

Ages & Stages for Caregivers

3 years

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

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SIGNS OF DEVELOPMENT —3 years

(individual development varies)

Developing Body

- Weighs 25-44 pounds
- Stands 34-43 inches in height
- Develops a taller, thinner, adult-like appearance
- Develops a full set of baby teeth
- Sleeps through most nights without wetting the bed (occasional accidents are still quite common)
- Uses the toilet with some help (many boys may not be ready for toilet learning until 3½)

Developing Mind

- Understands “now,” “soon,” and “later”
- Draws a circle and square
- Recognizes everyday sounds
- Matches object and picture
- Identifies common colors
- Can count 2-3 objects
- Puts on shoes (but cannot tie laces)
- Enjoys singing a simple tune

Developing Communication

- 75-80 percent of speech is understandable
- Talks in complete sentences of 3-5 words
- Stumbles over words sometimes
- Listens attentively to short stories; likes familiar stories told without any changes in words

Developing Self

- Sometimes shows preference for one parent (often the parent of the opposite sex)
- Enjoys playing alone, but near other children
- Enjoys playing with other children briefly, but still does not cooperate or share well
- Can answer the question, “Are you a boy or a girl?”
- Enjoys hearing stories about self, playing “house,” imitating

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Encourage toddlers’ muscle development.

Show toddlers how to hop like a rabbit, tiptoe like a bird, waddle like a duck, slither like a snake, and run like a deer.

This will also:

- Help them connect learning with fun.
- Encourage physical activity habits and enjoyment that can last a lifetime.

Build on toddlers’ first attempts to communicate with you using words.

Add new information to toddlers’ sentences. “Yes, that’s a flower—it’s a tall, red flower and it smells good.”

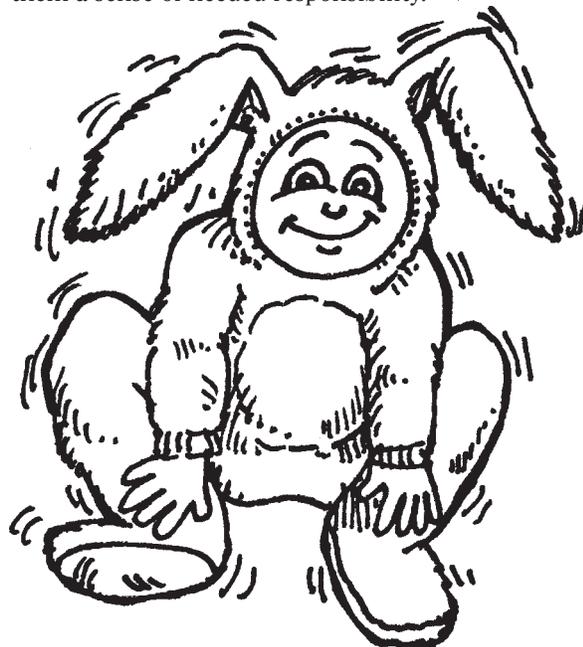
This will also:

- Help toddlers to add to their vocabulary and develop their skill at forming sentences.

Stimulate ...

Ask toddlers to tell you a story during your reading time.

This will build creativity and vocabulary in these three-year-olds and will give them a sense of needed responsibility.





A Great Place to Grow

Toys and Materials

- Nesting toys, cups that stack, puzzles (three to six pieces)
- Matching games, small pegs, pegboard
- Puppets, toy animals, dolls
- Small table and chairs, crayons, felt-tip markers, play dough, glue and paper, paint, paint brushes, stickers

Safety Tips

- Teach traffic safety while pretending indoors and while on outdoor excursions.
- Make sure play areas are free of dangers such as used refrigerators, debris, and dangerous chemicals.
- Keep electrical outlets covered and keep electrical cords out of main play areas, if possible.

HELP!

I care for both infants and children in my home. I have a three-year-old who wants to do everything himself. How can I best help this child gain independence while still meeting the needs of each child in my care?

This little one is beginning to spread his wings and wants to feel important. Why not offer him opportunities to lead things such as setting the table for lunch or snack, helping to fold towels and dishcloths, helping gather coats and bags of younger children, and allowing them to have a piece of paper and pencil that they can “list” their jobs for the day. Any task that they can do without harm to them or others, may take a little more time, but the rewards to this three-year-old may be well worth it.

Working with Parents

Working with parents of three-year-olds is an on-going learning experience. They may feel that their little one is growing up too fast and they have concerns about their child gaining independence. Encourage parents to help their child stretch their boundaries such as letting them

make guided choices that still keep them under their control. For example, have parents let their child dress themselves, even if the colors are a bit mismatched. Creativity and self-esteem will blossom.

What to do if you are concerned about a child's development

Child care providers are often in a position to be the first to notice when a young child has a developmental delay, chronic illness, or disability. If you suspect a child's behavior is indicating a problem:

- Talk with parents in a calm way, being careful to say that there probably isn't a problem, but that it would be worth checking out further.
- Work **with** parents, comparing what you have seen in child care with what they have seen at home and talking together about what to do next.
- Suggest resources, community professionals, articles to read, etc.
- Be a compassionate listener; hearing that there may be something wrong with your baby is very tough.

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Reference: Berk, L. (2000). *Child Development* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.