

Child Development 8

A

THREE TO FOUR YEARS



3-4
years

Online Version Watch Video



Department of Health



After the "terrible two", your child will enter the preschool "play" years (3 to 6 yrs), a period filled with **purposeful fantasy and make-believe**. Your child will gradually become **independent** in self-care, learn to

control herself and become more **responsive to the feelings of others**, and develop the abilities necessary for formal education.

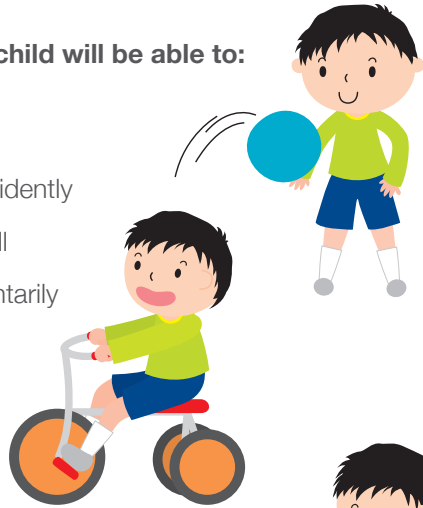
In the coming three years, your child will develop better **controlled** and **coordinated** movements to participate in games and sports. Improved attention and increased precision in finger and hand movements allow her to develop writing skill. Intellectual growth opens a wide new world for your child to **explore and gain knowledge**. Being able to master the basic rules of verbal language enables her to communicate her desires, feelings, and thoughts with ease. Although she may bargain with you, she will also learn to behave in ways that please you. As she develops awareness of the feelings and needs of others and begins to take in their views, she will learn to **interact with others** in socially acceptable ways.

Playing with others and attending preschool provide the opportunities and experience for your child to practise her new abilities in preparation for the next stage of development. Also, the way your child adjusts and settles in preschool is informative of her development. You should take every opportunity to discuss her progress with her teacher to make sure that she is adjusting well in various aspects.

By his fourth birthday, your child will be able to:

Movement

- Run, jump and climb confidently
- Throw and catch large ball
- Stand on one foot momentarily
- Pedal tricycle with ease



Hand and finger skills

- Hold pencil in an adult manner
- Draw circle and square
- Start learning to copy some simple letters comprising mainly of vertical or horizontal strokes (e.g. 1, +, □, L, T)
- Draw a person with a few body parts (commonly with head, limbs, eyes, and mouth)
- Try to use scissors to cut paper into strips



Language development

- Follow adult's daily instruction (e.g. put the clothes into the laundry basket in the toilet)
- Listen to simple stories and may request you to repeat his favourite ones over and over again
- Have an active vocabulary of hundreds of words

- Use pronouns (e.g. You, I, He) appropriately
- Express his needs or feelings in simple sentences.
- Begin to hold conversations with adults
- Speak clearly and understandable to strangers although he may still mispronounce some words
- Sing nursery rhymes together with actions



Cognitive Development

Your child will spend most of his time trying to **understand everything around him**. He will **ask you questions endlessly**. Do not expect to be able to answer them all. Telling him "I don't know, let's find it out!" will also help to broaden your child's knowledge, satisfy his curiosity, and teach him how to learn.

As his understanding of the world is still very much based on what he can see, he is not capable of abstract logical reasoning yet. He will only be able to understand simple concrete answers. At this stage, answers like "because it's good for you" would be more sensible to him.

Similarly, he will interpret the meaning of words literally, including teasing remarks made in fun. He might become misled or upset. You will therefore need to be **careful in choosing your words and responses**.



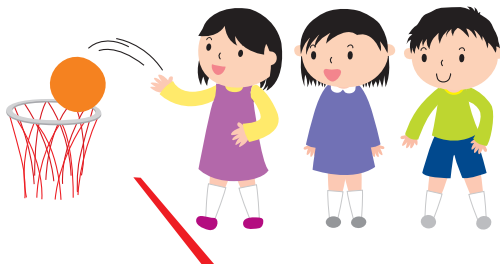
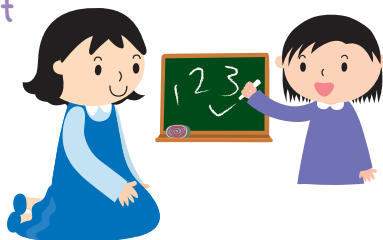
- Like to ask "Why", "Who", and sometimes "How" questions

- Understand basic concept of quantity (e.g. big & small, tall & short, long & short etc.)
- Name a few colours
- Say numbers up to 10 and may count up to 3 to 4 objects correctly
- Understand concept of time in relation to his own daily routine e.g. expecting playground activities some time after his brother is back from school



Social and emotional development

- Take part and enjoy fantasy play and role-playing games
- Engage in simple cooperative play with other kids
- Start to identify with his own sex (eg. during playing house, boys imitate their father or brother, and girls imitate their mother or sister)
- Show preference for same-sex playmates
- Control his behaviours increasingly and follow rules (e.g. taking turns, sharing toys)
- Aware of the feelings of others and may try to comfort playmates in distress



- Often cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality (eg. may become frightened by unfamiliar images that are perceived as scary monsters)

Self-Care Skills

- Stay dry all day and night usually
- Feed self skillfully with spoon
- Take off simple garments without assistance, including undoing buttons; but may need a little help in dressing up properly
- Put on shoes (without laces)
- Wash hands



Stimulating your child's development

Apart from **love and affection**, **reasonable limits and discipline**, your child needs your **guidance and encouragement**. She also needs you to provide her with the opportunities to develop and practice her emerging abilities. Children of this age are naturally **curious and eager to explore**. Try to offer your child a wide range of opportunities and settings for her to explore in, e.g. by visiting the park, zoo, museum, library, and other places outside preschool.



What you can do

- ✓ Set aside special time each day to talk with your child.
- ✓ Hold conversations with your child. Listen to what she has to say. Show her that you understand by nodding, smiling. Encourage and add new information to what she says.
- ✓ Answer questions that she asks and ask questions in turn to facilitate learning and language development.
- ✓ Help her use words to describe her emotions and needs



- ✓ Read with your child each day, and talk about the feelings and actions of the characters in the story. Tell her what behaviour you value and what you do not.
- ✓ Help her to increase her vocabulary and expand her phrases by introducing new words and inserting additional words to her phrases
- ✓ Make use of everyday life experience to introduce concepts like size, colour and numbers
- ✓ Encourage her to be independent in self care activities
- ✓ Give her small chores that she will succeed in doing
- ✓ Provide opportunities for your child to make simple choices
- ✓ Provide opportunity for your child to play with other children and adults
- ✓ Encourage make believe play. Follow your child's lead
- ✓ Limit your child's screen time with various electronic media to no more than 1 hour daily. Choose appropriate programmes for him to watch and play with and guide him along
- * ✓ Encourage your child to have various types of physical activities for at least 3 hours a day to build up her physical strength. This should include at least 1 hour of moderate to vigorous intensity such as playing slides and swings, running and playing football
- ✓ Avoid restraining your child in a stroller for more than 1 hour at a time



*https://www.startsmart.gov.hk/files/pdf/physical_guide_en.pdf (reference)










Toys that you can choose

- ✓ Miniature toys e.g. tea set, doll house, car and garage, animals etc.
- ✓ Toys that allow more creative play, e.g. building blocks, play-doh etc.
- ✓ Crayons, paints, other art and craft materials
- ✓ Simple jigsaw puzzles (e.g. 6-8 large pieces)
- ✓ VCDs or videos of action songs or simple stories
- ✓ Books with large, clear and colourful pictures



The above information only gives you a general idea of the changes expected as your child grows. Each child is unique and wide variations in the pace of development are often normal. Don't be over alarmed if your child takes a slightly different timing or fails to attain certain ability at some stage. It may only signal a need for more attention.

Discuss with doctors or nurses if, by the end of this period, your child

-  Appears clumsy in manipulating simple eating utensils such as spoon or fork
-  Has difficulty in following adults' daily instructions
-  Does not speak in sentences
-  Has unclear articulation that is difficult to be understood
-  Shows excessive or persistent aggressive behaviour
-  Still clings and cries excessively whenever you (or the main caregiver) leaves him
-  Shows no interest in playing with others;
Ignores other children and prefers playing on his own
-  Appears not to see or hear well
-  Has learning or behavioural problem at school

If you have any concerns or queries, discuss with nurses and doctors in any MCHC or your family doctor/paediatrician.



Family Health Service

Website: www.fhs.gov.hk

24-hour Information Hotline: 2112 9900