

Developmental Milestones: 4 to 5 Year Olds



What are some of the developmental milestones my child should reach by four to five years of age?

Before you know it, the somewhat calm child of three becomes a dynamo of energy, drive, bossiness, belligerence, and generally out-of-bounds behaviour. You may be reminded of the earlier trials and tribulations you went through when he was two. Also obvious during this time is the tremendous spurt of imaginative ideas that spring from children's minds and mouths. All of this behaviour and thinking will help your youngster build a secure foundation as he emerges into the world of school. Here are some other milestones to look for.

Movement milestones

- Stands on one foot for ten seconds or longer
- Hops, somersaults
- Swings, climbs
- May be able to skip

Milestones in hand and finger skills

- Copies triangle and other geometric patterns
- Draws person with body
- Prints some letters
- Dresses and undresses without assistance
- Uses fork, spoon, and (sometimes) a table knife
- Usually cares for own toilet needs

Language milestones

- Recalls part of a story
- Speaks sentences of more than five words
- Uses future tense
- Tells longer stories
- Says name and address

Cognitive milestones

- Can count ten or more objects
- Correctly names at least four colours

- Better understands the concept of time
- Knows about things used every day in the home (money, food, appliances)

Social and emotional milestones

- Wants to please friends
- Wants to be like her friends
- More likely to agree to rules
- Likes to sing, dance, and act
- Shows more independence and may even visit a next-door neighbor by herself
- Aware of sexuality
- Able to distinguish fantasy from reality
- Sometimes demanding, sometimes eagerly cooperative

Developmental health watch

Because each child develops in her own particular manner, it's impossible to predict exactly when or how your own preschooler will perfect a given skill. The developmental milestones listed here will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect as your child gets older, but don't be alarmed if her development takes a slightly different course. Alert your school or doctor, however, if your child displays any of the following signs of possible developmental delay for this age range.

- Exhibits extremely fearful or timid behavior
- Exhibits extremely aggressive behavior
- Is unable to separate from parents without major protest for sustained period
- Is easily distracted and unable to concentrate on any single activity for more than five minutes
- Shows little interest in playing with other children
- Refuses to respond to people in general, or responds only superficially
- Rarely uses fantasy or imitation in play
- Seems unhappy or sad much of the time
- Doesn't engage in a variety of activities
- Avoids or seems aloof with other children and adults
- Doesn't express a wide range of emotions
- Has trouble eating, sleeping, or using the toilet
- Can't differentiate between fantasy and reality
- Seems unusually passive
- Cannot understand two-part commands using prepositions ("Put the cup on the table"; "Get the ball under the couch.")
- Can't correctly give her first and last name
- Doesn't use plurals or past tense properly when speaking
- Doesn't talk about her daily activities and experiences
- Cannot build a tower of six to eight blocks
- Seems uncomfortable holding a crayon
- Has trouble taking off her clothing
- Cannot brush her teeth efficiently
- Cannot wash and dry her hands