

# Developmental Milestones

## A Guide for Parents



The  
**4<sup>th</sup>**  
Year

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

- enjoy tag, hide-and-seek and other games with simple rules
- like moderate “rough and tumble” play
- like to do things for himself
- know her age and the town where she lives
- act as though a doll or stuffed animal thinks and feels on its own

If you have questions about your child’s development or want to have your child tested,

- call your pediatrician
- the local health department
- the Make-A-Difference Information Network (They can help you find a testing location near your community.)  
1-800-332-6262
- the Parent Helpline (They can help you with questions about childrearing.)  
1-800-332-6378

Contact your county extension office to obtain other publications in this series. Additional resources on parenting are also available.

Joyce Powell  
Extension Assistant  
Human Development

Charles A. Smith, Ph.D  
Extension Specialist  
Human Development

*Thanks to Ann Murray and Susan Wanska for their assistance in the preparation of this publication series.*

*The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been synthesized from a variety of professional resources to help you appreciate your child’s progress. It is not a formal, standardized measurement tool.*

**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, Kansas**

L-837

March 1994

It is the policy of Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service that all persons shall have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and materials without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Kansas State University is an equal opportunity organization. These material may be available in alternative formats.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Marc A. Johnson, Director.

File Code: Human Development—2 CS2/98—10M; 5/96—3M; JR 3/94—5M; MD 4/91—10M; 9/91—10M

---

**H**ave you ever wondered how your child is growing and developing compared to other children of the same age? How do you know if your child is “on the right track”?

Your child is going through many physical and mental changes. Although no two children grow at the same rate, experts agree there are “normal” signs of development. This brochure will provide you with a checklist of important milestones in your child’s development during the fourth year of life.

It is a simple tool you can use to become aware of and appreciate the dramatic changes that are occurring in your child. Watch for these signs in your child over a one month period. (Even children have “bad days.”) Remember, each child is different and may learn and grow at a different rate. However, if your child cannot do many of the skills listed for his or her age group, you should consult your pediatrician. Several additional sources of information are listed on the back of this brochure.

You are the most important observer of your child’s development. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference.

---

## By 4 years of age does your child:

### Motor Skills

- feed herself (with little spilling)
- try to use a fork
- hold a pencil
- try to write name
- draw with the arm and not small hand movements
- draw a circle
- draw a face
- try to cut paper with blunt scissors
- sometimes unbutton buttons
- try to buckle, button, and lace, even though she probably needs help
- completely undress herself if wearing clothes with simple fasteners
- brush teeth with help
- build a tower of 7–9 blocks
- put together a simple puzzle of 4–12 pieces
- pour from a small pitcher
- use the toilet alone
- try to skip
- catch a bouncing ball
- walk downstairs using a handrail and alternating feet
- swing, starting by himself and keeping himself going

### Sensory and Thinking Skills

- recognize red, yellow, and blue
- understand taking turns and can do so without always being reminded
- understand “big,” “little,” “tall,” “short”
- want to know what will happen next
- sort by shape or color
- count up to 5 objects

- follow three instructions given at one time (“Put the toys away, wash your hands, and come eat.”)
- distinguish between the real world and the imaginary or pretend world
- identify situations that would lead to happiness, sadness, or anger

### Language and Social Skills

- have a large vocabulary and use good grammar often
- often talk about action in conversation (“go,” “do,” “make”)
- enjoy rhyming and nonsense words
- use regular past tenses of verbs (“pulled,” “walked”)
- use “a,” “an,” and “the” when speaking
- ask direct questions (“May I?” “Would you?”)
- want explanations of “why” and “how”
- relate a simple experience she has had recently
- understand “next to”
- separate from his parent for a short time without crying
- help clean up toys at home or school when asked to
- like to play “dress up”
- pretend to play with imaginary objects
- act out elaborate events which tell a story (as in serving an imaginary dinner or going on a “dragon hunt”)
- sometimes cooperate with other children
- often prefer playing with other children to playing alone, unless deeply involved in a solitary task
- change the rules of a game as he goes along
- try to bargain (“I’ll give you this toy if you’ll give me that one”)
- share when asked