

Developmental milestones 3 to 5 years

As children grow, so do their skills. While not specific to your child, this education sheet can help you know what skills your child is likely to develop at this age.

Children develop at their own rate, learning some skills much quicker than others. Progress also starts and stops. As some skills are learned, your child might go back to an earlier stage in some other areas for a time. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's development, talk with your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Gross motor skills

— skills that use large muscles (legs, arms, trunk, and neck)

- pedal a tricycle
- catch an 8-inch ball thrown from 5 feet
- alternate feet going up and down stairs
- jump forward 8 to 12 inches
- balance on each foot for 3 seconds
- walk across a 4-inch balance beam
- kick a ball rolling toward him or her

Fine motor skills

— skills that use small muscles (hands and fingers)

- draw a face
- cut along straight and curved lines
- copy and trace basic shapes
- stack ten cubes
- string 1-inch beads onto a string
- hold a large crayon with thumb and 2 fingers
- use preferred hand for writing and cutting tasks

Self-help skills

— skills that help children become more independent

- feed self using utensils without spilling
- put on and take off shoes without ties

- dress and undress with some help
- manipulate large buttons and snaps
- wash hands with help
- pour liquid from a small container
- unscrew the cap of a toothpaste tube
- use hair brush, toothbrush, and tissues with some help
- climb in and out of the car, bathtub, and bed on own

Cognitive skills

— mental skills (thinking, learning, problem solving)

- complete 3- to-10 piece interlocking puzzles
- name some colors and shapes
- count to ten
- sort by shape and color
- match pictures
- understand the concept of “two”
- aware of basic safety: caution with stairs, sharp objects, and hot objects

Speech skills

See the education sheets, “Speech and language development: 24 to 30 months” and “Speech and language development: 30 to 36 months.”

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child, but provides general information. If you have any concerns about your child's development, please ask your doctor, nurse practitioner, or therapist.

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our website: childrensMN.org/A-Z.