



Provided by the WIC Program and First 5 LA

Eager to Learn!

Listen to me talk. Most children say **over a hundred words** by the time they are 2½ years old. You still may not understand all of the words your child says. You can help your child learn new words.

I may be ready to use the toilet. Many girls are ready when they are about 2 years old. Boys are usually ready later when they are about 2½ years old.

I can do things all by myself. Your 2½ year-old is getting better and better at using his or her hands.

Playing is how I learn. I will talk better and get along better with children if I practice by pretending. Playing teaches your child about the world. Look inside for games you can play that will help your child learn.



Read, read, read! Help your child find a favorite book. Your child learns best when reading is fun for both of you. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

QUESTION: My child says a lot of words in baby talk. How can I teach my child how to say the words correctly?

ANSWER: The best way for your child to learn to speak correctly is by hearing you speak correctly. For example, if your child says, “DAH” for DOG, you can say, “Yes that is a DOG.” If your child calls a cat a dog, you can say, “That is a CAT. You are right. It has four legs and a tail like a DOG.”



Try this!

Your child is learning more about feelings. You can help your child learn the words for feelings. Tell your child how you feel. Use words like happy, sad, excited, angry or other feeling words. For example, if your child is crying, say, “You look sad.” Children who can use words to explain their feelings do not hit or bite as much as children who do not know those words.

QUESTION: What if my child is not talking yet?

ANSWER: By 2 years, most children say at least 50 words. If your child is not talking yet, **ask your doctor.** If your child needs extra help, it is best to get the help as early as possible. There are special programs for helping children, even very young children.



QUESTION: How can I help my child learn more words?

ANSWER: Your child is starting to learn words that describe things. You can help your child learn by talking a lot. Use words that describe color, shape, size and the way things feel when you touch them. You can tell your child what is in front, behind, under and over.

Try this!

Make a sorting game for your child. Cut out triangles, squares, circles, half-circles and rectangles from cardboard or paper. Color them red, blue, green, purple or other bright colors. Below are three games you can play. (Start by using just two shapes and two colors. When this is too easy for your child, make it harder by adding another shape or color.)

- 1) **Colors:** Pick a color. Tell your child the name of the color and ask your child to find the other shapes that are that color. For example say, “Look! I have the RED triangle. Can you find something RED?”
- 2) **Shapes:** Pick a shape. Tell your child the name of the shape and ask your child to find the other pieces that are the same shape. For example say, “Look! I have the red TRIANGLE. Can you find another TRIANGLE?”
- 3) **Matching:** Make two pieces that are the same shape and the same color. Give your child one piece and ask your child to find the other piece that is the same shape and same color. Talk about “same” and “different.” These will be important ideas for your child to understand when your child starts school.

QUESTION: I am tired of changing diapers! When will my child start using the toilet?

ANSWER: Every child is different. Here are some signs that can help you know when your child is ready.

Is your child noticing when he or she is peeing (urinating) or pooping (having a bowel movement or BM) in a diaper? Does your child pull on his or her pants or say, “Uh oh” when peeing or pooping in the diaper? Choose words to teach to your child (toilet or potty, pee or poop) or teach your child to point when they need to go to the bathroom.

Is your child interested in copying what you do? Does your child want to watch you using the bathroom? If you are comfortable with this, it can help your child learn to use the toilet.

Does your child like to put things where they belong? You can tell your child that urine and bowel movements (BM’s) belong in the toilet. Use the words that are comfortable for you.

Try not to start during a time when your child’s favorite word is “NO.” It is much easier to toilet train when your child is more interested in pleasing you.

Try this!

Have your child sing the ABC song while washing his or her hands. This helps your child in two ways. It helps your child learn the alphabet and it helps your child wash long enough to wash off the germs. Washing hands before eating and after using the toilet is a good way to keep your child from getting sick.



QUESTION: How do I teach my child to use the toilet?

ANSWER: Children learn to use the toilet most easily when they want to be independent AND when they want to please their parents. It usually takes about six months to learn to use the toilet.

Start by letting your child sit on the toilet (or potty seat) in diapers and clothes while you explain what a toilet is for and how to use it. You can empty the BM from a dirty diaper into the toilet to show your child where it belongs.

Once your child is comfortable with sitting on the toilet, take off his or her diaper. Let your child sit on the toilet several times each day. If you can tell when your child is having a BM, ask if he or she wants to sit on the toilet to finish. Ask several times each day if your child wants to sit on the toilet to try to pee.

When your child has used the toilet correctly a few times, you can try training pants. Having accidents is part of learning. If you punish your child for accidents, learning to use the toilet may become stressful for your child and may take longer. Instead, encourage your child when he or she uses the toilet successfully.

Many children do not stay dry at night until they are at least 3 years-old. Be patient.

QUESTION: How coordinated should my 2 to 2 1/2 year-old child be?

ANSWER: Your 2 to 2 1/2 year-old can wash his or her hands, stack 4 to 8 blocks, undress and begin to put on clothes. Your child may be able to stand on one foot for a second. Your child can throw a ball, but cannot catch very well yet. Your child can also turn doorknobs, so be careful that your child does not go outside alone. Your child can unscrew jar lids. Make sure that medicines are out of reach. Your child will want to brush his or her teeth “all by myself.” He or she will still need your help to make sure that the teeth are really clean.

QUESTION: How much T.V. should my child watch?

ANSWER: Children who watch a lot of T.V. do not have as much time to learn from playing. Experts recommend that children limit T.V. to 1 hour each day.

QUESTION: My child pushes a block on the floor and says, “Vroom, Vroom!” Should I explain that the block is not a car?

ANSWER: No. Pretending or “pretend play” is part of the magic of being a child. It is also one of the best ways for children to learn. When you get onto the floor and pretend with your child, it helps your child’s creativity and imagination develop. You are helping your child learn to talk. You are helping your child learn to understand more words. You are also helping your child learn about feelings and about how other people act. Pretend play is one of the most important parts of growing up. And, it is really fun to let yourself be a kid again and play, play, play!



QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for 2 to 2½ year-old children?

ANSWER: You are still your child’s most important playmate. Read, play and cuddle with your child every day. TALK and SING in every language you know. Your child will love riding on toys with wheels. Crayons, play dough and other art supplies give your child a chance to practice new skills. Your child will love to pretend. Toy telephones, a small broom or mop, pots and pans and other kitchen supplies, rakes and shovels and dress up clothes are fun for 2 year-olds.

Safety Corner



Here are some tips to keep your child safe:

1. Now that your child can run and open doors, he or she can get away from you quickly! Your child does not yet understand how to stay safe. Stay near your child in stores, parks, and everywhere!
2. Be sure to keep all household products and medicines completely out of reach.
3. If your child does put something poisonous into his or her mouth, call the **Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222** or dial **9-1-1**. Do not make your child vomit.
4. To prevent serious falls, use gates on stairways and install window guards if there is a second story or higher level.



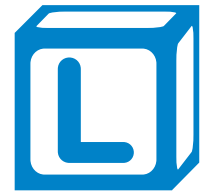
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Listen to Me!

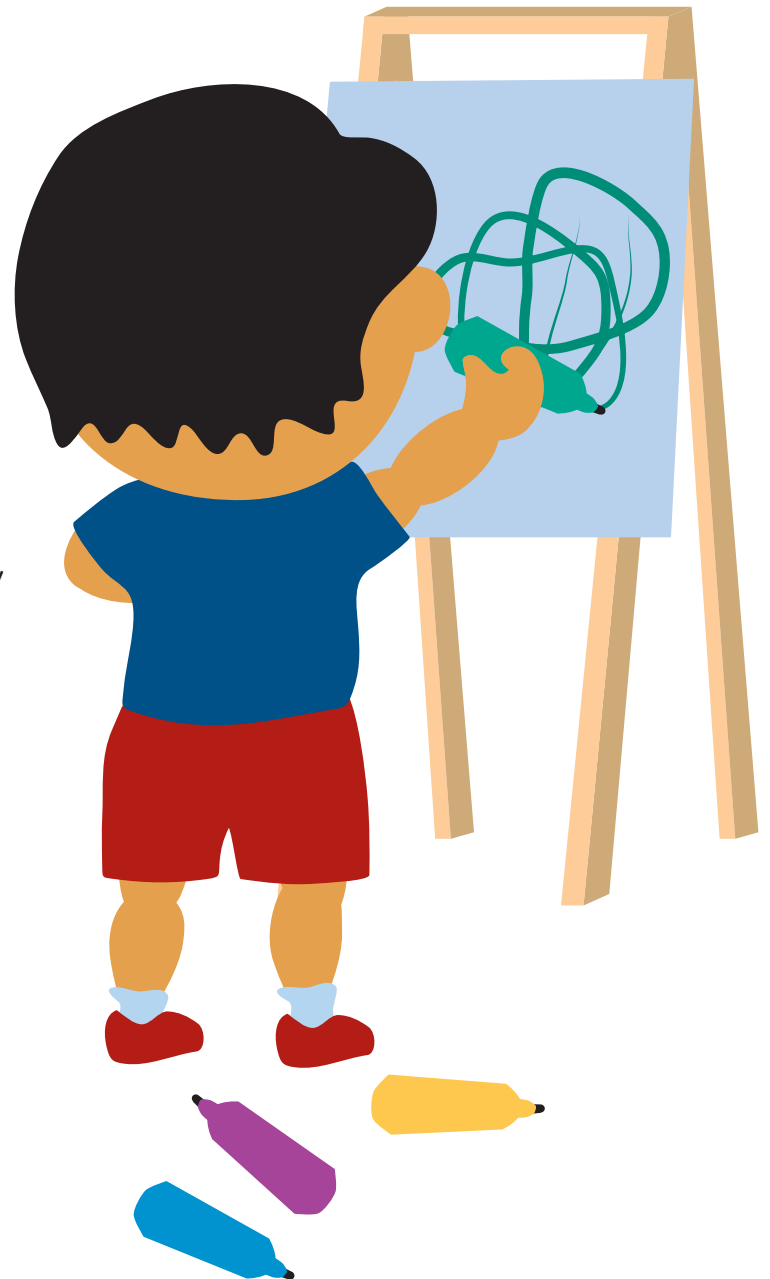
Listen to me. Your child is getting better at communicating. Communication includes talking and listening. Your 2½ to 3 year-old child understands and says more words and puts words together to make sentences.

I am learning right from wrong. Your child will learn to behave appropriately with your help. This kind of teaching is called **discipline**.

I may be ready to use the toilet. Many girls are ready when they are about 2 years old. Boys usually are ready later when they are about 2½ years old.

I can build, draw, kick a ball, and climb. Your 2½ to 3 year-old is able to do more and more things with his or her hands and body.

My imagination is growing. Your child is starting to pretend more and more.



Read, read, read! I love when you read to me. Reading to your child every day also helps your child learn to communicate. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

QUESTION: How can I help my child learn to communicate better?

ANSWER: You probably know how important it is to **talk** to your child. Talking to your child helps your child learn more words and how to put words together into sentences. It is also important to **listen** to your child. When you listen to your child, you are teaching your child that he or she is worth listening to. Listening shows respect. You are showing your child how to have a conversation.

Try this!

Pay attention to **WHAT** you say to your child and **WHEN** you say it. You may be surprised to find out how many orders you give your child. Do you let your child finish a sentence before you talk? Do you interrupt your child? If you want to teach your child not to interrupt, show them how. Stop talking after you ask a question. Wait and listen to your child's answer.



Try this!

What's in the Bag? Collect objects from around the house like a comb, brush, toothbrush, sock, ball, pen, spoon or anything else that your child knows the word for. Have your child cover his or her eyes. Put one of the objects into a bag. Have your child put a hand inside the bag and guess what is inside by feeling it. Help your child guess by asking, "Is it hard or soft? Is it long or short? Is it round or straight? Is it rough or smooth?"

Your child will like this game even more if you take a turn guessing. Have your child put an object into the bag when you are not looking. Feel in the bag. Say what you are thinking out loud so that your child can hear. For example, if you feel a spoon, you could say things like, "Hmmm, this feels hard. One part is straight and one part is round. I know, it's a spoon!" The more excited you are, the more fun your child will have.

QUESTION: I hear my child talking in bed, even when no one else is in the room. Do I need to teach my child that it is time to be quiet?

ANSWER: Probably not. Young children often talk to themselves. That is part of learning to talk and part of pretending. Listen to what your child is saying. You may hear a story about what happened during the day. You may hear your child putting a stuffed animal to bed using the same words that you use. As long as the talking is quiet, it may actually help your child fall asleep.

Try this!

Take your child's sock and say, "I need to put this sock on my ear, right?" Give your child a chance to laugh and tell you, "No!" Try to put it on your ear. Say, "Oh no, it doesn't fit! I know, I put this sock on my hand, right?" Your child will laugh because your child now understands the words. You can add words to help your child learn even more. Say the color of the sock, or add body parts like elbows and knees.

QUESTION: My child says “pweeze” instead of “please.” How can I teach my child to say words correctly?

ANSWER: Some sounds are very hard to learn to say. Even many five-year-olds still have trouble with the “L” sound and “R” sound. By hearing you speak correctly, your child will learn how to speak correctly over time. If your child says “pweeze,” you can respond by saying, “Thank you for saying PLEASE. I appreciate it.” This way you are teaching your child that you understand and you are also teaching your child how to say the word correctly.

Try this!

Use “please” and “thank you” when you are talking with your child. Hearing you use these polite words will help your child learn to be polite. When your child uses a polite word, show him or her how happy it makes you feel. Remember that it takes time for children to learn to be polite. Keep encouraging them.



QUESTION: How can I teach my child right from wrong? How can I teach my child to behave appropriately?

ANSWER: Being a parent of a 2 year-old can be very hard. Your child is trying to learn limits. Here are some helpful ideas.

Try to say “yes” as much as possible, and save “no” for safety. Saying “no” tells your child to stop, but does not tell your child what to do instead.

Make a safe area where your child can play. Put play things in that area. Life will be easier for you if your child cannot reach the things you don’t want your child to touch.

Distract your child. When your child reaches for something breakable, give your child something safe.

Move your child away from things you don’t want touched.

Tell your child why you are moving him or her. You can combine these ways of helping your child learn. For example, say, “No, please don’t touch the stove. The stove is hot. You can play here.”

QUESTION: How do I teach my child to use the toilet?

ANSWER: Children learn to use the toilet most easily when they want to be independent AND they want to please their parents. It usually takes about six months to learn to use the toilet.

- 1) Start by letting your child sit on the toilet (or potty seat) in diapers and clothes while you explain what a toilet is for and how to use it. You can empty the bowel movement (BM) from a dirty diaper into the toilet to show your child where it belongs.
- 2) Once your child is comfortable with sitting on the toilet, take off his or her diaper. Let your child sit on the toilet several times each day. If you can tell when your child is having a bowel movement, ask if they want to sit on the toilet to finish. Ask several times each day if your child wants to sit on the toilet to try to pee.
- 3) When your child has used the toilet correctly a few times, you can try training pants. Having accidents is part of learning. If you punish your child for accidents, learning to use the toilet may become stressful for your child and may take longer. Instead, encourage your child when he or she uses the toilet successfully.
- 4) Many children do not stay dry at night until they are at least 3 years-old. Be patient.

QUESTION: There is not much space in my home. How important is it for my child to run and climb?

ANSWER: Your 2½ to 3 year-old needs a chance to climb and run every day. This helps your child grow strong and healthy. Try to find somewhere safe for your child to run. If you can't go outside, turn on some music and dance and dance and dance!

Try this!

PLAY CATCH

Your child is very interested in throwing and catching. Take a ball to the park with you. You can throw, kick, catch, and roll it.



QUESTION: Why does my child pretend so much?

ANSWER: Pretending is one of the best ways that children learn. Now your child is becoming even more imaginative. A block may turn into an airplane in your child's play. You can pretend with your child, too. Make a sock puppet. Put your hand in a sock and make a mouth with your fingers. Then bark like a dog and make the puppet look like it is barking. Your child will have fun and pretend with you.

Both boys and girls pretend to be mommy. By pretending to be you, your child practices taking care of stuffed animals or toys the way you take care of him or her. Children this age pretend to be the people they see around them. By pretending, they are learning about social relationships and friends. When you pretend with your child, you are helping your child learn to talk and to understand the world around him or her. You are also helping your child learn about feelings and about how other people act. Pretend play is one of the most important parts of growing up!

Try this!

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Your child loves to copy what you do. Even at home your child can move around. Turn on some music and have a parade. Have your child copy the way you move. Then let your child be the leader and you follow. Play the same game at the park.

Safety Corner



Car Safety

- Car crashes can cause severe injuries or death. To prevent these injuries, use a car seat every time your child rides in the car. The safest place for your child to ride is in the car seat in the back seat.
- Children left in a car can die of heat stroke because temperatures inside the car can reach very high levels in minutes.
- Children left in a car can be injured by power windows or knock the vehicle into gear.
- Children left alone around the car can be hit as they may not be seen in the rearview mirror. Always walk behind your car to be sure your child is not there before you back out of your driveway.



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Making Friends!

I learn new words every day. I am learning shapes, colors, letters and numbers.

I am learning to make friends. I used to like playing **near** other children. Now I like playing **with** other children.

My imagination is still growing. My friends and I like to pretend.



I am learning right from wrong. I will learn to behave appropriately with your help. This kind of teaching is called discipline.

I use the toilet, but I still have accidents. Please be patient with me.

Help me get ready for Kindergarten. Read to me every day. Try to limit T.V. to one hour each day.

Try this!

When your child points at something and names it, he or she is showing interest. Respond with the name, but add new information and words. For example, if your child says, "Big dog!" you can answer, "Yes! That is a big, black dog. See, it is the same color as that small black cat, but the dog is big and the cat is small." Your answer teaches your child about colors, about size, about animals and about making comparisons.

QUESTION: Do I need to worry about how my child is talking? My older child talked much better at this age.

ANSWER: Every child is different. Sometimes younger brothers and sisters do not need to talk as much because their older brothers and sisters talk for them. Most 3 year-olds use plurals (words that mean more than one, for example, "dogs" or "cats"). 3 year-olds use pronouns (he, she, you, I, him, her), but will sometimes make mistakes. 3 year-olds are starting to use words that end in "-ing" like playing, running and eating. They learn to talk about what is happening now (present) before they learn to talk about what has happened (past) or will happen (future). Many 3 year-olds ask questions starting with who, what, where, when and why. Again, every child is different and learns to talk at their own pace. If you are concerned, be sure to talk to your child's doctor.

QUESTION: How can I help my child learn more words?

ANSWER: When you respond to something your child says to you, you are teaching your child that he or she is important. Your child will want to speak more and learn more words. Listening shows respect. It also teaches your child that it is important to take turns talking in conversations.

Here are some games you can play

Hungry for Learning

Food is a great way to teach your child about shapes, colors and numbers. Talk about the shape and color of the food. Does your child like **square** or **rectangle** brown graham crackers? Does your child want a sandwich cut into **2 triangles** or **4 squares**? Cut the food and count with your child. Does your child want 2, 3, or 4 crackers? What shape are the crackers? If your child has 4 crackers, count the crackers with your child. After your child has eaten 1 cracker, ask how many are left. Your child probably will not be able to tell you, but you can count the crackers together.

I Spy With My Little Eye

This is a great game to play with your child in a waiting room or restaurant. Look around you. Choose something that you know your child knows the word for and start to describe it. For example, if you choose a book you could say, "I spy with my little eye something that has pages in it." Let your child guess. Keep giving clues until your child guesses correctly. Use words like **under, on, behind** and **in**. "I spy with my little eye something that is **on** the table." As your child begins to learn colors and shapes, you can play this game with **colors** and **shapes**.

Treasure Hunt

Go on a **blue** hunt, a **red** hunt, a **circle** hunt or a **square** hunt. For example, you can say, "We're going on a square hunt, we're going on a square hunt. Find something square!" Your child will amaze you with what he or she finds: squares on the sidewalk, square windows, square crackers, square tables and square books.



QUESTION: My child says “dat” instead of “that.” How can I teach my child how to say words correctly?

ANSWER: Some sounds are very hard for children to say. Many 5 year-olds still have trouble with the “TH” sound, the “R” sound and the “L” sound. When your child says “dat,” you can respond by saying, “Oh, I see. You want THAT. THAT is a book.” This way you are teaching your child that you understand what they are saying and you are also teaching your child how to say the word correctly.

Try this!

Use “please” and “thank you” when you are talking with your child. Hearing you use these polite words will help your child learn to be polite. When your child uses a polite word, show him or her how happy it makes you feel. Remember that it takes time for children to learn to be polite. Keep encouraging them.

QUESTION: I need advice on how to discipline my child. Please help!

ANSWER: Some parents find that time-out is a way to discipline their child. Time-out helps a child learn limits in a safe way. Time-out is best when saved for the most difficult behaviors like hitting, biting or temper tantrums. Time-out teaches a child that he or she must control those behaviors. Time-out also gives the parent time to calm down and think about how to respond to the child in a way that will teach the child good behavior. Here is how to make time-out work best:



- 1) Pick a safe place for your child’s time-out. Do not put your child in a dark place or lock the door. The purpose is for your child to calm down. If your child is frightened, he or she will not calm down as easily.
- 2) Tell your child about time-out before you use it. You could say, “If you have trouble keeping your hands to yourself around other people, I will take you to a safe place to be alone until you are ready to come back to the group.”
- 3) Time-out should not last more than one minute for each year of your child’s age. A three year-old should not be in time-out for more than 3 minutes.
- 4) Time-out is not a punishment. Time-out is a chance for your child to get back into control of his or her feelings and actions.

QUESTION: How important is it for my child to be around other children?

ANSWER: Your 3 year-old needs to be around other children. This is a great age to meet other families with children at a park, or for your child to go to preschool. This is the age when children begin to make friends, but they need help to learn to treat each other kindly. During this year, your child’s games will become more and more complicated. Your child and his or her friends will play different characters. One child may play a firefighter, another child may play a princess and another may play a cat. They might create a play world where the firefighter rescues the princess and the cat from a tree. By pretending, they are learning about social relationships and friends. This is an important skill to help prepare your child for school.

QUESTION: What should I do if my child is not getting along with other children?

ANSWER: In any group of children, there will be times when the children do not agree. 3 year-olds are just learning what behaviors help them get along with other children. They are old enough to begin learning to share, but it still will not be easy. They are not old enough to know how to solve problems on their own. Help them think of solutions, but let them try to figure out which solution will work best. When they pick a solution, they will try harder to make that solution work. If a child is not cooperating and is acting in a way that is dangerous or might hurt another child, take that child out of the group for a few minutes. Sometimes just interrupting the dangerous behavior helps the child learn how to behave better.

QUESTION: How will I know if my 3 year-old needs extra help?

ANSWER: Talk to your doctor as soon as possible if your child does any of these things:

- Gets scared very easily
- Fights often
- Has a very hard time being separated from you
- Is not interested in other children
- Does not respond to other people
- Does not pretend
- Seems unhappy a lot
- Does not show a lot of different feelings

QUESTION: How important is it for my child to run and climb?

ANSWER: Your 3 to 3 1/2 year-old needs a chance to climb and run every day. This helps your child grow strong and healthy. Try to find somewhere safe for your child to run. Children this age are beginning to enjoy more structured games like Tag, London Bridge, Ring Around the Rosy or Duck, Duck, Goose. Your library has books and tapes of children’s games that can help you learn them.



Try this!
OBSTACLE COURSE

You can set up an obstacle course with things from around the house or at the park. At the park, the course can use playground equipment or whatever is in the park. For example, you can say, “Pretend that you are an airplane and fly to the tree. Then walk backwards to the picnic table. Crawl under the table and jump like a bunny back to me to give me a hug!” If you give too many instructions, your child may have trouble remembering. That’s okay. You can remind them when they forget.

Safety Corner



Helmet Safety

Children this age like to ride tricycles, bicycles, scooters and skateboards.

- When riding any of these, your child always needs to wear a well-fitting helmet.
- The helmet should have a sticker on it saying that it meets standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).
- Take your child to the store when buying a helmet to be sure it fits.
- If you have a used helmet, be sure to adjust the straps so it fits your child.



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Your
3 1/2 to 4
Year-Old
Child



Provided by the WIC Program and First 5 LA

Almost Ready for School!



I am still learning shapes, colors and numbers.

I have better balance and better control over my body.

I learn best when you encourage me.

I am getting better at making friends. My friends and I like to pretend when we play.

I use the toilet, but I still have accidents. Please be patient with me.

Help me get ready for Kindergarten. Read to me every day. Try to limit T.V. to one hour each day.

QUESTION: My neighbor's 3 year-old talks better than my child talks. Do I need to worry?

ANSWER: Every child is different. 3 year-olds are beginning to understand “same” and “different”. Most 3 year-olds also use plurals (words that mean more than one, for example, “dogs” or “cats”). 3 year-olds use pronouns (he, she, you, I, him, her), but will sometimes make mistakes. 3 year-olds are starting to use words that end in “-ing” like, playing, running and eating. They learn to talk about what is happening now, what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future. Many 3 year-olds ask questions starting with: who, what, where, when and why. Most children can name at least one color by the time they turn 4. If you are concerned, be sure to talk to your child's doctor.

Try this!

When your child talks about something, he or she is showing interest. Respond first by repeating what your child says. Then add new words that describe the object. For example, if your child says, “Look, the moon!” you can answer, “Yes! That is the moon. See, it is round like a circle. It is like a moon in your book, Goodnight, Moon. Should we say, “goodnight” to it? Goodnight, Moon.” Your answer teaches your child about shapes and reminds your child of the book.



QUESTION: How can I help my child learn to communicate better?

ANSWER: Listen to what your child says to you. When you answer your child, try to include the words that your child said. You are teaching your child that his or her words are important. This shows respect. When you answer your child, you can also add new words and phrases. Listening and answering also teach your child that it is important to take turns during conversations.

Try this!

3 year-olds are beginning to learn to count. Children often learn to name the numbers from 1 to 10 before they can really count.

Help your child learn to count objects. Count the steps as you walk up and down stairs. Count the napkins or plates as you set the table. (Your child will feel proud giving everyone a napkin and plate). Count the people in the room. Count the chairs in the house. The more counting you do with your child, the sooner your child will be able to count on his or her own.



Try this!

NUMBER TREASURE HUNT

Go on 1 hunt, or a 2 hunt, or a 3 hunt. For example, you can say, “We’re going on a 2 hunt. Find 2 of something!” Your child will amaze you with what he or she finds: 2 children, 2 doors, 2 windows, 2 cats, 2 ears, 2 eyes, 2 hands, but not 2 belly buttons!

QUESTION: How is my child's body growing and changing?

ANSWER: Your doctor has been measuring your child's growth and development. Your 3½ to 4 year-old can walk easily, hop, stand on one foot, and go up stairs and down stairs without help. Your child can kick a ball, and can usually catch a large ball after it bounces. Climbing and running every day helps your child grow strong and healthy. Children this age enjoy games such as tag, the Farmer in the Dell, Ring Around the Rosy and Duck, Duck, Goose.

Your child also has better control over his or her fingers. Your child can hold a crayon or pencil between his or her thumb and fingers instead of in a fist. Your child may be beginning to copy some capital letters and to use child-safe scissors. Doing artwork is a great way for your child to develop hand and finger control.



Try this!

Try to praise and encourage behavior that you like. Instead of saying “no,” use phrases such as “good try,” “you’re so close,” or “you’re working so hard.”



QUESTION: How can I teach my child good behavior by using praise and encouragement?

ANSWER: Praise and encouragement are both ways to help your child learn good behavior. Praise can be used to reward your child. When you praise your child, you are telling your child that he or she is behaving well. Children learn better from praise than from punishment. Punishment teaches your child what not to do. It does not teach your child the behaviors that you want your child to do. Catch your child being good!

Encouragement shows your child that you believe in your child's abilities. “You worked hard to make that circle” tells your child that his or her own effort produced the result. “You are getting better at hopping” tells your child that you noticed improvement and have faith in his or her ability to learn. “You look proud of your drawing” tells your child that his or her opinion is important. These are ways of encouraging that help your child want to try harder. Encourage your child especially when your child makes a mistake. “Wow! You put on your shoes yourself! They are on the wrong feet. Let’s try again. I know that you can fix them.” Praise and encouragement help your child know what pleases you.



Try this!

Your child can make a costume! Your child will have fun pretending and decorating. You will need a paper bag from the grocery store, scissors and crayons. Turn the bag into an animal coat that your child can wear. Let your child color the bag. Stripes can turn the bag into a zebra. Spots can turn it into a leopard or a dog. You can also cut out pieces of paper and glue them to the bag.

Strips of paper make a good tail. After the bag is decorated, help your child cut a hole in the flat bottom of the bag for your child's head. Cut a slit down the front of the bag. Also cut holes on each side for your child's arms. Now your child can wear the costume and have fun pretending!

QUESTION: How important is it for my child to be around other children?

ANSWER: Your 3½ year-old needs to be around other children. This is a great age for your child to go to preschool, or to meet children at a park. Your child is learning to make friends but still needs help to learn to treat other children kindly and fairly.

When 3½ year-olds play, they like to pretend to do the same activities that they see around them. For example, they might play house, or pretend to make dinner or pretend to go shopping. By pretending, they are learning about social relationships and friends.

Try this!

TEACH PROBLEM-SOLVING

This is an example of how you can teach problem-solving.

If Victoria and Michael argue about taking turns on a swing, you can say "You both want to go first, but only one of you can go first. What can you do to solve this problem?" Then give the children a choice. They could both find somewhere else to play. Or, you could suggest that the child who goes first gets to swing for 2 minutes, and the child who goes second gets to swing for 4 minutes. Explain that going second will mean a longer turn. (This also helps the children learn about numbers and time.) Then ask the children, "Which idea do you want to try?" Talk with the children about what they like and don't like about each idea. Then help them come up with a plan.

Safety Corner



Many 3½ to 4 year-olds love to play in water. Here are some tips to keep your child safe:

- Never leave your child alone in or near a bathtub, swimming pool, or any other water, even for a moment.
- Stay very close to your child around water.
- Keep the bathroom doors closed.
- If you are close to a swimming pool, make sure there is a fence on all 4 sides and be sure all pool gates are closed. It only takes a moment for your child to fall into a pool.



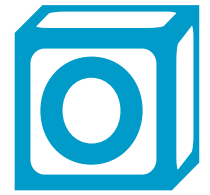
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One Year to Kindergarten!

Help me get ready for Kindergarten.

This is a great time to go to preschool.

I use language in many new ways, and you may not like some of them!

4 year-olds like to tell stories, and not all of the stories are true.

I sometimes have nightmares and I am scared of monsters.

This is normal for 4 year-olds.

Read to me every day.

Try to **limit T.V.** to one hour each day.



QUESTION: One year to Kindergarten! What do I need to do to get my child ready?

ANSWER: First, find out what school your child will be going to for Kindergarten. Then, go to the school and ask if they have a **pre-kindergarten program**. Pre-kindergarten programs help your child learn to sit quietly when listening to a story, learn to take turns and learn to pay attention. Children also learn letters, numbers, shapes, and colors. Children practice playing with other children. All of these skills will help your child to feel more comfortable in Kindergarten.



Try this!

LETTER HUNT

Go hunting with your child for the letters A, B and C, or the letters in your child's name. Say, "We're going on a B hunt. Find a B! Oh, look! There's a bank! Can you find the B on the sign? Oh look! I see a red B. Can you find it?"

QUESTION: What is my child learning about letters and numbers? How can I help?

ANSWER: Most 4 year-olds are not ready to read, but they love books, letters and numbers. Help your child make the sounds and write each letter of his or her name. The best thing you can do for your child is to help make books fun and exciting. Read to your child for at least 15 minutes each day.

Try this!

SAME AND DIFFERENT

Understanding same and different will help your child in kindergarten. Talk about objects in your house. How are they the same? How are they different? For example, "Look! Your fork and spoon are the same because you eat with them and they both have handles. How are they different? They are different because your spoon is round on the end and your fork has points."



QUESTION: What else can I teach my child to prepare him or her for school?

ANSWER: You can teach your child more about time. 4 year-olds understand that the day is divided into morning, afternoon and night. Teach them the seasons of the year (winter, spring, summer and fall) and the days of the week. Help them understand more opposites like: big and little, up and down, more and less, in front of and behind, top and bottom. There are many wonderful books about opposites.

QUESTION: What is my 4 year-old's language like?

ANSWER: Your child speaks in sentences and probably talks about what will happen in the future, what has happened in the past, and what is happening now. Other people probably understand your child almost as well as you do. F, V, S, Z, Sh, L, Th, and R are the hardest sounds. 4 year-olds like to make up words and say them just for fun. **Dr. Seuss** is a favorite author because he is so silly!



Try this!

4 year-olds can tell stories. After reading a story together, ask your child to tell the story back to you. Turn the pages and look at the pictures as you ask, "What happened first? Then what happened next? How are the characters in the story feeling? Where do they live? What's their favorite fruit? What kinds of games do they like to play?"

QUESTION: My child lied to me! What can I do?

ANSWER: Your child is learning to tell stories. Sometimes they are true stories and sometimes they are not true. First, try to understand why your 4 year-old lied. Was your child afraid of getting in trouble? Sometimes 4 year-olds lie to protect themselves from being punished. If you punish your child when he or she admits having done something wrong, he or she will learn to lie. Instead, try telling your child that you are proud when he or she tells the truth. Then you can work together to fix whatever your child did wrong.

Sometimes 4 year-olds say what they wish to be true instead of what is really true. Help your child understand that the more he or she tells the truth, the more people will believe what he or she is saying.

Sometimes 4 year-olds lie because they have seen the adults around them lie. Sometimes adults will lie to protect someone's feelings. Your 4 year-old will not understand this yet. Pay attention to what you say and teach your child to tell the truth by telling the truth yourself.

Try this!

BUILD-A-STORY

You and your child can build a story together. Start with, "Once upon a time," then add the first person or animal to the story. You can start with "there was a little girl" or "there was a little boy" or there was a fire breathing dragon."

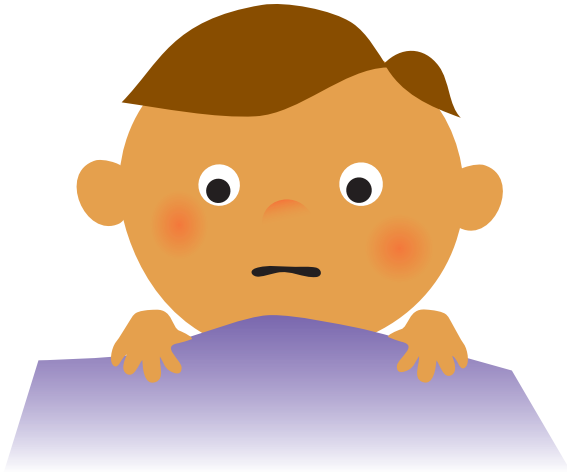
Ask your child to decide what happens to that person or animal. Then you add a part to the story, then your child adds a part to the story. Don't worry if it gets pretty silly. 4 year-olds may name the little boy Prince Eyeball or King Tunafish! They love that silliness.

QUESTION: My child laughs and giggles about anything to do with the toilet and likes to use "toilet talk!" What can I do?

ANSWER: Toilet talk is very popular with 4 year-olds. Sometimes, children will stop using the words if you ignore them. If this does not work, tell your child calmly that you do not like hearing those words. Try not to get upset. Part of what makes toilet talk fun for children is seeing adults' reactions.

QUESTION: My child loves to play games on my phone or a hand-held device. Is this OK?

ANSWER: Choose games that make learning fun. Play with your child and talk about what you learn. Try to **limit all screen time to one hour a day.**



QUESTION: My child has nightmares. What can I do to help?

ANSWER: Many 4 year-olds have nightmares.

They are not sure when a dream is real and when it's not. Sometimes they have nightmares after a scary movie, T.V. show or even a scary story. This is another reason to limit T.V. If your child has a nightmare, hold your child, talk about the dream, and help your child calm down and go back to sleep.

QUESTION: How will I know if my 4 year-old needs extra help?

Answer: Talk to your doctor as soon as possible if your child does any of these things:

- Gets scared very easily
- Fights often
- Has a very hard time being separated from you
- Is not interested in other children
- Does not respond to other people
- Does not pretend
- Seems unhappy a lot
- Does not show a lot of different feelings

Try this!

GET RID OF THE MONSTERS!

Many 4 year-olds are afraid that there are monsters under their beds or in their closets. Make an anti- monster spray. Put water into a clean spray bottle. Give your child a piece of paper and some crayons and have him or her color a monster. Then ask your child which color will make the monster go away. Have your child color over the monster with that color. Wrap the paper around the spray bottle like a label. At bedtime, say, "it's time to spray the monsters away!" Let your child spray the monsters or show you where to spray. Then say, "They are all gone. Time to go to sleep."

Safety Corner



- Many 4 year-olds have grown out of their toddler car seat. Booster seats are very important for your child's safety when riding in a car, and are required for young children.
- Always carefully read the height and weight limits printed on the car seat and booster seat and make sure it is the right size for your child.
- Children this age should always ride in a booster seat in the back seat of the car. The front seat is not safe for children.

I may still wet my bed. Please be patient with me!



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To Kindergarten and Beyond!



Help me get ready for Kindergarten. You are your child's best teacher.

My curiosity is growing. I want to know more about my body and why boys and girls are different.

I have very powerful feelings and I really show them. My feelings may change quickly.

Read to me every day. Take me to the library. Try to **limit T.V.** to one hour a day.

Congratulations! Your child is graduating from the WIC Little By Little Program. We hope you have enjoyed the handouts and books that WIC has provided and that they have prepared your child for kindergarten and beyond. The best way to help your child do well in school is to keep reading with your child. **Read to your child every day.** Even when your child knows how to read, reading together for 15 minutes or more each day will help your child do better in school. And even when your child is in school, you are still your child's best teacher.

Thank you for helping your child grow and develop...Little by Little!

QUESTION: My child is almost in Kindergarten. What do I need to do to get my child ready?

ANSWER: Many children are a little scared of starting Kindergarten. They do not know what Kindergarten will be like. They may not have their best friends in their class and the school may seem big to them.

You can help your child feel excited about Kindergarten. Talk with your child about what Kindergarten will be like. Your child will make new friends, color, play and listen to stories. There are many books that will help your child know what to expect. Some schools invite 4 year-olds to visit a Kindergarten class. Ask the staff at your school when your child can visit. Don't worry if your child cries during the first few days of Kindergarten. Most children feel much better after a few days.



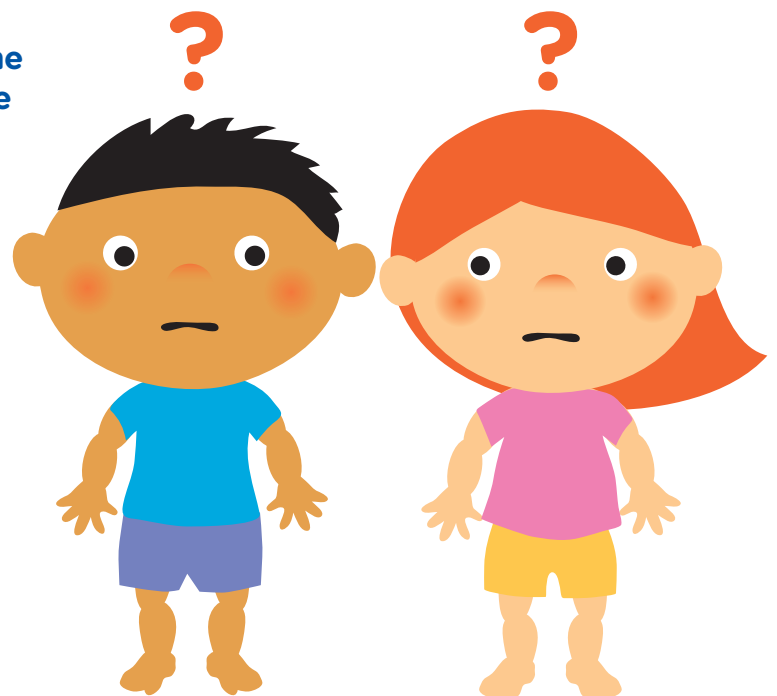
QUESTION: How can I help my child learn letters and numbers?

ANSWER: Your 4 year-old loves letters, numbers, books and talking. Practice counting with your child and help him or her recognize letters and their sounds. Most 4 year-olds learn the letters of their names first. You can make books and learning fun and exciting by reading to your child for 15 minutes each day!

QUESTION: Help! My child is asking about the difference between boys and girls and where babies come from. What should I do?

ANSWER: Explain the basic differences using simple words. Answer only what your child asks. Too much information may confuse them or be inappropriate for their age.

It is very important to help your child understand that “private parts” of his or her body should not be touched by any other person. Not even a close friend or relative should touch a child—except if a parent is helping their child take a bath or seeing why something hurts. A doctor may also check those parts of the body in a doctor’s office only if Mom or Dad is there.



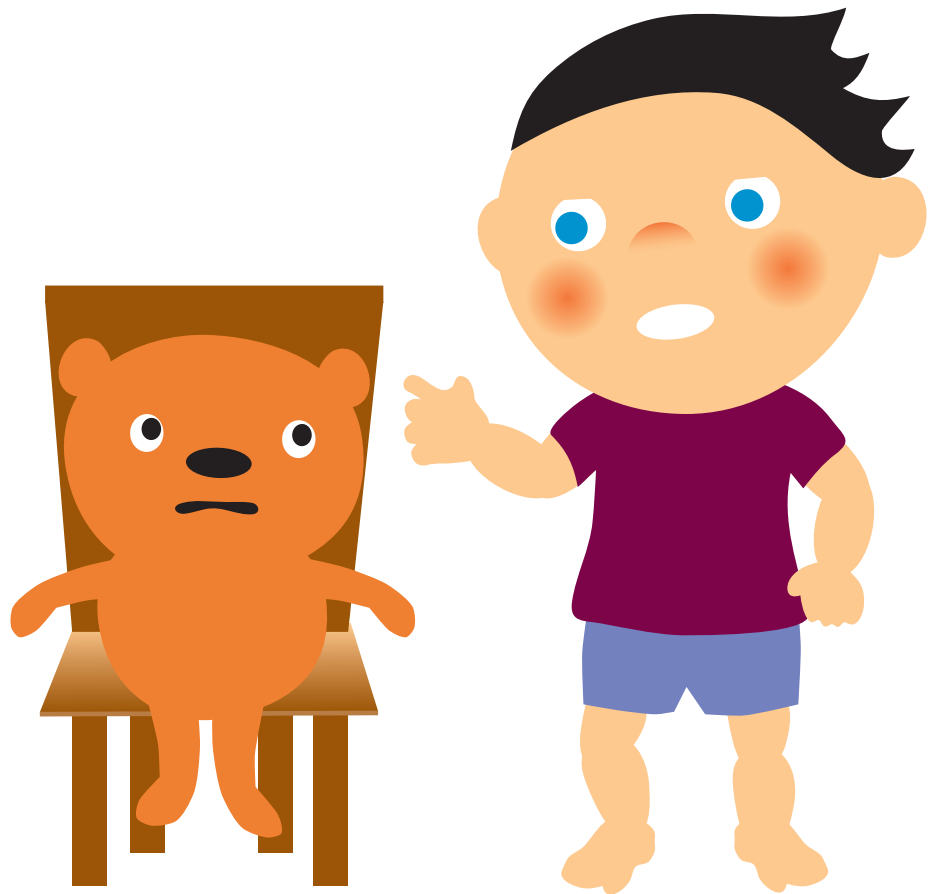
QUESTION: My 4 year-old's feelings are so intense. It seems like he or she can go from smiling to crying within seconds. Is this normal?

ANSWER: Yes. 4 year-olds have very powerful feelings and are not sure how to show them. When your child is feeling happy, there is no one in the world who could be happier. When your child is angry, he or she may say, "I hate you!" Your child needs you to help him or her find other words and other ways to talk about those angry feelings. Talking about feelings can help your child learn better ways to show those feelings.

4 year-olds are still learning that you can have two feelings at the same time. They may not understand that they can love you and be upset with you at the same time. Try to remind them that you still love them even when you are unhappy with their behavior. Remember, good children sometimes behave badly. This does not make them bad children.

QUESTION: My child is so bossy. What can I do?

ANSWER: Many 4 year-olds are bossy. Listen to how you talk to your child. Are you bossy? Try to use "please" and "thank you" when you are talking with your child. Hearing you use these polite words will help your child learn to be polite. When your child uses a polite word, show him or her how happy it makes you feel. Say, "I feel happy to do things for you when you say please!"



Try this!

When you are reading a story or watching T.V. with your child, ask your child how the characters in the story might be feeling. Or, "How would you feel if the same thing happened to you?" Talk with your child about how you would feel. Read books about feelings with your child. Ask a librarian for book ideas.

QUESTION: What are my child's friendships like?

ANSWER: Friends are becoming more and more important to your child. Friends help your child learn how people treat each other. 4 year-olds want to make their friends happy. They also want to be like their friends and may want to have the same kinds of clothes. Your child is getting more cooperative, but still needs help learning to be kind to others.

Before the First Day of School

- ✓ Call the school to find out when your child will begin Kindergarten.
- ✓ Ask for information to register your child.
- ✓ Ask to visit the kindergarten class with your child and meet the teacher before school begins.
- ✓ Find out about school breakfast and lunch programs.
- ✓ Show your child where the classroom, lunchroom, bathroom, and principal's office are located.
- ✓ Make sure your child is up-to-date on all immunizations.
- ✓ Review Traffic Safety rules with your child.
- ✓ Get the necessary school supplies (paper, pencils, notebook, backpack, etc...).
- ✓ Write your child's name on his or her backpack, lunch box and jacket.
- ✓ Continue reading to your child for 15 minutes or more every day.
- ✓ Visit your local library often.
- ✓ Keep practicing the following skills with your child:
 - Sounding out and recognizing letters
 - Counting numbers
 - Identifying shapes
 - Identifying opposites



The Night Before the First Day of School

- ✓ Read a book together before bedtime about going to school.
- ✓ Put your child to bed early so he or she is well rested. (This should be for ALL school nights.)
- ✓ Prepare your child's school clothes.
- ✓ Prepare a well-balanced dinner for your child.

Good nutrition and rest help children do better in school.

The First Day of School

- ✓ Wake up early together so the morning is not rushed.
- ✓ Make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast.
- ✓ Dress your child appropriately and make sure hair is combed and face is clean.
- ✓ You may want to take some pictures.
- ✓ Arrive at school on time.
- ✓ Review where and when you will pick your child up after school.
- ✓ Give a final hug and kiss.



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Safety Corner



It is important to have a conversation with your child about meeting strangers and avoiding potential dangers. Here are some ideas:

- **Talk openly about strangers.** Explain to your child that a stranger is anyone he does not know. He should never go anywhere or accept anything from strangers, even if the person seems friendly. Even though they are strangers, some people (for example, police officers) can be a source of help if the child is in danger.
- **Help your child identify places that can be trusted,** such as schools and homes of neighbors. Talk to your child about places to avoid, such as deserted areas and parking lots.
- **Discuss what your child should do if he is separated from you or his caregiver in a public place.** Make sure he knows he should go to a security guard or a store clerk and not leave the site. Teach your child your phone number; your child is now old enough to remember it.
- **Make safety part of your routine everyday life.** Practice what to do if a stranger approaches your child and asks for directions or asks for help in finding a lost pet. Talk to your child regularly to remind your child about safety.