



Information gathered from Louis Bates Ames and Frances Ilg from the Gesell Institute of Human Development.

Disclaimer: Every child is unique and may not go through the same milestones at the same time. Generally, rate of development is predictable; however, children may not proceed at the same rate. This information is a guide for an average child. Also, take your child's personality into consideration. The information below goes into depth about the personalities and interests of your child's age rather than developmental milestones, which can worry a parent. This article is to become aware and understand if your child may be more quiet, defiant, playful, exuberant, introverted. Some of these characteristics could be typical for their age and stage. Of course, your child has his or her own personality and how he sees the world and your child's sense of significance and belonging. My goal is that you become to appreciate some of these characteristics and embrace some of these new traits within your children as they are and who they become.

The Threenager

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The three-year-old is typically in the "we" stage so asking, "Can we do it together?" can go a long way with your child. A three-year-old tries to assert himself with a lot of emotion because he is trying to find his place in this world. This stage is known as the "threenager" because it mimics similar characteristics to the teenage years. Your three-year-old likes humor and needs a lot of encouragement.

Play

Your three-year-old may show more interest in other children and having "friends." Your child may start to play with other children rather than play side-by-side. They seem to be more interested in other children's feelings and can start to understand another person's point of view. Even though they are interested in each other, your three-year-old may want to still be near safe adults. One minute they may be playing with a friend and the next throwing, grabbing, or moving on to another activity. At the same time, your three-year-old may be able to say, "you may play with that when I'm done" and start engaging in turn taking. When playing with other children your child does not know she is being hurtful when she says, "I'm not playing with her" and have strong preferences for certain friends.

Curiosity and Language

A three-year-old's left hemisphere of the brain grows significantly, which is tied to language. You may see your three-year-old talk in 3 to 5 sentences during this year of development. At this stage, your three-year-old does not want to monopolize you, she is just curious about answers. Take the time when you can to answer her questions and research answers to encourage curiosity.

Outside the Home

A three-year-old may refuse to walk, refuse to go in a store, and then won't go back home. So, shopping may not be enjoyable at this age. However, your three-year-old typically enjoys being around you. He may like to go for walks, the store, play, and even help with household work. When leaving the house, remember an extra pair of clothes and underwear if your three-year-old is potty trained because it is common to wet their pants. Giving expectations of what to expect on your adventure with your three-year-old will go a long way.

Three-and-a-half

Three-year-olds are typically happy, calm, collected, friendly, capable and loving. Once your child reaches three-and-a-half this can be a wild age of many characteristics. Your child may seem more insecure while at the same time have a strong personality! Your child may refuse to listen, dress, eat, go to the bathroom, get up and go to bed. Routines can take much longer and routine charts may be helpful during this time.

The three-and-a-half-year-old likes the word “don’t.” “Don’t touch,” “Don’t look,” and “Don’t do that.” He may want to be an individual and is not as interested in the sense of “we.” This can be frustrating for a parent because the next minute your three-year-old may say, “Do this!”

This is a good time to ask for help from family members, friends, and even a babysitter during this time without guilt. It’s important to know that 3-year-olds and other preschoolers are more likely to get expelled than any other grade according to Carl Sheperis, Ph.D. from Walden University. Three-year-olds may be aggressive and not comply especially if preschool is new to them. Know that your child is not trying to pick a fight, but this is where she is developmentally.

In general, the three-and-a-half-year-old can be difficult to handle. Know that your three-and-a-half-year-old is not trying to make any personal attacks, he is only asking in the only way he knows how for your love and attention because he needs you in that moment. And it is usually, mom, that the three-and-a-half-year-old gives the toughest time to because you are likely the trusted adult. Sitting down and playing with your three-and-a-half-year-old is more important than ever right now to build that connection and relieve some of the routine battles.

Distraction and redirection can still work well at this age, such as “let’s see who can go faster, mommy or you.” Never make competitions between siblings and other children, just against adults as a friendly means of competition.

How to help your child

1. **Routine Charts.** routine charts may be helpful during this time. Allow your child to create his chart with your guidance by asking him what it is he needs to do to complete the routine (i.e., bedtime or morning). Then refer to the chart, rather than reminding your three-year-old what to do. According to Jane Nelson, founder of Positive Discipline, the more children do for themselves, the more capable and encouraged they feel. Let the routine be the boss by asking “What’s next on your routine chart?”
2. **Let’s Do It Together.** Asking your three-year-old, “let’s do it together” shows that you two are a team and on the same team. It prevents power struggles and less reminding. Modeling this approach over time encourages your three-year-old to help the next time she is needed.
3. **Ask for Help.** Don’t be ashamed to ask for help from family members, friends, or a babysitter. A few hours of help will go a long way!
4. **Build a Bridge.** If your three-year-old is in preschool, build a friendship of trust with his teacher. If your three-year-old sees that you take the time to get to know his teacher, you are showing your son that he can trust his teacher, too. Openly communicate before drop off and after pick up.
5. **Do Versus Don’t.** Saying don’t is discouraging and confusing to children. When saying “don’t leave your shoes on” your child needs to think what they’re not supposed to do and then what they are supposed to do. Also, modeling “Please take off your shoes” models respect.

6. **Distraction and Redirection.** Distraction and redirection can still work well at this age, such as “let’s see who can go faster, mommy or you.” Never make competitions between siblings and other children, just against adults as a friendly means of competition.
7. **Five Positive Statements.** As your three-year-old is struggling to find her place in this world praise her for good behavior. Try giving 5 positive statements before a negative. Also, be realistic on what your three-year-old is capable of doing.
8. **Potty Training.** Be patient! Even if your three-year-old started potty training at two-and-a-half, it still may take her an entire year to fully potty train. And then accidents can still happen even when you precious preschoolers gets to kindergarten. Also, make sure she is pooping regularly because constipation can cause a lot of accidents and this is something important to track and relay to the pediatrician.
9. **Potty Talk.** With all the fascination around potty training your three-year-old may be interested in bathroom or potty talk. First, try to ignore bathroom talk. You could also say, “I noticed you have been talking a lot about poopy, do you need to go to the bathroom?” That will usually stop the talk. Also, get books about going to the bathroom, like “Everybody Poops,” by Tara Gomi. Make up other funny words and jokes as a distraction.
10. **Take good care of yourself.** You are an amazing parent!