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## Ages and Stages: 3-Year-Olds

Lesia L. Oesterreich

Iowa State University, loesterr@iastate.edu

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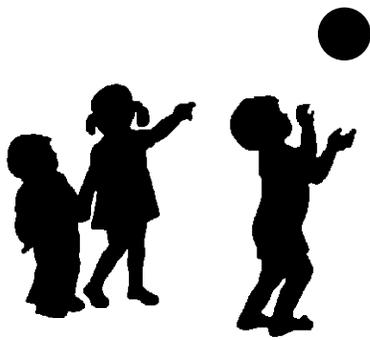
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# 3-Year-Olds



# AGES & STAGES

The 3-year-old is full of wonder, and spends a lot of time observing and imitating. They love to spend time with parents and enjoy helping out with simple household tasks.

## Physical development

- weight: 25-44 pounds
- height: 34-43 inches
- develops a taller, thinner, adult-like appearance
- develops a full set of baby teeth
- sleeps 10-12 hours at night
- 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 age 3½)
- puts on shoes (but cannot tie laces)
- dresses self with some help (buttons, snaps, zippers)
- feeds self (with some spilling)
- tries to catch a large ball
- throws a ball overhead
- kicks a ball forward
- hops on 1 foot
- walks short distance on tiptoe
- climbs up and down a small slide by self
- pedals a tricycle

## IDEAS FOR PARENTS

- Make brushing teeth a part of your child's daily routine.
- Be patient with toileting — accidents will still happen for a while.
- Purchase easy-to-dress clothing.
- Provide large buttons or old beads to string on a shoe lace.
- Encourage sand and water play.
- Show your child how to throw, catch, and kick a ball.
- Show your child how to hop like a rabbit, tiptoe like a bird, waddle like a duck, slither like a snake, and run like a deer.
- Talk frequently, use short sentences, ask questions, and listen.
- Add new information to your child's sentences. "Yes, that's a flower—it's a tall, red flower and it smells so good."
- Teach your child to memorize his or her first and last name.
- Ask your child to tell you a story during your reading time.
- Sing simple songs with your child.
- Look at baby pictures together and talk about "When you were a baby."
- Talk about colors, numbers, and shapes in your everyday conversation. "We need ONE egg. That's a RED car. The butter is in this SQUARE box."
- Ask for help with simple tasks such as putting the napkins by each plate, socks in the drawer, or stirring the muffin batter.

## Mental and language development

- 75-80 percent of speech is understandable; talks in complete sentences of 3-5 words. "Mommy is drinking juice."  
"There's a big dog."
- stumbles over words sometimes — usually not a sign of stuttering
- listens attentively to short stories; likes familiar stories told without any changes in words



- repeats words and sounds
- enjoys listening to stories and repeating simple rhymes
- able to tell simple stories from pictures or books
- enjoys singing and can carry a simple tune
- understands “now,” “soon,” and “later”
- asks who, what, where, and why questions
- stacks 5-7 blocks
- enjoys playing with clay or play dough (pounds, rolls, and squeezes it)
- puts together a 6-piece puzzle
- draws a circle and square
- recognizes everyday sounds
- matches object and picture
- identifies common colors
- can count 2-3 objects

## Social and emotional development

- accepts suggestions and follows simple directions
- sometimes shows preference for one parent (often the parent of the opposite sex)
- enjoys helping with simple household tasks
- can make simple choices between two things
- enjoys making others laugh and being silly
- enjoys playing alone, but near other children
- spends a great deal of time watching and observing
- enjoys playing with other children briefly, but still does not cooperate or share well
- enjoys hearing stories about self, playing “house,” imitating
- can answer the question, “are you a boy or a girl?”

# BOOKS

## Books for parents

*Your Baby and Child, From Birth to Age Five,*  
Penelope Leach

*Caring for Your Baby and Young Child, Birth to Age Five,* American Academy of Pediatrics,  
Steven P. Shevlov, ed.

## Books for children

*Caps For Sale,* Esphyr Slobodkina

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar,* Eric Carle

*Is It Red? Is It Yellow? Is It Blue?,* Tana Hoban

*All by Myself,* Mercer Mayer

*I Just Forgot,* Mercer Mayer

*I'm Sorry,* Sam McBratney

*A Tree Is Nice,* Janice Udry



## Toys

- nesting toys, cups that stack, puzzles (3-6 pieces)
- matching games, small pegs, pegboard
- large wheeled toys, tricycle, slide, wagon

- small table and chairs, crayons, felt tip markers, play dough, glue and paper, paint, paint brushes, stickers
- puppets, toy animals, dolls
- balls (different sizes), large blocks

## A word on development

Your child is unique. Children’s learning and growth rates differ from other children their age. If, however, your child is unable to do many of the skills listed for his or her age group, you may wish to talk to an early childhood specialist. You are the best person to notice developmental problems, if any, because of the time you spend with your child. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference. If you have questions about your child’s development or want to have your child assessed, contact:

- Your pediatrician or health care professional
- Area Education Agency—Early Childhood Special Education Department
- Iowa Compass 1-800-779-2001.

Contact your county Extension office to obtain other publications about children and parenting. Also visit the ISU Extension Web site at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu>.

The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been compiled from a variety of professional resources to help you understand your child’s overall growth. It is not a standardized measurement tool.

Written by Lesia Oesterreich, extension family life specialist. Graphic design by Valerie Dittmer King.

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