ASQ Ages & Stages Questionnaires®

Supporting Your Preschooler's Development

New skills prepare 3s and 4s for school and beyond

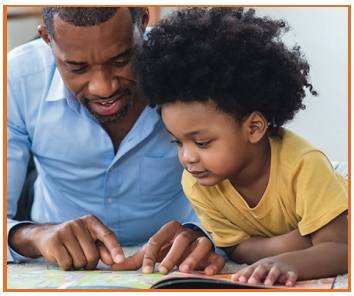
As toddlers grow into their 3s and 4s, emotions begin to emerge and need managing. Independence becomes a new theme. Developmental milestones can come fast, as those uncertain toddlers bloom into bigger, more distinct personalities, and get ready to take on the world—and school.

Three- and four-year-old children are a wonder to behold. In such a time of rapid change, many parents look for reassurance that their little ones are still meeting typical developmental milestones—and to learn what they can do to support healthy child development. If there are delays, catching them early and getting intervention services is key.

Meeting Milestones

Jane Squires, Ph.D., is an expert on early childhood development and identification of delays, and lead author of the ***Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition (ASQ®-3)***. Squires emphasizes that along with physical and cognitive development, children's social-emotional skill development and competence is a particularly important indicator of school readiness. "Checking in on progress in these areas is an essential part of preparing for school," says Squires. "Self-regulation and other social-emotional skills that help the child cooperate and listen in the classroom are often more predictive of academic and job successes than pre-academic skills."

When parents, pediatricians, and child care providers work together, they present a child's best opportunities to meet developmental milestones and be ready for school and beyond. Below, Squires shares information from **The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)** about some noteworthy skills and behaviors to watch for as your child grows.



At age 3: calms down within 10 minutes after you leave them, like at a childcare drop off; notices other children and joins them to play; talks with you in a conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges; asks "who", "what" "where", or "why" questions, like "Where is mommy/daddy?"; says first name, when asked; talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time; draws a circle when you show them how; avoids touching hot objects like a stove, when you warn them; strings items together, like large beads or macaroni; puts on some clothes by themselves, like loose pants or a jacket; uses a fork to eat.

At age 4: pretends to be something else during play (teacher, superhero, dog); asks to go play with children if none are around, like "Can I play with Alex?"; comforts others who are hurt or sad, like hugging a crying friend; avoids danger, like not jumping from tall heights at the playground; says sentences with four or more words; says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme; talks about at least one thing that happened during the day, like "I played soccer."; answers simple questions like "What is a coat for?" or "What is a crayon for?"; names a few colors of items; tells what comes next in a well-known story; draws a person with three or more body parts; catches a large ball most of the time; serves themselves food or pours water, with adult supervision; unbuttons some buttons; holds a crayon or pencil between fingers and thumb (not a fist).