

At a Glance

- Many 4-year-olds grow much taller and more coordinated by their fifth birthday.
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- Many kids are able to pay attention to an activity for 10 to 15 minutes by the end of the year.
 - Four-year-olds typically begin using more complicated sentences that combine more than one thought.

What are typical skills for 4-year-olds? This year most children develop many new skills very quickly. Check out these typical 4-year-old developmental milestones to know what you might be seeing by the end of this year. It will also help you know whether there are trouble spots to talk to the pediatrician about.

Physical Milestones

Children can put on close to five pounds and grow four inches this year. Eyesight continues to get better, too, so coordination improves. By the end of this year, most children can do these things:

Gross Motor Skills

- Control movement more easily; start, stop, turn and go around obstacles while running
- Log roll, do somersaults, skip and trot
- Get dressed with minimal help (zippers, snaps and buttons may still be a little hard)
- Throw and bounce a ball
- Jump over objects and climb playground ladders
- Pedal *and* steer a tricycle or bike

Fine Motor Skills

- Draw or copy basic shapes and crosses (this is a milestone known as “being able to cross the midline”)
- Write some letters
- Begin to use scissors purposefully
- Stack a tower at least 10 blocks high
- String beads or O-shaped cereal to make necklaces
- Pinch and shape clay or play-dough into recognizable objects

Cognitive Milestones

This year, children’s ability to think and learn goes beyond the basics of the world around them. They start thinking about and understanding things they can’t see or touch; you might notice your child starts to become “an idea man.” Most children are developing skills to:

- Understand the difference between real and make-believe
- Understand that pictures and symbols stand for real things
- Explore relationships between ideas, using words like *if* and *when* to express them
- Start thinking in logical steps, which means seeing the “how-tos” and consequences of things
- Get abstract ideas like “bigger,” “less,” “later,” “ago” and “soon”
- Put things in order such as from biggest to smallest, shortest to tallest
- Stick with an activity for 10 to 15 minutes

Language Milestones

Language development tends to explode this year. This may include developing a vocabulary of more than 1,000 words and using complicated sentences that combine more than one thought. Kids start asking who, what, why, when and where questions—and maybe even can answer some too. By the end of this year, most children can do these things:

- Sing silly songs, make up goofy words and start rhyming
- Follow simple, unrelated directions (“Go find your shoes and pick up that toy.”)
- Change speech patterns depending on who he’s having a conversation with, such as speaking in short sentences to a younger sibling
- Pronounce most sounds correctly, but still have trouble with *s*, *w* and *r* sounds
- Ask for the definition of unfamiliar words
- Make up stories and talk about what he’s thinking
- Argue, even though the argument might not be logical

Social and Emotional Milestones

Your child may be starting to develop his own unique personality. He may be more able to get along with peers and work out things that bother him through play. Most children can also:

- Share, cooperate, be helpful and take turns
- Start acting a little bossy and start tattling
- Enjoy telling silly jokes and find other things funny

- Begin telling small lies to get out of trouble, even though he knows it's wrong
- Do or say things he shouldn't to see what the reaction will be
- Have imaginary friends and play the same imaginary games over and over

Remember: Kids develop at different paces. Your child may gain some skills later than other kids or have some skills that are advanced for his age. If your child isn't meeting many of these milestones, consider speaking with [his doctor](#) to see if an [evaluation to look at his skills](#) is recommended. There are a number of ways you, your child's doctor and even his preschool can work together to help boost his skills.