

# Top Tips: Your Developing Child 3 – 4 Years

Your child is maturing rapidly. Active and mobile, h/she is now moving around on a tricycle and using other wheeled toys. These adept movers respond freely to music and love the rhythms of music, shaking and twisting their bodies. Better hand-eye co-ordination allows mastery of new tools like a toothbrush and scissors. Listening to stories continues to delight and children of three will talk about these readily. Sentences now contain four or five words. They remember words to songs and rhymes proudly and may even recite the some numbers. Socially their confidence is soaring and this year you will see new friendships appearing. They are more at ease in the company of others and begin to join in games with others in small groups. 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. Encourage your child to express emotions

Now that much of the emotional turmoil as a two year old has become less, your child is much more open to express a range of emotions. H/she is still vulnerable and may still cry over the slightest upset. Let your child openly express his or her feelings. This is especially important for boys.

## Tip 2. Bolster confidence in social situations

Your child is now much more confident socially and mixes well with other children. You still need to be there to provide a safe and secure reference point, even if it is only in the background. H/she will be meeting new children and making friends at the childminder, playgroup, school or nursery. Show how pleased you are that h/she is making friends. Ask questions about your child's friends so that you get to know them too. Encourage joining in with small group games.

## Tip 3. Help your child understand social rules

Now that your child is meeting new children and going out to different places, things like taking turns and following rules in a game become important. You can practise this at home when you play together. Give lots of praise when this happens. Stay relaxed and guide.

## Tip 4. Help your child learn about right and wrong

Moral development around this age shows itself in your child now beginning to know about what is right and wrong – for example that being unkind to somebody is wrong.

Reading stories that pose moral issues like this is a good lead into discussions of cause and effect – if we are unkind to somebody that makes them unhappy and we often feel unhappy too. In this way your child will learn about moral values – and of course they will always look at your behaviour to decide how they should behave.

### **Tip 5. Allay any fears about monsters**

At this age, a child's imagination is in overload. H/she loves fantasy play and is able to devise quite sophisticated play scenes with dolls or animals and people. Things that are unfamiliar can be misunderstood as scary. H/she may believe there are monsters in the bedroom or behind the sofa. Talk to your child about this and reassure them, especially at nights, that this is not the case and that you are there.

### **Tip 6. Push on with developing language**

A child of three has on average between 800-1000 words. H/she understands most sentences and uses sentences with 4 -6 words frequently with quite accurate grammar. Phrases with nouns are used, e.g. "a black dog". Instructions with two parts are now understood. You can use this as a way to develop their grasp of language, Say for example, "Get the letter from Auntie Margy from the kitchen drawer and bring it to me. Thank-you."

### **Tip 7. Continue to be a good role model as what you do is copied**

Never underestimate the influence you have on your child's development. From about the age of three, h/she will copy what you say and what you do. You will hear the words you use yourself being repeated in play, even with the same intonations. H/she will want to dress like you and do what you do. This is of course useful feedback and a reminder to be positive as your child is constantly learning from you. Any quips about Uncle Fred's snoring will very likely be repeated straight back to him!

### **Tip 8. Become literacy savvy**

Children are soaking up nursery rhymes, and songs at this age. They recite them back mostly word perfectly and are proud of their achievements. Continue to read to them. Discuss books as before and let them choose the books they want to hear. Help them to re-tell stories by using props. Listen to their comments about the stories they hear as they will comment on events and people they know that are similar to those in the stories. Encourage more mark making. You will see that the scribbles now appear much more like letters and even some letters appear together as the beginnings of words.

### **Tip 9. Build on logic and thinking skills**

Your child will spend a lot of time playing with puzzles and jigsaws. All the time they are learning, so do encourage this. Help them to sort objects in categories, although this may be only by one characteristic, such as shape, as yet. Let them tell you what they are doing and why. Use these play opportunities to encourage number recognition from 0-5 to start with. Let them count the objects aloud and label each one (called "one-to-one correspondence").

## Tip 10. Improve memory and recall

Memory and intellectual capacity is really taking off. Your child can recall events from weeks ago, with some appreciation of past and present. H/she will tell you about these events. When hearing stories, your child knows if details are wrong. When other people sing songs and get the words wrong, your child knows and points this out. Help to develop this memory by chatting about events and people. Play a game asking them to repeat something you have just said to see if the words are held in the short-term memory.

## Important milestones

Moving	Communicating	Learning	Being with others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Walks up and down stairs easily unsupported</li> <li>▪ Can throw a ball overhand</li> <li>▪ Propels a tricycle with pedals on an even surface</li> <li>▪ Can catch a ball that is thrown a short distance away</li> <li>▪ Uses tools with more accuracy, e.g. scissors</li> <li>▪ Can draw a circle and square shape</li> <li>▪ Is able to use a fork and spoon to eat with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hears when called from another room</li> <li>▪ Uses sentences with four or more words</li> <li>▪ Uses plurals, e.g. dogs; cats</li> <li>▪ Discusses stories when read to</li> <li>▪ Carries out instructions with 2-3 pieces of information</li> <li>▪ Speaks clearly enough for strangers to understand</li> <li>▪ Talks about events at home and outside</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concentrates up to 3 minutes</li> <li>▪ Looks through a book alone</li> <li>▪ Has knowledge of early numbers but not always in the correct order (1-10)</li> <li>▪ Drawing and mark-making is more mature</li> <li>▪ Understands "1"</li> <li>▪ Can recall events from a day ago</li> <li>▪ Can copy O, V, T shapes with varying accuracy</li> <li>▪ Knows and will tell you full name and gender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is more confident in social situations</li> <li>▪ Shows imagination in pretend play</li> <li>▪ Sees him/herself as having a body and a mind and feelings</li> <li>▪ Will co-operate with other children</li> <li>▪ Happy to adopt a role in pretend play, e.g. Mummy or Daddy</li> <li>▪ Talks about own feelings</li> <li>▪ Knows when h/she has done wrong</li> <li>▪ Joins in small group activities</li> </ul>

