

Developmental Milestones & Widely Held Expectations at 3-4 Years

(Taken from the Quebec Minister of the Family Educational Program for CPE's, as well as

Child Development: A Primer by Ingrid Crowther & NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice)

Note: Experts say every child develops differently. These Developmental Milestones are designed to give a general idea of how a child of this age may develop.

Affective Dimension

- Building secure relationships with educators
- Making and expressing choices, plans and decisions with respect to favorite toys/activities
- Integration/learning the routines

Physical and Motor Dimension:

A) Fine Motor Development (small muscles of thumb & fingers)

- **Manipulation**—cuts paper with scissors; controls crayons & markers to make vertical, horizontal & circular shapes; uses pincer (thumb & one finger) or tripod grasp (thumb and 2 fingers); may show hand dominance
- **Artwork**—produces wider variety of scribbles with lines, swirls, loops & closed forms; draws with increased intentionality & often names what he/she has drawn; may draw people although not all body parts are present
- **Hand-Eye Coordination**—pours with less spilling; places small pegs in holes; increased skill in building with construction blocks/toys

B) Gross Motor Development (large muscles of arms & legs)

- **Balancing**—can balance on one foot for short time; walks across balance beam
- **Walking/Running**—walks with arms swinging; runs more smoothly; better able to change direction & stop
- **Climbing**—climbs/descends stairs using alternating feet; climbs up playground equipment but may have difficulty coming down
- **Jumping**—jumps using both feet at the same time; jumps over obstacles leading with one foot; jumps down from platforms or climbing equipment
- **Ball Skills**—throws ball overhand; catches ball by trapping it against body; kicks ball while running and continues to chase & kick it

C) Development of sensory perception from the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch & taste), as well as the development of a healthy lifestyle

- Seems to hear and see well; willing to participate in sensory experiences such as water-play, shaving cream, finger-painting; willing to try new foods
- Washes hands with soap & water; enjoys being active and has age appropriate strength, balance, coordination and stamina; learning to cough/sneeze into upper arm and request or use tissues rather than sleeve/hand to wipe nose; eats a balanced diet

Cognitive Dimension (thinking skills)

- A) **Attention Span**—increased attention span for areas of interest; may return to an activity over several days
- B) **Memory**—remembers words/people/events as demonstrated by rapid vocabulary growth and the naming of familiar adults, peers and objects; repeats sequences of familiar routines and retells events that have occurred in the past; memorizes favorite books, songs, etc.
- C) **Symbolic Function**—pretend play more complex; uses one object to represent another even if not similar in shape (eg: might use a square block to represent a cup)
- D) **Ability to Categorize and Conceptualize**—sorts objects based on one characteristic (eg: shape, color or size)
- E) **Reasoning** —uses materials to help solve problems (eg: finds a different paintbrush to make wider lines, wets sand to make moulds); enjoys age-appropriate puzzles; still focuses on only one aspect of a problem (called centration; for example, might say that a tall skinny glass holds more than a short fat glass even though it is not true)
- F) **Awakening to Mathematics and Science**
 - **Curious and enjoys exploring the world**
 - **Concept Development**—*Size*: differentiates between large & small; *Quantity*: identifies when one set of items contains more than another; *Time*: expresses an understanding of time duration and knows the daily routine; *Color & Shape*: identifies and names colors & shapes
 - **Counting**—can rote count to 10+ but may miss or insert incorrect numbers

Communication & Language Dimension

- A) **Pre-linguistic Language**—understands most words & phrases with increasing comprehension as exposed to songs, books, & play activities.
- B) **Oral Language**
 - **Language Usage**—uses 3-6 words in simple sentences, uses words to compare (eg: more, longer, faster); repeats simple rhymes & fingerplays; sings simple songs; asks many questions; talks about things that are not in the immediate vicinity (eg: “My cat’s black. She’s at home.”); describes actions, events, feelings (eg: “Amy is sad.”); maintains conversations by adding to what someone has said; asks questions about what has been heard; makes suggestions; answers questions appropriately; uses descriptive words (eg: big red ball); uses language to describe what he/she is doing; identifies words that sound alike (eg: ball and fall or toy and boy)
 - **Grammar**--uses plurals (eg: oranges, apples, but may still overextend by saying “feets”); puts endings on verbs (eg: -ing)
 - **Vocabulary Size**—at 3 yrs ranges 300 to 2,000+ words; at 4 yrs ranges 4,000 to 6,000
- C) **Awakening to Reading & Writing**—listens to stories for 10 or more minutes; makes relevant comments about stories heard; tells stories or pretends to read to peers; knows some letters and may read name and some other significant words; interested in writing some letters
- D) **Second (or 3rd) Language Development to Foster English/French Bilingualism**

- **Receptive Language (Phase 1)**-- develops an ear for the sounds common to the language; begins to understand frequently used words & phrases; gradually moves towards more comprehension as the child accumulates many hours of exposure in the course of the daily routines, and through songs, books, and engaging play activities.
- **Expressive Language (Phase 2)**—the ability to speak a new language comes much more slowly, at first by simple repetition of common words & phrases; mixing of languages is typical as children search for the right word and substitute the word they know; **A**s concentration, memory, confidence and desire to communicate increases—which varies by individual-- the ability to express an ever increasing amount in the target language results in eventual fluency.
- **Reading & Written Language (Phase 3)**—begins in earnest only around age 7, however, the foundation for later school learning is laid down at the preschool age by learning the letters of the alphabet in both languages through use of the ABC song, various alphabet books, discussion of letters that start names, and a print rich environment.

Self-Expression/Creativity:

- **Water, Sand & Playdough**—experiments to make connections (sink/float activities or weight/volume concepts); builds increasingly complex structures/objects
- **Music & Movement**—enjoys listening to and singing songs; experiments with instruments to create different sounds & volumes; keeps a steady beat when using instruments; follows another's lead as well as creates own dance movements
- **Art**—enjoys experimenting with different art mediums (markers, paint, glue, etc.)
- **Blocks/Construction Toys**—uses materials to express ideas or create structures (eg: builds a field for farm animals); builds enclosures; bridges; names structures
- **Dramatic Play**—acts out familiar roles (family members or doctors); demonstrates feelings and personalities of those imitated; may create an imaginary playmate

Social/Emotional Dimension

- A) **Self Confidence & Self Esteem**—develops as children explore, follow their interests, and are supplied with age appropriate challenges which they are able to master
 - **Pride in Accomplishments**—expresses pride in accomplishments; demonstrates enjoyment in having efforts recognized (eg: artwork put on display)
- B) **Autonomy & Self-Help Skills**—the ability to do things for themselves continue to expand & become refined; capable of the following: wash own hands; use the toilet; independently dress (needing help only with starting zippers, doing buttons or tying shoes); eat with a spoon/fork & drink with a cup; pour own milk; help to clean up
- C) **Construction of Identity**—states own gender correctly (but may not realize that this gender will always be the same)
- D) **Emotional and Social Skills**
 - **Emotional Control**—takes turns but not consistently; understands basic emotions and starts to use words to indicate feelings (“Sarah is happy”); shows affection to peers and younger children; shows

concern for hurt child; defends own rights (“I had it first!”); may act aggressively if toy is taken or activity disturbed by others

- **Self Regulation/Coping Skills**— able, with advanced warning, to change activities or deal with changes in the regular routine with little fuss; able to lie quietly on his/her bed
- **Peer Interaction**—participates with peers in activities; shares but not consistently; may observe others before joining in
- **Making of Choices**— chooses from a wide variety of activities and materials; increased ability to focus & sustain interest in chosen activities & materials; enjoys age appropriate group games/activities led by educator; may interact with peers to make group decisions & collaborative efforts