Walks forwards, backwards, sideways, etc., hauling large toys with complete confidence.
- Obviously appreciates size and movements of own body in relation to external objects and space.
- Rides tricycle using pedals and can steer it round wide corners.
- Can stand and walk on tiptoe.
- Can stand momentarily on one (preferred) foot when shown.
- Can sit with feet crossed at ankles.
- Can throw a ball overhand and catch large ball on or between extended arms.
- Kicks ball forcibly.

Fine Motor Skills

- Builds tower of nine or ten cubes.
- By 3.5 years, builds one or more little bridges using cubes/blocks; using two hands cooperatively.
- Threads large wooden beads on shoelace.
- Can close fist and wiggle thumb in imitation, right and left, e.g. when singing 'Tommy Thumb' or '2 Little Dicky Birds'.

