

# Ages and Stages - Preschoolers

The preschooler, age three to five years, is a child who continues to want independence, and also enjoys being with others. Preschoolers are filled with curiosity, enthusiasm, and a zest for exploring. During these years, all areas of development undergo rapid changes. Listed below are some characteristics of these children.



## Physical Development

The Three Year Old	The Four Year Old
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth slows but is steady</li> <li>• Walks up and down stairs using alternating feet</li> <li>• Can hop on one foot</li> <li>• Jumps in place with ease</li> <li>• Throws ball overhand</li> <li>• Holds crayon with thumb and fore fingers, not a fist as when younger</li> <li>• Enjoys building with blocks, turning pages of a book one at a time, and playing with play dough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grows about 2 inches per year</li> <li>• Can walk on a straight line</li> <li>• Petals and steers a tricycle with ease</li> <li>• Climbs trees, ladder, &amp; play equipment easily</li> <li>• Reproduces letters and shapes</li> <li>• Threads small beads onto string</li> <li>• Jumps over objects and lands on both feet</li> <li>• Enjoys running, painting and drawing</li> </ul>

## Cognitive Development

The Three Year Old	The Four Year Old
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention span is increasing</li> <li>• Listens with interest to age appropriate stories - likes books</li> <li>• Interested in realistic play (feeding the cat, raking the leaves, etc.)</li> <li>• Draws shapes and puts them together to form trees, people, objects</li> <li>• Sorts objects according to color, shape, or use</li> <li>• Can name and match primary colors</li> <li>• May know numbers up to four</li> <li>• Can identify "more": cars, or dogs</li> <li>• Has some understanding of time (today, two days, nap time)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can stack blocks from largest to smallest</li> <li>• Interested in letters and naming them</li> <li>• May recognize a few printed words</li> <li>• Interested in books</li> <li>• May count sets of objects up to 7</li> <li>• May rote count up to 20</li> <li>• Understands the words tallest, biggest, same, and more</li> <li>• Attention span continues to increase</li> <li>• Interested in how things grow and how things work</li> <li>• Matches a set of objects to a numeral (3 coins to the numeral 3)</li> </ul>

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## Language Development

The Three Year Old	The Four Year Old
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talks about the actions of others, even when they are not present ("Daddy is mowing the grass.")</li><li>• Can answer simple questions correctly</li><li>• Asks for specific objects or help</li><li>• Remembers and tells favorite stories</li><li>• Vocabulary is increasing and is about 80% understandable</li><li>• May know 300 to 1000 words</li><li>• Uses more nouns, adjectives, and verbs in speaking</li><li>• Joins in social conversation (Please! Hi! Bye! Thank you!)</li><li>• Enjoys talking with others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understands and uses prepositions like "on", "in," and "under"</li><li>• Speech is about 95% understandable</li><li>• Can recite and sing simple songs or rhymes</li><li>• Changes tone of voice when talking with others - To baby, "Milk gone?" To mother: "Did Toby drink all of his milk?"</li><li>• Begins to use past tense verbs (Mommy closed the car door)</li><li>• Gives first name, last name, sex, sibling's name, or telephone number when asked</li><li>• Can talk on and on and on</li></ul>

## Social Development

The Three Year Old	The Four Year Old
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beginning to understand taking turns, but may not always want to</li><li>• Talks to self, toy or pet</li><li>• May have nightmares or fears</li><li>• Enjoys simple games or small group activities</li><li>• Friendly, laughs often</li><li>• Attention span increasing: may sit for up to 10 minutes at an activity</li><li>• May observe other children playing, join in, or just play beside them</li><li>• Likes to be near other people</li><li>• May still have a security blanket for comfort</li><li>• Shows affection toward others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Friendly and outgoing</li><li>• Moods can change quickly</li><li>• May still tantrum over minor frustrations</li><li>• Cooperates with others</li><li>• Participates in group activities</li><li>• Tattles on other children</li><li>• Enjoys make believe activities</li><li>• Establishes friendships with other children</li><li>• Uses verbal rather than physical aggression against others</li><li>• May not always take turns easily or share quickly</li><li>• Exaggerates about what may have happened</li></ul>

## Daily Routines



Daily routines for three and four year olds are important in helping them to understand what will come next. For instance, an evening routine could be established after the dinner hour that includes playtime, snack, bath, reading a story, brushing teeth, and then bed. A fairly similar routine from day to day will help the preschooler prepare himself/herself for "what comes next." Routines can be established for eating, dressing, toileting, and play activities.