

Ages & Stages for Caregivers

4 years

Four-year-olds are energetic and imaginative. They often learn new words quickly and use them in chatting with others, telling jokes and sharing wild stories.

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SIGNS OF DEVELOPMENT —4 years

(individual development varies)

Developing Body

- Weighs 27-50 pounds
- Stands 37-46 inches in height
- Needs 10-12 hours of sleep each night
- Uses a spoon, fork, and dinner knife skillfully
- Dresses self without much help
- Walks a straight line
- Hops on one foot
- Pedals and steers a tricycle skillfully
- Jumps over objects 5-6 inches in height

Developing Mind

- Places objects in a line from largest to smallest
- Can recognize some letters if taught and may be able to print name
- Recognizes familiar words in simple books or signs (STOP sign)
- Counts 1-7 objects out loud

Developing Communication

- Speaks fairly complex sentences. "The baby ate the cookie before I put it on the table."
- Enjoys singing simple songs, rhymes, and nonsense words
- Learns name, address, and phone number, if taught
- Follows two unrelated directions: "Put your milk on the table and get your coat on."

Developing Self

- Understands and obeys simple rules (most of the time)
- Takes turns and shares (most of the time); may still be bossy
- Changes the rules of a game as she goes along
- Has difficulty separating make-believe from reality

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Encourage preschoolers' language development.

Encourage your four-year-olds to play with words by providing old coupons, junk mail, newspaper ads, and old cereal boxes.

You may also:

- Talk about reading. Show these youngsters that words are everywhere: food labels, menus, etc.
- Ask the children to help plan activities.

Build on preschoolers' curiosity and drive to understand their world.

Talk about things being in, on, under, behind, beside, etc.

Four-year-olds will like to act out these words that you are describing and will enjoy new ways of play.

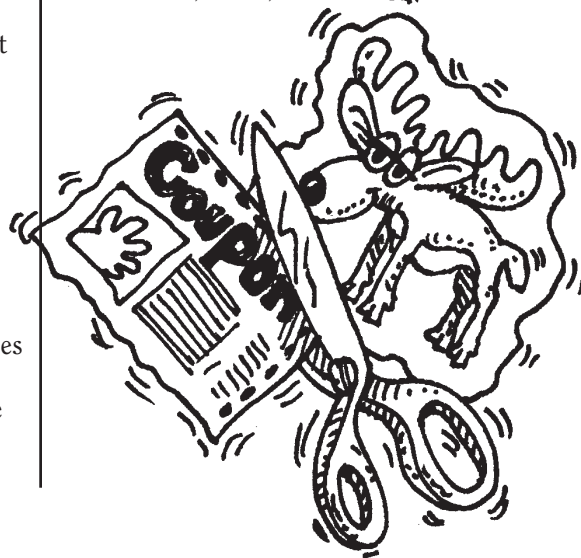
Stimulate ...

Cut out magazine pictures of different shapes, colors, or animals.

This will help children develop cutting skills as well as matching and grouping.

You may also:

- Sort and count everything in sight like silverware, socks, and rocks.





A Great Place to Grow

Toys and Materials

- Matching games, puzzles (12-15 pieces), board games, dominoes, play money, pretend cash register
- Plastic blocks, balls (of all sizes)
- Glue, crayons, paint, scissors and paper, washable markers, colored chalk, play dough
- Trucks and cars, bicycle with training wheels, dress-up clothes

Safety Tips

- Let children know that there are some things like matches and sharp knives that they should not touch.
- Teach safety in play by stressing only one child on the slide, swing, or bike at a time.
- Model safe behaviors, by putting things back from where you got them, and fastening your seat belt when you are in the car.

HELP!

A four-year-old in my care likes to shock us with the use of “forbidden” words. The younger children laugh and tattle on her, then use the words in their own home. How can I stop this negative chain reaction?

This is a common problem for caregivers and parents. Understand that the attention a young child gets from using these words may be the biggest attraction. Try to ignore the outburst, if possible. It may be a good idea to set rules at the beginning of the year and let the children help come up with consequences for breaking the rules. For example, if a child says something inappropriate in front of other children perhaps she needs some time alone. Maybe a certain object is frustrating her and the object needs to be taken away. Many times children repeat what they hear at home or in the media. A gentle reminder that these words are not acceptable may be just the help needed.

Working with Parents

Keep lines of communication open with the parents of your preschoolers. Encourage parents to stop by and see their child in your care. Share encouraging words with

parents about how they are maturing and relating well with others. By sharing the positive on a regular basis, when a problem occurs, it will be easier to talk with the parents and reach a solution.

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.
- 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.
- 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.