

Your  
3 to 3 1/2  
Year-Old  
Child



School Readiness Program  
Provided by the WIC Program and First 5 LA

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# Making Friends!

**I learn new words every day.** I am learning shapes, colors, letters and numbers.

**I am learning to make friends.** I used to like playing **near** other children. Now I like playing **with** other children.

**My imagination is still growing.** My friends and I like to pretend.



**I am learning right from wrong.** I will learn to behave appropriately with your help. This kind of teaching is called discipline.

**I use the toilet, but I still have accidents.** Please be patient with me.

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**Help me get ready for Kindergarten.** Read to me every day. Talk and sing in every language you know. Have fun with me!

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## Try this!

When your child points at something and names it, he or she is showing interest. Respond with the name, but add new information and words. For example, if your child says, “Big dog!” you can answer, “Yes! That is a big, black dog. See, it is the same color as that small black cat, but the dog is big and the cat is small.” Your answer teaches them about colors, about size, about animals and about making comparisons.

**QUESTION: Do I need to worry about how my child is talking? My older child talked much better at this age.**

**ANSWER: Every child is different.** Sometimes younger brothers and sisters do not need to talk as much because their older brothers and sisters talk for them. Most 3 year-olds use plurals (words that mean more than one, for example, “dogs” or “cats”). 3 year-olds use pronouns (he, she, you, I, him, her), but will sometimes make mistakes. 3 year-olds are starting to use words that end in “-ing” like playing, running and eating. They learn to talk about what is happening now (present) before they learn to talk about what has happened (past) or will happen (future). Many 3 year-olds ask questions starting with who, what, where, when and why. Again, every child is different and learns to talk at their own pace. If you are concerned, be sure to talk to your child’s doctor.

**QUESTION: How can I help my child learn more words?**

**ANSWER:** When you respond to something your child says to you, you are teaching your child that he or she is important. Your child will want to speak more and learn more words. Listening shows respect. It also teaches your child that it is important to take turns talking in conversations. **HINT: Put down your phone.**

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## Here are some games you can play

### Hungry for Learning

Food is a great way to teach your child about shapes, colors and numbers. Talk about the shape and color of the food. Does your child like **square** or **rectangle** brown graham crackers? Does your child want a sandwich cut into **2 triangles** or **4 squares**? Cut the food and count with them. Does your child want 2, 3, or 4 crackers?

What shape are the crackers? If your child has 4 crackers, count the crackers with them. After your child has eaten 1 cracker, ask how many are left. Your child probably will not be able to tell you, but you can count the crackers together.

### I Spy With My Little Eye

This is a great game to play with your child in a waiting room or restaurant. Look around you. Choose something that you know they know the word for and start to describe it. For example, if you choose a book you could say, “I spy with my little eye something that has pages in it.” Let your child guess. Keep giving clues until your child guesses correctly. Use words like **under, on, behind** and **in**. “I spy with my little eye something that is **on** the table.” As they begin to learn colors and shapes, you can play this game with **colors** and **shapes**.

### Treasure Hunt

Go on a **blue** hunt, a **red** hunt, a **circle** hunt or a **square** hunt. For example, you can say, “We’re going on a square hunt, we’re going on a square hunt. Find something square!” Your child will amaze you with what he or she finds: squares on the sidewalk, square windows, square crackers, square tables and square books.



**QUESTION: My child says “dat” instead of “that.” How can I teach my child how to say words correctly?**

**ANSWER:** Some sounds are very hard for children to say. Many 5 year-olds still have trouble with the “TH” sound, the “R” sound and the “L” sound. When your child says “dat,” you can respond by saying, “Oh, I see. You want THAT. THAT is a book.” This way you are teaching your child that you understand what they are saying and you are also teaching your child how to say the word correctly.

**Try this!**

Use “please” and “thank you” when you are talking with your child. Hearing you use these polite words will help your child learn to be polite. When your child uses a polite word, show him or her how happy it makes you feel. Remember that it takes time for children to learn to be polite. Keep encouraging them.

**QUESTION: I need advice on how to discipline my child. Please help!**

**ANSWER:** Some parents find that time-out is a way to discipline their child. Time-out helps a child learn limits in a safe way. Time-out is best when saved for the most difficult behaviors like hitting, biting or temper tantrums. It teaches a child that he or she must control those behaviors. Time-out also gives the parent time to calm down and think about how to respond to the child in a way that will teach them good behavior. Here is how to make time-out work best:



- 1) Pick a safe place for your child’s time-out. Do not put your child in a dark place or lock the door. The purpose is for your child to calm down. If your child is frightened, he or she will not calm down as easily.
- 2) Tell your child about time-out before you use it. You could say, “If you have trouble keeping your hands to yourself around other people, I will take you to a safe place to be alone until you are ready to come back to the group.”
- 3) Time-out should not last more than one minute for each year of your child’s age. A three year-old should not be in time-out for more than 3 minutes.
- 4) Time-out is not a punishment. Time-out is a chance for your child to get back into control of his or her feelings and actions.

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**QUESTION: How important is it for my child to be around other children?**

**ANSWER:** Your 3 year-old needs to be around other children. This is a great age to meet other families with children at a park, or for your child to go to preschool. This is the age when children begin to make friends, but they need help to learn to treat each other kindly. During this year, your child’s games will become more and more complicated. Your child and their friends will play different characters. One child may play a firefighter, another child may play a teacher and another may play a cat. They might create a play world where the firefighter rescues the teacher and the cat from a tree. By pretending, they are learning about social relationships and friends. This is an important skill to help prepare them for school.

**QUESTION: What should I do if my child is not getting along with other children?**

**ANSWER:** In any group of children, there will be times when the children do not agree. 3 year-olds are just learning what behaviors help them get along with other children. They are old enough to begin learning to share, but it will not always be easy. They are not old enough to know how to solve problems on their own. Help them think of solutions, but let them try to figure out which solution will work best. When they pick a solution, they will try harder to make that solution work. If a child is not cooperating and is acting in a way that is dangerous or might hurt another child, take that child out of the group for a few minutes. Sometimes just interrupting the dangerous behavior helps them learn how to behave better.

**QUESTION: How will I know if my 3 year-old needs extra help?**

**ANSWER:** Talk to your doctor as soon as possible if your child does any of these things:

- Gets scared very easily
- Fights often
- Has a very hard time being separated from you
- Is not interested in other children
- Does not respond to other people
- Does not pretend
- Seems unhappy a lot
- Does not show a lot of different feelings

**QUESTION: How important is it for my child to run and climb?**

**ANSWER:** Your 3 to 3 1/2 year-old needs a chance to climb and run every day. This helps them grow strong and healthy. Try to find somewhere safe for them to run. Children this age are beginning to enjoy more structured games like Tag, London Bridge, Ring Around the Rosy or Duck, Duck, Goose. Your library has books and media of children’s games that can help you learn them.



For children ages 2-5 years, it is recommended to limit screen time to no more than 1 hour per day of educational media. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.

Parents who keep the TV on or focus on their phones miss opportunities to interact with their children and help them learn.

**HINT: Put down your phone.**

**Safety Corner**



**Helmet Safety**

Children this age like to ride tricycles, bicycles, scooters and skateboards.

- When riding any of these, your child always needs to wear a well-fitting helmet.
- The helmet should have a sticker on it saying that it meets standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).
- Take your child to the store when buying a helmet to be sure it fits.
- If you have a used helmet, be sure to adjust the straps so it fits your child.



**First 5 LA**  
First 5 LA is a child advocacy and grant making organization created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues in programs for improving the lives of children from prenatal through age 5 in Los Angeles County. First 5 LA champions health, education and safety causes concerning young children and families. For more information, please visit [www.first5la.org](http://www.first5la.org).



**The WIC Program**  
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