

3-5 Years

The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children

What the typical child might say and do:	What the typical child knows or thinks:	What you should say or do:	Cautions:
<p>Has a vocabulary of approximately 900 words by age 3; increases vocabulary to 1,500 to 2,000 words by age 5</p> <p>May count to 20 or more and can recognize most letters of the alphabet by age 5</p> <p>Uses increasingly complex sentences (including verb tenses, plural forms, prepositions, possessives, and contractions) to convey meaning (A 3-year-old may say: "I bringed home two toy mouses," while the 5-year-old could report: "I brought home two toy mice.")</p> <p>Can describe <i>who</i> did <i>what</i> to <i>whom</i> ("The Power Ranger made the bad guys give back the gold and go away.")</p>	<p>Develops gross and fine motor coordination; uses crayons or markers to color and prints own name by age 5</p> <p>Sees feelings as an "all-or-nothing" proposition</p> <p>Believes that a given event causes the same feelings in all people</p> <p>Bases judgments of "right" and "wrong" on "good" or "bad" consequences and not on intention</p> <p>Mixes wishful thinking and fact</p> <p>Understands time in a rudimentary way, but has difficulty distinguishing morning from afternoon or remembering days of the week</p>	<p>Establish rapport by playing a game or showing an interesting toy.</p> <p>Encourage the child to take the lead ("Let's play with these puppets. Choose one and say anything you like.") while setting firm limits regarding not hitting or breaking things ("You can hit the pillow, but you can't hit me.").</p> <p>Use short, concrete questions to help expand upon or clarify the child's concerns.</p> <p>Be friendly, positive, and reassuring.</p> <p>Convey your genuine concern for the child.</p>	<p>Don't expect the child to give you reliable, specific information.</p> <p>Don't expect the child to consistently describe <i>when</i> or <i>how often</i> something happened or to describe a traumatic event in any logical sequence.</p>

3-5 Years *(cont.)*

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<p>Asks about the meanings of words and the uses of various objects</p> <p>Rhymes words and remembers songs</p> <p>Recognizes some words on a page and “reads” familiar stories by age five</p> <p>Likes to make silly sounds; uses foul language to shock adults</p> <p>Is boastful</p> <p>Calls other children by mean or silly names</p> <p>Normal nonverbal communication includes being active, distractible, and wiggly; not sustaining eye contact; and sometimes falling down for no apparent reason</p>	<p>Doesn't fully understand kinship relationships, though terms (mother, uncle, grandmother) may be commonly used as labels</p> <p>Can remember pictures and events</p> <p>Notices discrepancies and when things are out of place</p> <p>Is eager for adult approval</p> <p>Describes others in global, egocentric, and subjective terms (“She’s nice cuz she gave me a sucker!”)</p> <p>Believes that s/he is the cause of the emotions or actions of others (“If I was a good girl, Mommy wouldn’t hurt me.”)</p>		

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	Likes the company of others, but can't always manage harmonious relationships		

Indicators of possible developmental problems:

Doesn't speak

Regresses to "baby-talk" or quits talking

Doesn't answer simple "who?" "what?" and "where?" types of questions

Repeats certain words/phrases (such as a TV commercial) to the exclusion of all other communication (echolalia)

Cannot be understood by persons outside of his/her family

Is not able to use brief (four-word) sentences to express self

Uses abnormal rhythmic patterns and/or vocal tones when speaking