

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD

4-5
YEARS
MILESTONES OF
DEVELOPMENT

Big muscle movement
Small muscle movement
Talking and understanding
Social
Thinking



Act for kids

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Introduction

Each moment is precious when parenting a child of four to five years. Soon they will be at school, journeying out into the world. At this age expression of curiosity continues; they are sponges soaking up more information than you imagine. "Why?" and "How?" are their favourite questions. Teach me, show me, and help me learn are the unspoken meanings underpinning these simple queries.

As your child continues to develop a sense of autonomy, watching them make mistakes can be very difficult – remember it is a part of learning – within the bounds of safety of course! Encouraging your child when they are struggling to succeed is just as important as celebrating their triumphs.

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 5 years

✓ An average child can:

- walk easily on a narrow line.
- run lightly on their toes.
- be active and skilful in climbing, sliding, swinging, etc.
- skip on alternate feet.
- stand on one foot for eight to 10 seconds, right and left.
- hop on one foot 10 times or more, right and left.
- catch a ball in their hands, throw and kick easily.
- ride a bike with/without trainer wheels.

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- they lose balance easily when moving.
- awkward and uncoordinated with running, stumbling, frequently tripping over.
- fears and/or avoids playground equipment.
- not able to stand on one foot more than two to three seconds.
- not able to hop on one foot more than four or five times (either leg) and/or able to hop on one foot only.
- not able to catch, throw or kick a ball.
- not able to pedal a tricycle or a bike with trainer wheels.



Small muscle movement

By 5 years

✓ An average child can:

- thread a large needle.
- copy (draw) basic shapes (triangle, circle, lines).
- begin learning to write letters (like their name).
- show more detailed drawings, like windows in the house, curtains, etc.
- show improved scissor skills (cutting out simple shapes).
- use a knife and fork together.
- usually have a clear hand preference before starting school.

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- unable to thread using a large needle.
- unable to copy (draw) basic shapes (triangle, circle, lines).
- unable to copy letters that are recognisable.
- not drawing simple pictures.
- difficulty using a pencil and scissors.
- no clear hand preference (where it affects performance in everyday activities).



Talking and understanding

By 5 years

✓ An average child can:

- hold a long, sensible conversation.
- make few grammatical errors.
- understand opposites.
- understand similarities between objects.
- understand prepositions (like in, out, beside) and personal pronouns (like I, you, he, she).

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- regular trouble with finding individual words.
- often makes grammatical mistakes.
- unable to respond to questions (like what, why).
- can't understand or explain meanings of common words.
- mistakes with grammar, tense, personal pronouns or prepositions.
- concerns from pre-school teachers about whether the child is able to understand.
- unable to repeat longer sentences (eight words or more).

Social

By 5 years

✓ An average child can:

- give their home address (number, street).
- use a knife and fork.
- fully dress and undress except laces and difficult buckles.
- solve social problems like negotiating, sharing, avoiding conflict.

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- not independent with eating and dressing.
- unable or not interested in participating in group games and activities.
- no problem-solving skills if they don't get their own way.

Thinking

By 5 years

✓ An average child can:

- identify coins and notes.
- count 10–20 objects.
- understand concepts of morning, afternoon.
- compare objects (like faster, slower).

✗ Signs of possible problems include:

- unaware of money, number and time concepts.
- play is different in quality than their friends.
- concerns about school readiness.



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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