

Your Child at 4 Years



Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your child has reached by age 4. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

What Most Children Do by this Age:

Social/Emotional

- ☐ Enjoys doing new things
- ☐ Plays "Mom" and "Dad"
- ☐ Is more and more creative with make-believe play
- ☐ Would rather play with other children than by himself
- ☐ Cooperates with other children
- ☐ Often can't tell what's real and what's make-believe
- ☐ Talks about what she likes and what she is interested in

Language/Communication

- ☐ Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as correctly using "he" and "she"
- ☐ Sings a song or says a poem from memory such as the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" or the "Wheels on the Bus"
- ☐ Tells stories
- ☐ Can say first and last name

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- ☐ Names some colors and some numbers
- ☐ Understands the idea of counting
- ☐ Starts to understand time
- ☐ Remembers parts of a story
- ☐ Understands the idea of "same" and "different"
- ☐ Draws a person with 2 to 4 body parts
- ☐ Uses scissors
- ☐ Starts to copy some capital letters
- ☐ Plays board or card games
- ☐ Tells you what he thinks is going to happen next in a book

Movement/Physical Development

- ☐ Hops and stands on one foot up to 2 seconds

- ☐ Catches a bounced ball most of the time
- ☐ Pours, cuts with supervision, and mashes own food

You Know Your Child Best.

Act early if you have concerns about the way your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, or moves, or if your child:

- ☐ Is missing milestones
- ☐ Can't jump in place
- ☐ Has trouble scribbling
- ☐ Shows no interest in interactive games or make-believe
- ☐ Ignores other children or doesn't respond to people outside the family
- ☐ Resists dressing, sleeping, and using the toilet
- ☐ Can't retell a favorite story
- ☐ Doesn't follow 3-part commands
- ☐ Doesn't understand "same" and "different"
- ☐ Doesn't use "me" and "you" correctly
- ☐ Speaks unclearly
- ☐ Loses skills he once had

Tell your child's doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay and ask for a developmental screening.

If you or the doctor is still concerned

1. Ask for a referral to a specialist and,
2. Call any local public elementary school for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get services to help.

For more information, go to cdc.gov/Concerned.

DON'T WAIT.
Acting early can make a real difference!



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1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

Learn the Signs. Act Early.



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Help Your Child Learn and Grow

You can help your child learn and grow. Talk, read, sing, and play together every day. Below are some activities to enjoy with your 4-year-old child today.



What You Can Do for Your 4-Year-Old:

- ☐ Play make-believe with your child. Let her be the leader and copy what she is doing.
- ☐ Suggest your child pretend play an upcoming event that might make him nervous, like going to preschool or staying overnight at a grandparent's house.
- ☐ Give your child simple choices whenever you can. Let your child choose what to wear, play, or eat for a snack. Limit choices to 2 or 3.
- ☐ During play dates, let your child solve her own problems with friends, but be nearby to help out if needed.
- ☐ Encourage your child to use words, share toys, and take turns playing games of one another's choice.
- ☐ Give your child toys to build imagination, like dress-up clothes, kitchen sets, and blocks.
- ☐ Use good grammar when speaking to your child. Instead of "Mommy wants you to come here," say, "I want you to come here."
- ☐ Use words like "first," "second," and "finally" when talking about everyday activities. This will help your child learn about sequence of events.
- ☐ Take time to answer your child's "why" questions. If you don't know the answer, say "I don't know," or help your child find the answer in a book, on the Internet, or from another adult.
- ☐ When you read with your child, ask him to tell you what happened in the story as you go.
- ☐ Say colors in books, pictures, and things at home. Count common items, like the number of snack crackers, stairs, or toy trains.
- ☐ Teach your child to play outdoor games like tag, follow the leader, and duck, duck, goose.
- ☐ Play your child's favorite music and dance with your child. Take turns copying each other's moves.

Milestones adapted from CARING FOR YOUR BABY AND YOUNG CHILD: BIRTH TO AGE 5, Fifth Edition, edited by Steven Shelov and Tanya Remer Altmann © 1991, 1993, 1998, 2004, 2009 by the American Academy of Pediatrics and BRIGHT FUTURES: GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH SUPERVISION OF INFANTS, CHILDREN, AND ADOLESCENTS, Third Edition, edited by Joseph Hagan, Jr., Judith S. Shaw, and Paula M. Duncan, 2008, Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool.

Your Child at 5 Years



Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your child has reached by age 5. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

What Most Children Do by this Age:

Social/Emotional

- ☐ Wants to please friends
- ☐ Wants to be like friends
- ☐ More likely to agree with rules
- ☐ Likes to sing, dance, and act
- ☐ Is aware of gender
- ☐ Can tell what's real and what's make-believe
- ☐ Shows more independence (for example, may visit a next-door neighbor by himself [adult supervision is still needed])
- ☐ Is sometimes demanding and sometimes very cooperative

Language/Communication

- ☐ Speaks very clearly
- ☐ Tells a simple story using full sentences
- ☐ Uses future tense; for example, "Grandma will be here."
- ☐ Says name and address

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- ☐ Counts 10 or more things
- ☐ Can draw a person with at least 6 body parts
- ☐ Can print some letters or numbers
- ☐ Copies a triangle and other geometric shapes
- ☐ Knows about things used every day, like money and food

Movement/Physical Development

- ☐ Stands on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- ☐ Hops; may be able to skip
- ☐ Can do a somersault
- ☐ Uses a fork and spoon and sometimes a table knife
- ☐ Can use the toilet on her own
- ☐ Swings and climbs

You Know Your Child Best.

Act early if you have concerns about the way your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, or moves, or if your child:

- ☐ Is missing milestones
- ☐ Doesn't show a wide range of emotions
- ☐ Shows extreme behavior (unusually fearful, aggressive, shy or sad)
- ☐ Unusually withdrawn and not active
- ☐ Is easily distracted, has trouble focusing on one activity for more than 5 minutes
- ☐ Doesn't respond to people, or responds only superficially
- ☐ Can't tell what's real and what's make-believe
- ☐ Doesn't play a variety of games and activities
- ☐ Can't give first and last name
- ☐ Doesn't use plurals or past tense properly
- ☐ Doesn't talk about daily activities or experiences
- ☐ Doesn't draw pictures
- ☐ Can't brush teeth, wash and dry hands, or get undressed without help
- ☐ Loses skills he once had

Tell your child's doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay and ask for a developmental screening.

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You can help your child learn and grow. Talk, read, sing, and play together every day. Below are some activities to enjoy with your 5-year-old child today.

What You Can Do for Your 5-Year-Old:

- ☐ Continue to arrange play dates, trips to the park, or play groups. Give your child more freedom to choose activities to play with friends, and let your child work out problems on her own.
- ☐ Your child might start to talk back or use profanity (swear words) as a way to feel independent. Do not give a lot of attention to this talk, other than a brief time out. Instead, praise your child when he asks for things nicely and calmly takes “no” for an answer.
- ☐ This is a good time to talk to your child about safe touch. No one should touch “private parts” except doctors or nurses during an exam or parents when they are trying to keep the child clean.
- ☐ Teach your child her address and phone number.
- ☐ When reading to your child, ask him to predict what will happen next in the story.
- ☐ Encourage your child to “read” by looking at the pictures and telling the story.
- ☐ Teach your child time concepts like morning, afternoon, evening, today, tomorrow, and yesterday. Start teaching the days of the week.
- ☐ Explore your child’s interests in your community. For example, if your child loves animals, visit the zoo or petting farm. Go to the library or look on the Internet to learn about these topics.
- ☐ Keep a handy box of crayons, paper, paint, child scissors, and paste. Encourage your child to draw and make art projects with different supplies.
- ☐ Play with toys that encourage your child to put things together.
- ☐ Teach your child how to pump her legs back and forth on a swing.
- ☐ Help your child climb on the monkey bars.
- ☐ Go on walks with your child, do a scavenger hunt in your neighborhood or park, help him ride a bike with training wheels (wearing a helmet).

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