



Early Learning Matters

Because parents are their children's first, best teachers.



Ages and Stages

Energetic and imaginative best describes four-year-olds. They are able to learn new words quickly, and use them in chatting with you, telling you jokes and wild stories.

4 Years

Ideas for Parents

Books for Parents

- Your Baby and Child, From Birth to Age Five, Penelope Leach
- Caring for Your Baby & Young Child, Birth to Age Five, American Academy of Pediatrics, Steven P. Shevlov, ed.

Books for Children

- Baby!Talk!, Penny Gentieu
- Baby's Colors, Neil Ricklen
- Baby's First Words, Lars Wik
- Farm Animals, Phoebe Dunn
- Goodnight Moon, Margaret Wise Brown
- Moo, Baa, La La La, Sandra Boynton

- Read aloud each day and encourage your child to help you tell the story.
- Talk about reading. Show your child that words are everywhere: grocery labels, restaurant menus, department store signs, etc.
- Encourage your child to play with words by providing old coupons, junk mail, newspaper ads, and old cereal boxes.
- Ask your child to deliver short messages to family members.
- Say nursery rhymes and finger plays together.
- Make play dough, play follow the leader.
- Cut out magazine pictures of different shapes, colors, or animals.
- Talk about things being in, on, under, behind, beside, etc.
- Pretend to walk like various animals.
- Sort and count everything in sight like silverware, socks, rocks.
- Teach your child the correct use of the telephone.
- Let your child help you plan activities and make lists for groceries, errands, etc.



Stages for Development

Mental Development

- Can place objects in a line from largest to smallest
- Can recognize some letter if taught and may be able to print name
- Recognizes familiar words in simple books or signs (STOP sign)
- Understands the concepts of tallest, biggest, same, more, on, in, under, and above
- Counts 1-7 object out loud
- Understands order of daily routines (breakfast before lunch, lunch before dinner, dinner before bedtime)
- Speaks fairly complex sentences. "The baby ate the cookie before I could put it on the table."
- Enjoys singing simple songs, rhymes, and nonsense words
- Adapts language to listener's level of understanding. To baby sister: "Daddy go bye bye." To Mother: "Daddy went to the store to buy food."
- Learns names, address, and phone number if taught
- Asks and answers who, what, when, why, where questions
- Continues 1 activity for 10-15 minutes
- Names 6-8 colors and 3 shapes
- Follows two unrelated directions: "Put your milk on the table and get your coat on."

Physical Development

- weight: 27-50 pounds
- height: 37-46 inches
- uses a spoon, fork, and dinner knife skillfully
- needs 10-12 hours sleep each night
- dresses self without much help
- walks a straight line
- hops on 1 foot
- pedals and steers a tricycle skillfully
- jumps over objects 5-6 inches high
- runs, jumps, hops, skips around obstacles with ease
- stacks 10 or more blocks
- forms shapes and objects out of clay or play dough
- threads small beads on a string
- catches, bounces, and throws a ball easily

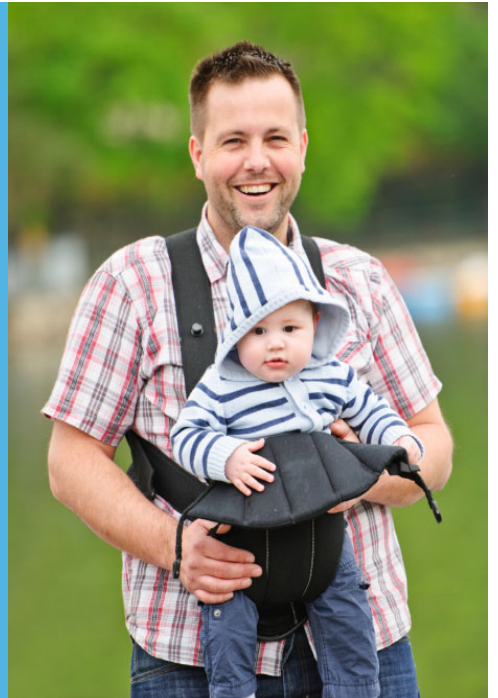
Social and Emotional Development

- Takes turns and shares (most of the time); may still be bossy
- Understands and obeys simple rules (most of the time)
- Changes the rules of a game as she goes along
- Likes to talk and carries on elaborate conversations
- Persistently asks why; may name call, tattletale freely
- Enjoys showing off and bragging about possessions
- Fearful of the dark and monsters
- Begins to understand danger- at times can become quite fearful
- Has difficulty separating make-believe from reality
- Lies sometimes to protect self and friends, but doesn't truly understand the concept of lying – imagination often gets in the way

Your child is unique. His or her learning and growth rates differ from other children the same age. If, however, your child is unable to do many of the skills listed for this age group, you may wish to talk to an early childhood specialist. You are the best person to notice developmental problems, if any, because of the time you spend with your child. If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference. If you have questions about your child's development or want to have your child assessed, contact:

- Your pediatrician or health care professional
- Area Education Agency—Early Childhood Special Education Department
- Iowa Compass 1-800-779-2001

Contact your county Extension office to obtain other publications about children, parenting, and family life or visit the ISU Extension Web site at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/> ..



**Written by Lesia Oesterreich,
extension family life specialist.
Edited by Muktha Jost. Graphic
design by Valerie Dittmer King**

The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been compiled from a variety of professional resources to help you understand your child's overall growth. It is not a standardized measurement tool.