

At a Glance

- Five-year-olds are very active—they typically hop, skip, jump and dance.
-
- Your five-year-old may begin playing with language to tell silly jokes.
 - Five-year-olds usually start understanding right and wrong and can be critical of those who don't follow the rules.

Are you wondering what kinds of skills 5-year-olds develop in preschool and kindergarten? This is a big year for learning to do new things. Get an idea of what to expect this year by checking out these developmental milestones for typical 5-year-olds. This list can help you identify if there are trouble spots to mention to your child's pediatrician.

Physical Milestones

Kids tend to be fairly active at this age and can run, hop, skip and jump without tripping over their own feet. Most 5-year-olds learn to do these things:

Gross Motor Skills

- Walk on tiptoes and heel-to-toe like on a balance beam
- Jump rope and pump legs to swing alone
- Stand and hop on each foot
- Catch a ball the size of a softball
- Start to move in different ways at the same time to do things like swim, dribble a basketball or dance

Fine Motor Skills

- Use one hand more than the other (known as "hand dominance")
- Hold a pencil using a tripod grip (two fingers and a thumb)
- Cut out basic shapes with scissors; may be able to cut a straight line
- Use a fork, spoon and knife easily
- Be able to wipe and wash after using the bathroom

Cognitive Milestones

Five-year-olds learn facts and begin to grasp some basic concepts. By the time they turn 6, many children can do things like these:

- Recognize and name colors and basic shapes
- Know the letters of the alphabet and letter sounds
- Recite their name, address and phone number
- Understand basic concepts about print (such as knowing which way the pages go and how words are read left to right and top to bottom)
- Know that stories have a beginning, middle and end
- Count groups of objects up to 10 and recite numbers to 20
- Stick with an activity for 15 minutes and finish a short project
- Make plans about how to play, what to build or what to draw

Language Milestones

Most five-year-old kids understand and can use thousands of words, usually in sentences five to eight words long. Many 5-year-olds have the language development needed to:

- Use words to argue and try to reason with people; *because* is an oft-used word
- Use most plurals, pronouns and tenses correctly
- Tell stories, jokes and riddles; may understand simple puns
- Use language to talk about opposites and compare things (“That black cat is smaller than the white one.”)
- Talk about things that are going to happen as well as things that have already happened
- Follow simple multi-step directions

By the end of kindergarten, most children can recognize common words, such as *the* and *me*, and they can begin reading three-letter words, like *hat*.

Social and Emotional Milestones

From ages five to six, children’s social and emotional development tends to go beyond making friends and expressing feelings. They start understanding more complicated things like right and wrong. Many 5-year-olds are also likely to do these things:

- Have an interest in behaving like their friends and wanting their approval
- Begin to prefer same-gender friendships; become jealous of other people spending time with “their” friends
- Follow the rules most of the time; may criticize kids who don’t follow the rules
- Enjoy being on display; will sing, dance or be silly to get attention

- Want your approval and to be taken seriously; may throw a tantrum or get angry if they thinks they're not being listened to
- Start to see why it's helpful to share and get along with other kids

Keep in mind that kids develop at their own pace and that your child may have skills that aren't on this list. On the other hand, if your 5-year-old hasn't met a number of these milestones, you may want to take the opportunity to [speak with his doctor](#) about an [evaluation of your child's skills](#). Knowing the areas where they need some support is helpful information to have as they enter kindergarten.