

Three Year-Olds

Starting to Ask “Why?”

Every child develops differently, but the following milestones can help you determine whether your child is gaining speech and language skills at an appropriate level for his or her age. Children typically do not master all items in a category until they reach the upper age range.

Language Comprehension

- ❖ Follows a three-step command
- ❖ Understands “one” and “all”
- ❖ Knows “in front” and “behind”
- ❖ Identifies “hard/soft/rough/smooth”
- ❖ Identifies circle and square
- ❖ Understands differences in meanings (e.g. stop-go, big-little, in-on)
- ❖ Is conscious of past and future
- ❖ Recognizes 1 to 3 colors

Language Expression

- ❖ Uses many sentences that have 4 or more words
- ❖ Uses compound sentences with “and”
- ❖ Frequently asks questions
- ❖ Uses nouns and verbs most frequently
- ❖ Uses pronouns “I, you, me” correctly
- ❖ Has expressive vocabulary of 800 to 1,200 or more words
- ❖ Tells two events in chronological order
- ❖ Uses “is” at beginning of questions
- ❖ Uses “are” with plural nouns (e.g. “boys are running”)
- ❖ Consistently uses regular plural forms (e.g. “two dogs”)
- ❖ Answers simple “who, what, where” questions

Speech

- ❖ Masters most sounds, but may have difficulty with: /l, r, s, z, sh, ch, y, v, th/
- ❖ People outside family usually understand child’s speech about 75% of the time
- ❖ Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words



Pragmatics

- ❖ Engages in longer dialogues
- ❖ Assumes the role of another person in play
- ❖ Requests permission
- ❖ Begins using language for fantasies, jokes, teasing
- ❖ Makes conversational repairs when listener has not understood what was said
- ❖ Tells short stories
- ❖ Begins to notice other people’s moods and feelings

Play

- ❖ Begins cooperative play and sharing
- ❖ Reenacts experiences such as a birthday party
- ❖ Uses one object to represent another (e.g. uses a stick as a fence or a phone)
- ❖ Increases use of dramatization of play
- ❖ Often silly in play and may do things wrong purposely
- ❖ Puts toys away
- ❖ Likes to dress up

