

## Your Child at 3: Understanding Developmental Milestones



### Highlights

Development milestones include social, emotional, and physical skills that children acquire as they grow.

Different skills, emotions, and activities develop at various ages.

Toddlers typically begin toilet training between 2 and 3 years old.

Every child develops at their own pace.

If you have concerns about your child's development, seek professional advice.

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## **What Are Development Milestones?**

Development milestones are the social, emotional, and physical skills that children develop over time. Examples include crawling, walking, talking, using toys, and feeding themselves.

Children generally reach milestones in a similar order, but each child follows their own timeline.

If you are concerned about your child's development, consult a healthcare professional.

## **How Can I Help My Child Develop?**

Toddlers need 12 to 13 hours of sleep daily, including a long sleep at night. Some children may no longer need daytime naps but still benefit from quiet time.

A balanced diet is essential. Offer a variety of healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables, at every meal. Let your child decide how much to eat.

Children learn by imitation, so setting an example with healthy eating habits is important.

Excessive screen time can affect development. Recommendations include:

Ages 2 to 5 years: Limit screen time to less than 1 hour per day.

Under 2 years: Best to avoid screen time entirely.

## **What Physical Skills Should My Child Have at 3 Years?**

Toilet training usually begins between ages 2 and 3. Some children adapt quickly, while others take more time. Look for signs of readiness and be patient.

By age 3, many children can:

Help wash themselves in the bath

Feed themselves \ (though mealtime mess is expected\)

Throw, kick, and catch balls  
Walk up and down stairs while holding a rail or hand  
Jump on the spot  
Ride a tricycle  
Get dressed \ (with some help)\  
Copy a circle with a pencil or crayon  
Turn book pages one at a time  
Screw and unscrew lids and turn door handles

### **What Social and Emotional Milestones Should I Expect by 3 Years?**

At this stage, children experience more complex emotions, such as guilt and shame, which can be confusing for them.

Temper tantrums are common, as toddlers struggle to express strong feelings in words.

By age 3, children begin to:

Recognize others' emotions and show concern when someone is upset  
Understand that their actions affect others, and vice versa  
Enjoy playing with other children, engaging in pretend play and group activities  
Imitate family members through role-playing and singing games  
Prefer routines but gradually adapt to changes and become more comfortable being away from parents or caregivers.

### **What Should My Child Be Able to Understand and Communicate at 3 Years?**

By age 3, children typically have a vocabulary of 200+ words and can:

Form 3-word sentences or longer  
Take turns in conversations  
Be understood by most people  
Explain things using a few words  
Follow 2- to 3-step instructions

Language skills continue to develop, including:

Using past tense (e.g., "I walked" instead of "I walk")

Answering who, what, and where questions

Connecting events (e.g., knowing that putting on shoes means they are going outside)

Talking or singing to themselves during play

Children growing up in multilingual households may use words differently across languages but still develop their vocabulary and communication skills effectively.

### **How Can I Help My Child Learn and Develop Through Play?**

Play is essential for learning and development. Encourage activities such as:

Pretend play, dressing up, and role-playing

Drawing and painting with crayons and pencils

Reading, singing, and talking together to improve language skills

Building with blocks to enhance coordination and problem-solving

Outdoor play, running, climbing, and balancing

Simple puzzles and matching games

Praising your child's efforts builds confidence and encourages them to try new activities.

### **What If I Am Worried About My Child?**

Children develop at their own pace, but you may want to seek advice if your 3-year-old:

Falls frequently or struggles with stairs and balance

Cannot draw a simple line or cross

Has difficulty using cutlery or undoing buttons

Does not engage in pretend play

Avoids playing with toys or other children

Does not make eye contact

Has unclear speech or does not speak in sentences

Struggles to understand multi-step instructions

Has lost skills they previously had

## **What Vaccines Does My Child Need?**

Routine vaccinations play a key role in keeping children healthy.

A flu vaccine is recommended each year. There are no standard vaccinations required specifically between ages 2 and 3.

## **Tools and Assistance**

If you have concerns about your child's development, seek guidance from a healthcare provider.

Parenting support services, including helplines and playgroups, can also provide assistance and information.

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**Parenting Support Services:** Many local and online services provide support for parents of toddlers. These services may include guidance on child development, parenting strategies, and assistance in managing common parenting challenges.

**Child Development Helplines:** Several helplines are available to offer immediate advice on child development concerns. These are often staffed by pediatric experts and can provide reassurance and information on what to expect at different stages.

**Playgroups and Early Learning Programs:** Participating in playgroups or enrolling your child in early learning programs can support their social, emotional, and cognitive development. These environments provide opportunities for your child to interact with peers and learn new skills through play.

**Books and Educational Resources:** There are many books and online resources

available that cover child development milestones, parenting techniques, and activities to help children develop various skills. These resources can be valuable in guiding you through the development process.

**Pediatricians and Child Development Specialists:** If you're concerned about your child's development, seeking advice from a pediatrician or child development specialist is important. They can offer expert guidance on normal development, as well as help identify any potential delays or challenges.

**Online Parenting Communities:** Joining online parenting communities or forums can offer additional support and advice. These platforms allow parents to share their experiences and solutions to common parenting issues.

This enhanced block gives a more comprehensive view of the tools and resources available to assist parents in supporting their child's development.