



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Parenting the  
Preschooler



# Age 3

## Developmental Milestones

At age 3, watch for your child's ability to:

### Building Relationships

- Dress and undress themselves
- Follow 2-3 steps of instructions
- Show interest in new things
- Copy adults and friends (Mirroring)

### Physical/Motor Skills

- Go up and down stairs holding a railing
- Use children's scissors (Fine Motor Skills)



Photo by Natalie from Pexels

### Growing Brains

- Be able to name some colors
- Follow 2-3 steps of instructions
- Speak in 5-6 word sentences
- Draw a person with 2-4 body parts
- Play make-believe with toys, pets, and people
- Say first name, age, and sex
- Understand the idea of his, hers, and mine
- Name a friend

## What is developmental screening?

- Developmental screening can help you determine if your child is developing on track for his or her age. It's a way to check if there are any problems in how your child learns, plays, speaks, or acts.
- Ask your child's doctor, child-care provider, early childhood teacher, or home visitor about doing a developmental screening. There are tools that have been developed just for parents to use with their children. Find one for your child's age at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>.
- Parents who have used a developmental screening tool with their children say it helped them learn more about child development. It's great hands-on parenting!

# Tips for Encouraging and Supporting Developmental Milestones

## Building Relationships

- Let your child help you with small chores, like putting clean socks in a drawer or stirring pancake batter.
- Give your child a few simple choices, such as what to wear or what to eat for a snack.
- Provide clear, consistent rules.
- Provide options when you say “no” such as offering coloring or reading instead of active play near bedtime.
- Urge your child to play with other children, take turns, and share.

## Physical/Motor Skills

- Offer toys, like small balls and beads to string on a shoelace, to build fine motor skills (finger use).
- Be patient with toilet training. Treat accidents calmly and simply.

## Growing Brains

- Keep reading to your child. Reading the same book over again helps your child learn.
- Talk often with your child. Ask questions and listen to their answers. When they give responses, ask “How did that make you feel?” and “How did your friends feel?”

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## Benefits of Play

- Play helps children develop their own autonomy, physical/motor skills, and cognitive/communication skills.
- Play helps children’s brains develop. They learn how things fit together, how items compare, and how to discover patterns. Play helps them learn to connect with others, settle conflict, develop compassion, caring, and learn patience. It helps them make sense of their world.
- Developmental milestones are skills that appear in a certain order for all children. Each child will reach these milestones at different rates. Developmental milestones help parents understand what to expect as their child grows.

Written by: Julia Erickson, Amanda Coorough. Reviewed by: Yia Lor, Amanda Griswold.  
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