



American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Developmental Milestones by the End of 3 Years

Movement

- Climbs well
- Walks up and down stairs, alternating feet
- Kicks ball
- Runs easily
- Pedals tricycle
- Bends over easily without falling

Hand and Finger Skills

- Makes vertical, horizontal and circular strokes with pencil or crayon
- Turns book pages one at a time
- Builds a tower of more than six blocks
- Holds a pencil in writing position
- Screws and unscrews jar lids, nuts and bolts
- Turns rotating handles

Language

- Follows a two- or three -component command
- Recognizes and identifies almost all common objects and pictures
- Understands most sentences
- Understands physical relationships ("on," "in," "under")
- Uses four- and five -word sentences
- Can say name, age and sex
- Uses pronouns (I, you, me, we, they) and some plurals (cars, dogs, cats)
- Strangers can understand most of her words

Cognitive

- Makes mechanical toys work
- Matches an object in her hand or room to a picture in a book
- Plays make-believe with dolls, animals and people
- Sorts objects by shape and color

- Completes puzzles with three or four pieces
- Understands concept of "two"

Social

- Imitates adults and playmates
- Spontaneously shows affection for familiar playmates
- Can take turns in games
- Understands concept of "mine" and "his/hers"

Emotional

- Expresses affection openly
- Expresses a wide range of emotions
- By 3, separates easily from parents
- Objects to major changes in routine

Developmental Health Watch

The developmental milestones 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. Each child develops at her own pace. Do consult your pediatrician, however, if your child displays any of the following signs of possible developmental delay for this age range.

- Frequent falling and difficulty with stairs
- Persistent drooling or very unclear speech
- Inability to build a tower of more than four blocks
- Difficulty manipulating small objects
- Inability to copy a circle by age 3
- Inability to communicate in short phrases
- No involvement in "pretend" play
- Failure to understand simple instructions
- Little interest in other children
- Extreme difficulty separating from mother

Excerpted from [*Caring for Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*](#), Bantam 1999

© Copyright 2000 American Academy of Pediatrics