

Ages and Stages: 3 Years

Three-year-olds continue to become more independent. They are able to do many everyday tasks---such as dressing and eating---with much less help than before. Three-year-olds are very busy practicing all the new skills they have learned and are often eager to help adults do chores. At this age, they enjoy pleasing those around them more, and they like to laugh and interact with people.

Look at your child grow!

When your child is 3 years old, he or she may:

- run pretty well, but still fall sometimes.
- jump safely from a low step and hop on one foot for a short time.
- draw simple shapes.
- be improving at pedaling small riding toys.
- enjoy climbing and sliding.
- use words and simple phrases to communicate their needs.
- imitate the behavior of the people around them.
- remember better, but still need to be reminded sometimes.
- begin using the toilet with help.

Your child wants you to know several things. He or she may:

- need plenty of exercise indoors and out. It helps him or her grow strong while using energy in a positive way.
- sound like he or she is stuttering when talking. Be patient and encouraging.
- learn about right and wrong by watching and imitating you.
- need you to help use words to express feelings.
- still need lots of patience when using the toilet---accidents will still happen.
- enjoy books and stories. Read to him or her every day.
- enjoy singing simple songs.
- make mistakes. Your child will learn from mistakes if you correct them a positive, helpful, encouraging way.
- need to be noticed and encouraged when he or she is behaving well.
- learn how to should feel about him or herself by your treatment. Your care and respect helps the child feel like a worthwhile person.
- need your careful attention. Every child is different. If you watch your child closely, you will get clues about how to help him or her grow.

Your child is an active learner who:

- is curious and likes to figure out how things work.
- notices and talks about how things are similar and different.
- asks questions using the words when, how, where, and why.
- begins to sort and match many objects.
- may have trouble understanding what is real and what is pretend.

Your child is learning to connect with other people and may:

- be learning to use words and talk about feelings.
- need help and support to learn how to share and take turns.
- enjoy playing with other children in groups.
- like to give and receive affection.
- accept suggestions and follow simple directions.

Play helps your child learn. He or she may:

- need many opportunities to play. Play is a child's work, and learning how to play is crucial. Children are very playful by nature. Play includes learning, trying, being, and feeling. Through play, children learn many things about themselves, others, and the world around them.
- enjoy games like running, rolling, throwing, puzzles, stacking, and make-believe.

Your child may enjoy toys and activities such as:

- Cups that stack
- Puzzles (3-6 pieces)
- Matching games
- Play dough
- Glue and paper
- Puppets
- Toy animals
- Balls (different sizes)
- Large blocks
- Dress-up clothes

* The information is considered typical for this age. If you have questions about your child's development, contact your pediatrician or health care professional. If we do all we can do to help children develop and grow now, they will have the best chance to succeed in life.

Adapted from Alabama Cooperative Extension System by Traci Johnston. Originally developed by Ellen Abell and H. Wallace Goddard.

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating.
The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.