

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD

2-3 YEARS

MILESTONES OF
DEVELOPMENT

Big muscle movement
Small muscle movement
Talking and understanding
Social
Thinking



Act for kids

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Introduction

Parenting a two to three year old can be an enormous joy. Your little one becomes more nimble as their fine motor skills improve. They also begin to develop creative skills as they learn to express themselves through drawing.

Raising a child at this new life stage can also come with a new set of challenges. By now your little one can usually make themselves clearly understood through speech, which can lead to some embarrassing situations in the supermarket. Your child will also be able to express their feelings and independence with greater determination. While this is a good thing and entirely normal, you'll begin to understand what's meant by the phrase 'terrible twos'.

This booklet is part of the *Understanding your child* series, published by Act for Kids.

For more information about child development, or to get additional copies, use the contact details on the back of this booklet.

Copyright © 2003 Child Development Network. Reproduced with permission. The milestone checklists provided in this booklet are to assist with monitoring your child's development. The majority of children will achieve these milestones by the time they reach the age mentioned. All children develop at different rates. Some children are slower than others (developmentally delayed) but catch up with time. Other children, however, may have an underlying problem that causes their delayed development, and they may not catch up. It is important for these children to get as much treatment (early intervention) as possible. So if you are concerned about any aspect of your child's development, see your doctor. If in doubt, it is better to have your concerns checked than to 'wait and see'.

Big muscle movement

By 3 years

✓ An average child can:

- walk heel-to-toe.
- stand on one leg.
- jump off a step with both feet together.
- climb up stairs, one foot at a time.

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- unsteady balance – can't balance on one foot.
- weakness, poor quality movement (like being clumsy, falling often).

Small muscle movement

By 3 years

✓ An average child can:

- copy (draw) a circle, cross, horizontal stroke.
- thread six beads.
- build a tower of eight or more blocks.
- use scissors to cut along a line.
- use a fork and spoon.
- undo a button.

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- unable to copy (draw) lines, crosses, circles
- no ability with scissors (although ability can depend on experience).
- unable to use cutlery.
- unable to undo a button.

Talking and understanding

By 3 years

✓ An average child can:

- name objects and body parts.
- talk without just repeating what you say.
- be understood almost all of the time.
- use different types of words correctly.
- define things by use (house, key, etc.).
- give their first name.
- follow three-step instructions.
- identify two colours.

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- persistent copying in talking (such as repeating parts of movies, etc.).
- mostly can't be understood.
- limited grammar or vocabulary.
- limited content, interest or variation in the language.
- can't follow two or three step instructions.
- still need to talk to them in simplified, 'baby' language.



Social

By 3 years

✓ An average child can:

- demonstrate clear, imaginative play involving people.
- wash and dry hands.
- put on clothing.
- play interactive games.
- give their first name on request.
- use fork and spoon together at the table.
- name their own sex.
- play with other children, with play beginning to interact around common interest. Turn-taking and sharing is beginning.
- separate from parents without crying.
- describe their own simple feelings like happy, sad.

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- no interest in learning how to dress themselves.
- no awareness/response to name.
- no interest in learning how to feed themselves.
- unable to name their own sex.
- no interest in developing interactive play skills with other children.
- no apparent awareness of their own feelings.
- no interest in helping in social/household activities.
- play is mechanical and repetitive with little change, imagination or human content.

Thinking

By 3 years

✓ An average child can:

- play including imaginary objects.
- draw a face with crude features.
- recognise a number.
- repeat back two or three numbers.
- understand concepts of bigger and smaller.
- recognise money.

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- they show little imagination.
- no understanding of using a pencil beyond random scribble.
- no understanding of what numbers mean beyond copying counting.
- no awareness of money (although this depends on experience).





Act for Kids is a for-purpose organisation that delivers evidence-led professional therapy and support services to young people and their families.

We help keep kids safe, heal from trauma and lead happy lives through professional counselling, parenting programs, resources and advocacy.

For more information, visit **actforkids.com.au** or phone **1300 228 000**.

Child development resources

www.bubhub.com.au

www.cd.net.au

www.cyh.com

www.raisingchildren.net.au

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