

# Top Tips: Your Developing Child Aged 4 – 5 Years

Your four year old now shows greater self-control. Dressing, feeding and washing are mostly done independently. They know what is right and wrong and what it is to tell a lie. Their pretend play is complex and sophisticated, although they may still need help in separating fantasy from reality. They have a basic grasp of number, colours, size and time. Confident in social situations with greater communication, they like to initiate conversations with others. When asked a question they reply with a clear and well-thought out answer. They are making many new friends and the minor arguments from earlier are less frequent. Boys tend to play with boys more and girls with girls. They continue to ask what, why and how questions and show an interest in the bigger questions such as life and death. Your child continues to achieve important milestones during this year but it is important to remember that all children do so at their own pace. The milestones below will give you an idea of what progress you can expect but please do not worry if your child takes a little longer or indeed achieves some of these earlier than indicated. As a parent you have a very important part to play in supporting this development within a loving and caring relationship. The ideas below will help you to support your child's development.

## Tip 1. Support your child in becoming more self-reliant

Children of four want to make decisions and do things for themselves. Their physical skills are well developed and they can carry out tasks like washing, getting dressed and feeding themselves without you doing it for them. Let them do these things, offering assistance only when they clearly need it.

## Tip 2. Tap into an interest in reading books

Your child will spend a lot of time pouring over favourite books. Their memory for stories and their understanding that stories have a beginning, middle and end is improving quickly. They enjoy looking at the pictures. A few children will begin to read simple books like alphabet books with pictures and some words. Encourage this but do not become impatient or pressurize your child into learning to read. Some of the best things you can do are to provide a rich environment with lots of books at home, help them extend their vocabulary, read to them and share books regularly together and point out the rhythms and sounds in language.

## Tip 3. Use daily routines as opportunities to learn about time

Being active mentally and physically means your child will be tired. Having regular routines is just as important now as when they were a baby. Setting times for getting up, eating and sleeping are important. Use these routines to help your child understand about time: that certain events form a day, that things occur in a sequence and that things can happen at particular times of a day. For example: We get up, we wash, have breakfast, brush our teeth, etc.

#### **Tip 4. Be active and sporty together**

With improved skills of running, hopping and jumping, your child will relish every opportunity to try these skills out. Set some challenges, “Can you stay on 1 foot while I count to 5?” Four year olds love to dance. Develop their hand -eye co-ordination. Practise hitting a ball with a small bat, kicking a football. Be active together. Go to the swimming pool. Get outside, go to the park. Enjoy being a sporty family together.

#### **Tip 5. Help your child learn about written language**

Print is all around us: in the home and outside. At home point out the words on labels, on food tins, words on the TV screen - even newspapers. Outside, do the same with road signs and advertising boards. Create opportunities for your child to become a writer. Help with correct letter formation but don't focus on this unless child asks. Give encouragement and time for their drawing. Provide interesting materials to make marks with such as crayons, paints, pencils and papers of different colours, shapes and sizes.

#### **Tip 6. Provide more opportunities for dramatic play**

Your child's play has changed considerably by now. Life is more complex. At times you will need to help them work out what is real and what is fantasy. In pretend play you will see wonderful creativity and imagination. Cafes, surgeries, garages and shops are now created. Props now take on a variety of different roles in imaginative ways. Merely providing a few props like a phone, clip boards, some dressing up clothes and anything is possible in your child's mind. Encourage play with other children.

#### **Tip 7. Encourage planning and making simple decisions**

Encourage your child to think ahead. This can be done in an outing to the park. Plan what will be needed on the trip, who might be there and what you will do once you both get there. Get them to set goals. Try to get your child to think about different possibilities and ways of doing things. Let them be involved in what to wear, what snacks they want.

#### **Tip 8. Develop their concentration**

By age five, your child can sustain concentration for about 15 minutes. This will not be the case for all children however, and you may have to work with your child to extend the time they spend on various activities. Make a game of it. Set a challenge. Your aim is to sustain their concentration and to ensure they complete activities before leaving to do others. These are important habits of learning which help in the future.

#### **Tip 9. Prepare positively for school**

Starting school is a huge milestone in a child's life. It is also one you can help with. A child learns better when relaxed. You also need to remain relaxed and see this milestone as a natural step in your child's learning. Do support learning of numbers, colours, size and the passage of time. Talk about going to school in a positive way. Go to all pre-entry visits. You may have a formal opportunity to meet the class teacher and to learn about what your child will be doing in the year ahead. Your child may already be with a childminder or attending a setting, and starting school is

a next progression from the good foundations already laid at home and in these settings.

### Tip 10. Be proud of your child's accomplishments

Your child has achieved so much already. Be proud of everything they have done. Remember it is not a race and that each child will get there but at their own individual pace. Record these milestones. Take photographs, keep mementos. Your child will enjoy looking at these too and remembering these events. Boost their self- image by telling them how proud you are of everything they have done. Enjoy listening to your child telling others of these achievements too.

### Important milestones

Moving	Communicating	Learning	Being with others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dresses without much help including fasteners and (un)doing buttons</li> <li>▪ Washes hand and face</li> <li>▪ Holds a pencil with correct grip</li> <li>▪ Can brush teeth and comb hair. Cuts with scissors with some accuracy</li> <li>▪ Some success with hitting a ball with a bat</li> <li>▪ Runs with ease &amp; speed.</li> <li>▪ Swerves to avoid obstacles</li> <li>▪ Propels a trike with pedals skilfully</li> <li>▪ Able to walk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can say full name, gender and address</li> <li>▪ Uses prepositions "in", "on"</li> <li>▪ Uses past tense not always correctly in speaking, e.g. "Mummy goed outside"</li> <li>▪ Can name some letters and numbers</li> <li>▪ Uses grammar that is mostly accurate</li> <li>▪ Understands stories. Is able to answer simple questions about them</li> <li>▪ Likes to initiate conversations with others</li> <li>▪ May use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aware of time. Understands routines</li> <li>▪ Can order objects from smallest to largest</li> <li>▪ Understands comparisons like "bigger", "lighter", "more", "tallest"</li> <li>▪ Knows what is meant by 'the same as'</li> <li>▪ Can count objects 0-7 with some accuracy</li> <li>▪ Concentrates on an activity for up to 15 minutes</li> <li>▪ Completes activities</li> <li>▪ Curious about life and death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social and enjoys playing with other children</li> <li>▪ Can take turns. Shares things often</li> <li>▪ Shows anger through words as well as actions</li> <li>▪ Begins to comprehend dangers</li> <li>▪ Enjoys imaginary play</li> <li>▪ May show jealousy</li> <li>▪ May be bossy to other children</li> <li>▪ Copies adults- especially same gender</li> <li>▪ Displays pride in achievements</li> </ul>

along a straight line on the ground	different tone of voice when speaking to different people		
-------------------------------------	---	--	--