



Growing & Learning— the Preschooler

3 to 5 years

Preschool children are curious, enthusiastic and full of energy. Their skills are growing and changing quickly. They are more aware of the needs of others and starting to think before they act. They try hard to be independent, but still need parents and caregivers to guide and support them.

As children reach their fifth birthday, parents often wonder if they are ready for kindergarten. This fact sheet is about child development from the age of three to five

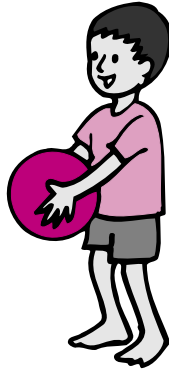
years. It also includes a “**When to be concerned**” section that is mainly for parents of 4 year olds. We know that each child is an individual, and we hope this information will give parents a chance to provide any help their child may need before beginning school.

Do take time to enjoy your preschooler: let them lead you in play, praise them with enthusiasm and listen to their stories. It's an age that passes all too quickly!

MOVING AND PLAYING

a) Gross motor skills

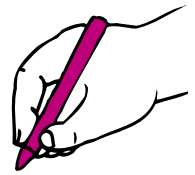
- Jumps over objects;
- Catches a large bounced ball with both hands;
- Walks up stairs with one foot on each step;
- Walks on a straight line;
- Hops forward on one foot;
- Pedals and steers a tricycle easily;
- Throws a ball overhand;
- Climbs up and down equipment with ease;
- Can stand on one foot for at least 5 seconds by 5 years of age.



b) Fine motor skills

- Copies many shapes: a square by 4½ years, a triangle by 5 years;
- Turns pages one at a time;
- Builds a tower of more than 10 blocks;
- Starts to prefer to use right or left hand;

- Begins to hold a crayon using the tripod grasp by 5 years;
- Cuts on a line using scissors.



c) Things I can do myself

- Opens door by turning the handle;
- Washes and dries own hands;
- Dresses and undresses self without help and can work front buttons and zippers by 5 years of age;
- Eats well with fork and spoon;
- Fixes simple food for self such as cereal with milk.

d) Social/play

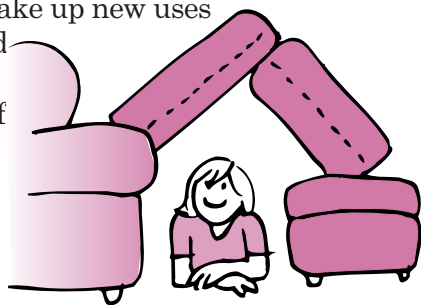
- Watches and plays near other children and may join for a short time in their play at 3 years;
- Protects own toys and may grab, hit or hide toys at times;



- Seems to understand taking turns by 4 years, but is not always willing to do so;
- Takes part in make-believe play, alone or with other children;
- Loves playing with other children and cooperates most of the time but can be bossy;
- Sharing, taking turns and playing cooperatively come more easily by 5 years of age.

What parents can do to help

- Let your child make up new uses for things around the house (e.g. build a fort out of sofa cushions).
- Offer materials such as safety scissors, paper, glue, playdough, and markers to encourage creativity and eye-hand co-ordination. Enjoy these activities with your child.



- Provide three wheeled riding toys that help steering and coordination skills.

- Explore the outdoors with your child. Help them learn to enjoy nature. Give them names for what they see. Help collect rocks, shells, pine cones, etc. Grow plants from seeds.



- Teach your child simple board and card games that emphasize playing and not winning.
- Teach your 4-year-old how to stay safe while exploring the world.
- Visit near-by parks that have outdoor play equipment.
- Expect that your child can learn to take care of toys and to clean up.
- Look for times to help your child grow socially. Have little friends over to play. This helps your child learn to be a friend.
- Teach your child to use words to problem solve when playing with other children.

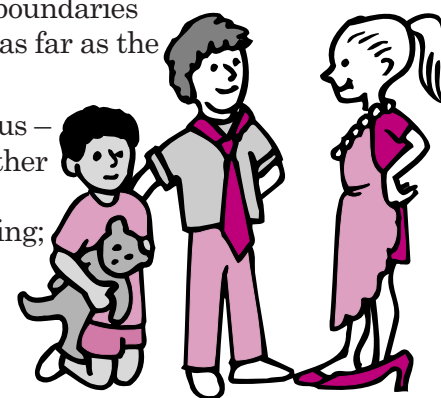


When to be concerned

- Your child cannot stay with one activity for 5–10 minutes.
- Your child chooses to play alone rather than with other children by 4 years of age.
- Your child cannot dress self with large buttons and zippers.
- Your child cannot hold a spoon and fork with fingers to feed self.
- It is hard for your child to hold a large ball with both hands.
- Your child cannot name simple shapes like circles, squares, triangles.
- Your child cannot draw pictures of things you can recognize or cut on a line with scissors.
- Your child has a hard time using the toilet alone by 4 years of age.

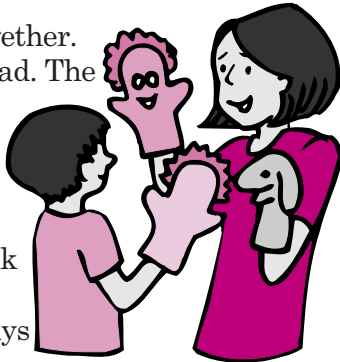
FEELINGS

- begins to be interested in other's feelings at 3 years;
- wants to please you and to do things right;
- has trouble dealing with strong emotions (e.g. may burst out crying);
- feels the need to test her will against the parent at 3½ years;
- sometimes has nightmares and may fear the dark, monsters, certain people;
- is full of enthusiasm and excitement at 4 years (e.g. loves new games and new places);
- can be boastful (e.g. – “My dad is stronger than your dad!”);
- likes and obeys boundaries and limits (e.g. “as far as the gate”);
- is sexually curious – will explore another child's body by looking or touching;
- can talk about feelings and express them in pretend play.



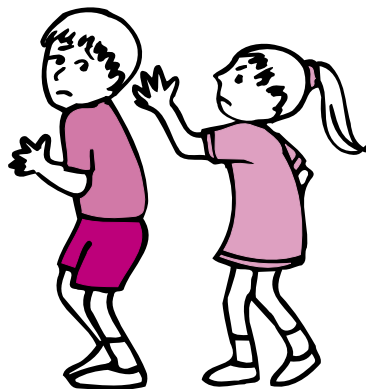
What parents can do to help

- Help your child become your partner. Encourage your child's growing need to be independent, but set clear limits for behaviour. Your courage to say "no!" at times helps your child feel secure, even though he will resist at first.
- Take time to play together. Follow your child's lead. The time you spend as your child's play partner will build a positive relationship.
- Help your child to talk about feelings and teach appropriate ways of showing emotions. (e.g. when she feels angry, she can sing a mad song or punch a pillow).
- Begin in a simple way to talk about sexuality with your preschooler (e.g. teach correct names for all body parts and how babies are made).



When to be concerned

- Your child deals with frustration and anxiety by having angry outbursts or temper tantrums on a daily basis.
- Your child has daily fears or anxieties that affect sleep or waking hours for more than 3 months.
- It is hard for your child to make the change from one activity to another.
- Your child always responds in a negative way when adults give suggestions or instructions.
- Your child hits, kicks, spits or behaves in other impulsive ways. You use management ideas to try to stop the behaviour but they don't work.
- Your child behaves in sexually inappropriate ways even though you have tried to stop the behaviour. (e.g. masturbating in public).



LISTENING AND TALKING

Between 4 & 5 years of age:

- knows at least 2 things about common objects (e.g. a ball is big, round and "I throw it")
- understands the concepts of "same", "different" and other words for comparing such as big/little, tall/short, fast/slow by 5 years
- follows directions that have two and three steps
- tells what happens in the correct order (e.g. when we get up, we get dressed, have breakfast, brush our teeth and go to school)
- remembers and tells about past events in order
- defines simple words by their use (e.g. a ball bounces, a bed is to sleep on)
- answers who, what, why, where and when questions
- most of a child's speech can be understood (90%)
- uses plurals (balls, dogs), possessives (her, theirs, mommy's) and simple past tense verbs (washed, looked). May put 'ed' on irregular verbs. (e.g. 'runned', 'sleeped', 'goed')
- speaks in complete sentences of 4 to 8 words
- able to tell first name, last name
- counts by memory to 10
- able to sing simple songs and say some rhymes
- loves word play and making silly words
- uses more words that tell where (e.g. on top of, in, at, down, behind and under)
- by 5 years of age can name the 4 primary colors – red, green, blue, yellow

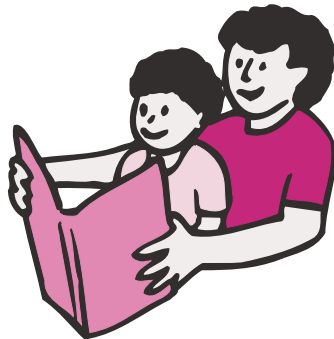


The 4 & 5 years old may still:

- Have trouble with the speech sounds r, l and th.

What parents can do to help

- Sing songs, tell rhymes and use finger play (e.g. “Head & Shoulders, Knees and Toes”).
- Talk with your child about the names of objects, activities and people in daily events.
- Share picture books with your child every day and take turns talking about the pictures.
- Visit the local library, borrow books and listen to story time.
- Help your child understand that events of their day come in order (e.g. have dinner, take a bath, read story, get ready for bedtime).



Other information on parenting are available at your local Community Health Office/Centre or online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>

For more information, contact a Public Health Nurse at Vancouver Coastal Health www.vch.ca visit the VCH Parenting Website <http://parenting.vch.ca/> or visit Healthlink BC www.healthlinkbc.ca

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email phe@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **GK.300.G762** Please send any feedback about this handout to feedback@vch.ca
© Vancouver Coastal Health, June 2017

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.
www.vch.ca

When to be concerned by 4 years of age

- Your child is not using 4-5 words in sentences.
- Your child seems not to hear well.
- Your child stutters.
- Your child's speech is hard for others to understand most of the time.
- Your child is not taking part in conversations with adults or other children.
- Your child does not seem to understand directions or follow routines.
- All 3 year old children should have their vision screened.

