

AGES & STAGES

3 years



The 3-year-old is full of wonder, and spends a lot of time observing and imitating others. They love to spend time with parents and enjoy helping out with simple household tasks.

3-YEAR-OLDS

Growing and Moving

WEIGHT: 25-44 pounds

HEIGHT: 34-43 inches

- develops a taller, thinner, adult like appearance
- develops a full set of baby teeth
- sleeps through most nights without wetting the bed (with occasional accidents)
- uses the toilet with some help (many boys may not be ready until age 3-1/2 years)
- puts on shoes (but cannot tie laces)
- dresses self with some help (buttons, snaps, zippers)
- feeds self (with some spilling)
- throws a ball overhand
- tries to catch and kick a large ball forward
- jumps with both feet; walks short distance on tiptoe
- climbs up and down a small slide by self
- enjoys slow paced swinging
- pedals a tricycle
- holds a crayon with first two fingers and thumb.
- enjoys playing with clay or play dough (pounds, rolls, and squeezes it)
- enjoys playing in sand or water (pouring, dumping, sifting)

Thinking and Learning

- understands "now," "soon," and "later" – but not yesterday or tomorrow
- asks who, what, where, and why questions
- stacks 5-7 blocks
- sorts objects by shape and size
- puts together a 6-piece puzzle
- draws a circle and square
- recognizes everyday sounds
- interested in similarities and differences, especially with animals unique features
- identifies common colors; red, blue, yellow and green
- can touch and count 2-3 objects – usually out loud
- likes realistic toys, but can pretend that a block is a cup, or a wash cloth is a hat



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TOYS



Toys

nesting toys, cups that stack, puzzles (3-6 pieces)

matching games, pegboard

large wheeled toys, tricycle, slide, wagon

small table and chairs

crayons, felt tip markers, play dough, glue and paper, paint, paint brushes

puppets, toy animals, dolls

balls (different sizes), blocks (medium and large)

Listening, Talking, and Reading

- 75-80 percent of 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 listening to stories, but only for about 8-12 minutes
- likes familiar stories told without any changes in words
- enjoys retelling simple stories from pictures or books
- delights in repeating words, sounds and simple rhymes
- enjoys singing and can carry a simple tune

Feeling and Relating

- accepts suggestions and follows simple directions
- sometimes shows preference for one parent (often the parent of the opposite sex)
- seeks adult attention and approval
- enjoys helping with simple tasks
- can make simple choices between two things
- enjoys making others laugh and being silly
- enjoys playing alone, but nearby or alongside other children
- spends a great deal of time watching, observing and imitating other children and adults
- enjoys playing with other children briefly, but still does not cooperate or share well
- enjoys hearing stories about self
- likes to play house, but not yet ready for complex pretend play

LET'S TALK!

Ideas to help children build communication skills

Give children specific feedback. Rather than make general comments, try giving specific directions or feedback, "It looks like the wagon's wheel is stuck. What happens if you lift it? What else could you try?" Talk together about what works and what doesn't work.





Books for Children

Bear Snores On
Karma Wilson and Jane Chapman

Caps for Sale
Esphyr Slobodkina

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom
Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie
Laura Joffe Numeroff and Felicia Bond

Is Your Mama a Llama?
Deborah Guarino and Steven Kellogg

Harold and the Purple Crayon
Crockett Johnson

Napping House
Audrey Wood and Don Wood

Peter's Chair
Ezra Jack Keats

The Rainbow Fish
Marcus Pfister and J. Alison James

The Snowy Day
Ezra Jack Keats

The Very Hungry Caterpillar
Eric Carle

IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Help little fingers learn to do small tasks by stringing beads, stacking small blocks or buttoning a coat.
- Make brushing teeth a part of your child's daily routine.
- Be patient with toileting — accidents will still happen for a while.
- Encourage sand and water play.
- Show your child how to throw, catch, and kick a large, soft ball.
- Show your child how to hop like a rabbit, tiptoe like a bird, waddle like a duck, slither like a snake, and run like a deer.
- Read together daily. Demonstrate that books are read from left to right, point out that pictures connect to words, and discuss how books have titles, authors and illustrators.
- Ask your child to tell you a story or retell the story using pictures as clues.
- Have many back-and-forth conversations, use short sentences, ask questions, and listen.
- Add new information to your child's sentences. "Yes, that's a flower— it's a tall, red flower and it smells so lovely."
- Talk about colors, numbers, and shapes in your everyday conversations. "We need ONE egg. That's a RED car. The butter is in this SQUARE box."
- Take a nature walk; look for shapes, sizes, colors, textures, smells and sounds.
- Teach your child to memorize his or her first and last name.
- Sing simple songs and silly rhymes.
- Look at baby pictures together and talk about "when you were a baby."
- Ask for help with simple tasks such as putting the napkins by each plate, socks in the drawer, or stirring the muffin batter.

A Word on Development

Every child is unique. Each child's learning and growth rates may differ slightly from other children the same age. If, however, you notice a child is unable to do many of the skills listed for his or her age group, you may wish to talk with a health professional. In Iowa, you may request a free evaluation and assessment from **Early ACCESS** at 1-888-425-4371. www.iafamilysupportnetwork.org/early-access-iowa

If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference.

Resources

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

- Human Sciences www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences
- Extension Store store.extension.iastate.edu

Search "Ages and Stages" for information about specific development milestones.

The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been combined from a variety of professional resources to help you understand your child's overall growth. It is not a standardized measurement tool.

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Ages & Stages 3-Year-Olds is available online at: store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/5024.

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