

Developmental Milestones

THE FOURTH YEAR

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Have you ever wondered how your child is growing and developing compared to other children of the same age? How do you know if your child is “on the right track”?

Your child is going through many physical and mental changes. Although no two children grow at the same rate, experts agree there are “normal” signs of development. This fact sheet provides a checklist of important milestones in your child’s development during the fourth year of life.

It is a simple tool you can use to become aware of and appreciate the dramatic changes that are occurring in your child.

Watch for these signs in your child over a one-month period. (Even children have “bad days.”) Remember, each child is different and may learn and grow at a different rate. However, if your child cannot do many of the skills listed for his or her age group, you should consult your pediatrician. If your child was born sooner than expected, be sure to deduct the number of months early from his or her age. A 5-month-old born two months early would be expected to show the same skills as a 3-month-old who was born on his or her due date. Several additional sources of information are listed on the back.

You are the most important observer of your child’s development. 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 tested,

- » call your pediatrician
- » call the local health department
- » The Make-A-Difference Information Network (They can help you find a testing locations near your community.) 1-800-332-6262, or visit <http://kskits.org/resources/MakeADifference.shtml>
- » the Parent Helpline (through Kansas Children’s Service League, <https://www.kcsl.org/ParentHelpLine.aspx>) (They can help you with questions about childrearing.) 1-800-CHILDREN (1-800-245-3736)

Contact your county or district extension office to obtain other publications in this series. Additional resources on parenting are also available.



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The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been synthesized from a variety of professional resources to help you appreciate your child’s progress. It is not a formal, standardized measurement tool.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

4 YEARS OF AGE, DOES YOUR CHILD:

MOTOR SKILLS

- feed self (with some spilling)
- try to use a fork
- hold a pencil
- try to write name
- draw with the arm and not small hand movements
- draw a circle
- draw a face
- try to cut paper with blunt scissors
- sometimes unbutton buttons
- try to buckle, button, and lace, even though she probably needs help
- completely undress herself if wearing clothes with simple fasteners
- brush teeth with help
- build a tower of seven to nine blocks
- put together a simple puzzle of 4 to 12 pieces
- pour from a small pitcher
- use the toilet alone
- pedal tricycle
- try to skip
- catch a bouncing ball
- walk downstairs using a handrail and alternating feet
- swing, starting by herself and keeping herself going

SENSORY AND THINKING SKILLS

- recognize red, yellow, and blue
- understand taking turns and can do so without always being reminded
- understand "big," "little," "tall," "short"
- want to know what will happen next
- sort by shape or color
- count up to five objects
- follow three instructions given at one time ("Put the toys away, wash your hands, and come eat.")
- distinguish between the real world and the imaginary or pretend world
- identify situations that would lead to happiness, sadness, or anger

LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL SKILLS

- have a large vocabulary and use good grammar often
- often talk about action in conversation ("go," "make," "do")
- enjoy rhyming and nonsense words
- use regular past tenses of verbs ("pulled," "walked")
- use "a," "an," and "the" when speaking
- ask direct questions ("May I?" "Would you?")
- want explanations of "why" and "how"
- relate a simple experience she has had recently
- understand "next to"
- separate from parents for a short time without crying
- help clean up toys at home or school when asked to
- like to play "dress up"
- pretend to play with imaginary objects
- act out elaborate events that tell a story (as in serving an imaginary dinner or going on a dragon hunt)
- sometimes cooperate with other children
- often prefer playing with other children to playing alone, unless deeply involved in a solitary task
- change the rules of a game as he goes along
- try to bargain ("I'll give you this toy if you'll give me that one.")
- share when asked
- enjoy tag, hide-and-seek, and other games with simple rules
- like moderate "rough and tumble" play
- like to do things for himself
- know her age and the town where she lives
- act as though a doll or stuffed animal thinks and feels on its own

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Joyce Powell (retired); Charles A Smith, Ph.D., (retired)
assisted by Ann Murray and Susan Wanska.

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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