

# Your Child at 4 Years

Talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

## What children do at this age



### Social/Emotional

- Enjoys doing new things
- Is more and more creative with make-believe play
- Would rather play with other children than by himself
- Cooperates with other children
- Plays "Mom" or "Dad"
- Often can't tell what's real and what's make-believe
- Talks about what she likes and what she is interested in

### Language/Communication

- Tells stories
- Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as correctly using "he" and "she"
- Can say first and last name
- Sings a song or says a poem from memory such as the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" or the "Wheels on the Bus"

### How you can help your child's development

- Play make-believe with your child. Let her be the leader and copy what she is doing.
- Suggest your child pretend play an upcoming event that might make him nervous, like going to preschool or staying overnight at a grandparent's house.
- Give your child simple choices whenever you can. Let your child choose what to wear, play, or eat for a snack. Limit choices to 2 or 3.
- During play dates, let your child solve her own problems with friends, but be nearby to help out if needed.
- Encourage your child to use words, share toys, and take turns playing games of one another's choice.
- Give your child toys to build imagination, like dress-up clothes, kitchen sets, and blocks.
- Use good grammar when speaking to your child. Instead of "Mommy wants you to come here," say, "I want you to come here."

**Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)**

- Names some colors and some numbers
- Understands the idea of counting
- Starts to understand time
- Remembers parts of a story
- Understands the idea of “same” and “different”
- Draws a person with 2 to 4 body parts
- Uses scissors
- Starts to copy some capital letters
- Plays board or card games
- Tells you what he thinks is going to happen next in a book

**Movement/Physical Development**

- Hops and stands on one foot up to 2 seconds
- Pours, cuts with supervision, and mashes own food
- Catches a bounced ball most of the time

**Act early by talking to your child’s doctor if your child:**

- Can’t jump in place
- Has trouble scribbling
- Shows no interest in interactive games or make-believe
- Ignores other children or doesn’t respond to people outside the family
- Resists dressing, sleeping, and using the toilet
- Doesn’t understand “same” and “different”
- Doesn’t use “me” and “you” correctly
- Doesn’t follow 3-part commands

**How you can help your child’s development**

- Use words like “first,” “second,” and “finally” when talking about everyday activities. This will help your child learn about sequence of events.
- Take time to answer your child’s “why” questions. If you don’t know the answer, say “I don’t know,” or help your child find the answer in a book, on the Internet, or from another adult.
- When you read with your child, ask him to tell you what happened in the story as you go.
- Say colors in books, pictures, and things at home. Count common items, like the number of snack crackers, stairs, or toy trains.
- Teach your child to play outdoor games like tag, follow the leader, and duck, duck, goose.
- Play your child’s favorite music and dance with your child. Take turns copying each other’s moves.

**Tell your child’s doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay for this age,** and talk with someone in your community who is familiar with services for young children in your area, such as your local public school. For more information, go to [www.cdc.gov/concerned](http://www.cdc.gov/concerned).