

A Child at Different Ages

Children grow up very quickly. They always seem to be changing! Sometimes it can be difficult to keep up with them. As the child grows it develops physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Being aware of how they grow and develop can help us as we plan for their care and comfort in our classrooms. It can also prepare us to plan and present better lessons and activities.

DEVELOPMENT

Children develop skills in five main areas of development:

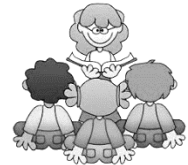
1. **Cognitive Development**

This is the child's ability to learn and solve problems. For example, this includes a two-month-old baby learning to explore the environment with hands or eyes or a five-year-old learning how to do simple math problems.



2. **Social and Emotional Development**

This is the child's ability to interact with others, including helping themselves and self-control. Examples of this type of development would include: a six-week-old baby smiling, a ten-month-old baby waving bye-bye, or a five-year-old boy knowing how to take turns in games at school.



3. **Speech and Language Development**

This is the child's ability to both understand and use language. For example, this includes a 12-month-old baby saying his first words, a two-year-old naming parts of her body, or a five-year-old learning to say "feet" instead of "foots".



4. **Fine Motor Skill Development**

This is the child's ability to use small muscles, specifically their hands and fingers, to pick up small objects, hold a spoon, turn pages in a book, or use a crayon to draw.



5. **Gross Motor Skill Development**

This is the child's ability to use large muscles. For example, a six-month-old baby learns how to sit up with some support, a 12-month-old baby learns to pull up to a stand holding onto furniture, and a five-year-old learns to skip.



INFANTS, TODDLERS, & EARLY CHILDHOOD

BIRTH - 2 YEARS

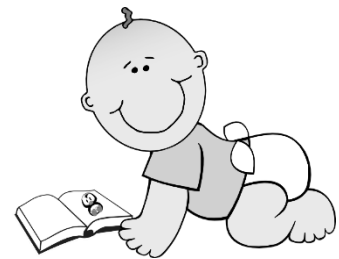
The most rapid growth happens in the first two years of a child's life, after this growth slows down. The infant, completely dependent on others, gains strength, becomes more mobile, and increases in independence. The child's vision improves and he becomes increasingly interested in lights, color, and using simple art materials as well as various sounds or sound effects. Children at this age begin to show an interest in television or hand-held devices.

Toddlers have increasing control over basic gross- and fine-motor skills. Interest in gross motor activity increases with newly found physical strength and basic coordination. Toddlers especially enjoy balancing, climbing, running, jumping, throwing, catching, playing with sand, or pushing and pulling wheeled objects.

Using their fine motor skills, toddlers can manage simple screwing actions, and can use simple one- or two-turn wind-up mechanisms provided they are of low tension. Smaller buttons or snaps may be difficult for these children to manipulate, but they can use large hooks, buttons, and buckles.

Development

- Changing rapidly with increasing age
- Learning about themselves and close family
- Learning language (hearing and then speaking)
- Learning to move around, crawl, and finally walk
- Learning to follow simple commands
- Learning to trust



In the Classroom/Nursery:

- Create a positive atmosphere
- Sing songs to the children
- Clap hands together
- Repeat words and then short phrases
- May want to have soft music in classroom
- Children this age don't participate well in groups
- Children this age enjoy individual, independent play with adult watching or participating
- The classroom needs many helpers/assistants

Spiritual Messages they need to hear:

- You are loved.
- God loves you.
- God loves your Mommy and Daddy.

TODDLERS, AGE 2 - 3

Once pretend play is established, 2-year-olds can perform social roles like mommy, daddy, or baby. Role taking becomes a bigger part of social pretend play, and their pretend play becomes more elaborate. Two-year-olds can now engage in true construction play. Eventually, the 3-year-old will show greater interest in structured games. Gender preferences also become more evident. Girls typically choose dolls, household props, dress-up activities, and art materials, while boys tend to play more with blocks and small vehicle toys, and will engage in more aggressive or rough-and-tumble play.



These children progress considerably in their gross-motor skills. They can tiptoe and balance on one foot, hop, climb and slide on play structures with ease, kick or catch a large ball thrown from a short distance, and throw and aim at short distances. They now have the fine-motor skills to take on the challenge of more complex construction play, piecing together smaller puzzle pieces, painting, pasting, and other art activities. When creating art, they are more interested in the process rather than the final product.

Development

- Exploring and learning about the world around them
- Often explore things by trying to put them in their mouths (be careful!)
- Developing large motor skills (leg and upper arms)
- Perfecting walking
- Running and jumping
- Climbing
- Talking
- Learning to use complete sentences
- Lots of questions and answers
- Learning shapes, colors, names of things

In the Classroom/Nursery:

- Children this age enjoy individual play, side-by-side in a room with others
- Blocks, simple puzzles, dolls, stuffed animals, balls
- Can do some small group activities for short periods of time

Spiritual Messages they Need to Hear:

- God Loves you
- God loves your family
- God made everything
- Jesus loves you
- We can Pray
- God is...(Good/ Truthful/ Caring)

EARLY CHILDHOOD, AGE 3 – 4

The child of this age group has a narrow world. They are mainly familiar with things, and people at home. These children have many fears and uncertainties which makes them vulnerable. Until they begin going to school, their vocabulary is limited, as is their attention span. Because they have a short attention span, they need to change their activities often, with much variety.



At this age, the child's heart is beating much faster than an average adult. A 3-4-year-old, has a resting heart rate of 80 to 120 beats per minute, while the average adult averages to 60 to 100 beats per minute. This makes the child very active! Children in preschool need a lot of physical exercise and will get restless if sitting too long. Though the child can be moving a lot, they can see, hear, and understand a lot of what is being said around them.

Development

- Learning how they relate to their family (and to people outside of their family)
- Learning to tell stories of their own, using more than one sentence or thought
- Learning to separate from family or home for short, predictable periods of time
- Learning numbers in sequence and the alphabet
- Very concrete in their thinking, can't understand abstract words or thoughts (beauty, peace, love, harmony)
- Perfecting large motor skills (legs and upper arms)
 - a) *Running, Jumping, Climbing, Dancing, Hopping, Marching*
 - b) *Standing on one foot/ balancing, Walking up and down stairs*
 - c) *Kicking a ball, throwing a ball*
- Developing fine motor skills (hand and fingers)
- Early coloring, Finger-painting
- Working with clay / Play-Doh,
- Early writing and tracing skills, very early drawing
- Very early work with things like scissors and glue (with lots of supervision!)

In the Classroom/Nursery:

- Use ordinary words that the child will understand
- Teach new words and their meanings
- Don't speak too long. Give short commands.
- Children learn by following. Have children repeat words and/or actions after you.
- Lesson a child's fears by being calm. Don't be agitated, even if it seems the child isn't listening.

- Children in this age group enjoy these types of play:
 - a) *imagining things and “pretend” play, (at this age the child can’t differentiate reality from fantasy and has a very vivid imagination)*
 - b) *playing in groups of 2 or 3 children their own age and being in larger groups*
 - c) *exploring new sounds, textures, colors, smells, tastes*
 - d) *sorting by color, shape, size, and similarities*
 - e) *Songs with hand and finger motions*

- Bible Comprehension
 - a) Able to listen to and understand short Bible Stories
 - b) Able to remember main person in story
 - c) Able to remember and repeat a few main points in story

Spiritual Messages they Need to Hear:

- God loves and cares about you and your family (mother/father/brothers/sisters/etc)
- God made everything including you.
- You are special and unique (and valuable to God and others.)
- God hears our Prayers.
- God is... (Dependable, Trustworthy, Always Good)
- There is a difference between Right and Wrong

*"Children are innocent and love justice, while most adults are wicked and prefer mercy."
- G.K. Chesterton*

BEGINNING ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

CHILDREN, AGE 4-7



The child of this age group is beginning to widen his/her horizons. At this age they will likely start school which will further their social and emotional development. They will learn to sit for longer periods of time and learn to better interact with other children. School will further help develop their speech and vocabulary as they will be hearing words which were not spoken around their home.

These children further master gross- and fine-motor skills. They enjoy frequent trips outside to run, climb, hop, skip, and chase. They are learning to ride small bicycles, first with and then without training wheels. These children are much more able to cut with scissors, paste, trace, draw, color, and string beads than 3-year-olds. They also have enough dexterity and coordination to start using a computer keyboard.

Drama and pretend play are at their peak. These children like to invent complex and dramatic make-believe scenarios. They can build upon each other's play themes, create and coordinate several roles in an elaborate scenario, and better understand story lines. Many of these children still have difficulty understanding the differences between fantasy and reality. For example, children of this age may believe that monsters are real. They enjoy stepping into roles of power, like a parent, doctor, policeman, lion, or superhero, which helps them to better understand these roles, to make them less scary, or to fulfill wishes and express a broad range of emotions. As their cognitive and fine-motor skills improve, they begin to desire objects with more realistic detail, yet they still are not very concerned about mirroring reality.

Development

- Learning how they relate to God, to family members, and to other people in the world
- Learning more and more about the world (outside of home) and what it is like
- Begin asking many questions about everything as they learn
- Learning to separate from family members for extended periods of time in a day
- Learning new skills to help take care of themselves when away from family
- Building confidence in their new abilities
- Making friends (outside of family members and other familiar people)
- Learning to read, but usually not yet “fluent” readers (referred to as “Pre-Readers”)
- Learning to write name well
- Learning to write all of the letters

- Learning to read, write, and copy individual words and short sentences or phrases
- Learning the fundamentals of spelling
- Learning about numbers and arithmetic
- Counting numbers, and learning to write numbers (up to 10, 100, and 1000+)
- Learning to do Addition and Subtraction
- Early mathematical word problems
- Perfecting large motor skills (legs and upper arms)
- Perfecting fine motor skills (hand and fingers)

In the Classroom:

- Teach new words and their meanings
- Don't speak too long.
- Teach one matter/ one truth at a time.
- Have children repeat what you want them to remember.

- Children in this age group enjoy these types of play:
 - a) *Creating objects with clay / Play-Doh*
 - b) *Songs with more and more complex hand and finger motions*
 - c) *imagining things and "pretend" play*
 - d) *playing in progressively larger groups of children for longer periods of time*
 - e) *discovering more about sounds, textures, colors, smells, tastes*
 - f) *Working with paint, colors, markers, glue, scissors, string, yarn etc.*
 - g) *Playing simple instruments: drums, cymbals, bells, etc. (Usually very loudly!)*
 - h) *Singing familiar songs as a group*
 - i) *Dancing, marching, and moving to music*
 - j) *Simple games that require some new skill*

- Bible Comprehension
 - a) Able to listen and understand short Bible stories.
 - b) Able to recall main events and characters.
 - c) Able to acting out stories and re-telling stories.
 - d) Able to copy simple words from Bible verse or story.
 - e) Able to draw simple pictures, in reference to lesson. (Tower, stars, harp etc)
 - f) Able to repeat and memorize short phrases and Bible Verses.
 - g) With Timeline, better able to understand how stories go together historically
 - h) Learning to pray individually and with others.

Spiritual Messages they Need to Hear:

- God loves you and knows you.
- God loves and knows everyone. (Family, friends, neighbors.)
- God made everything perfectly.
- You are valuable to God and to others.
- God hears our Prayers.
- Characters of God. God is... (Dependable, Trustworthy, Always Good etc.)
- There is a difference between Right and Wrong
- God has been involved with us through history.
- God has a plan for the future.
- Jesus is God's Son.
- All people sin (We choose to do things that we know are wrong/bad).
- Reassure child that we all make mistakes. Mistakes are not the same as "sins."
- Jesus came to pay for all our sins.
- Because of what Jesus did for us, we can live with Him forever.
- We can accept Jesus as our Savior.

"When our children see us clinging to the promises of God, they will grow up Trusting in His goodness. If we fail as adults in praying for and praying with the next generation, then they will become spiritually unsure."

- Michael Youssef

UPPER ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

CHILDREN, AGE 8-10

As the child continues to go to school, they gain self-confidence and their previous fears disappear. Many questions about people and their differences will be asked, to the point where the child can be annoying, or the parent/teacher can be uncomfortable. This child is eager to help around the home and in the classroom which will give them the life skills they will need for the future.

These children continue their interest in physical play outdoors, seeking to master more specialized physical skills. They are much stronger, have greater endurance, and are ready for more challenges. They often want to focus on and develop specific skills, and are adept at a variety of activities requiring great dexterity, such as complex hand games, jacks, snapping fingers, tying a bow, constructing models, operating hand puppets, needlepoint, sewing, weaving, and braiding.

Children this age can make small, controlled marks or movements while drawing or writing. They pay much more attention to detail, which facilitates a desire for collecting. At this stage they start using logic more often to solve problems, organize, or choose from a variety of alternatives. Their appreciation for simple jokes and riddles grows during this period. Licensed characters based on action superhero themes or friendship themes are very popular early on with this age group and many will begin various collections of specific articles or themes.



Development

- Accepting self; learning about strengths and gifts
- Making friends; learning to get along with others
- Dresses and grooms self, completely
- Beginning to learn about their role in society, responsibilities to family, friends
- Readers – Able to read with increasing ease/ Reading for information
- Can count forward and backward
- Begins to understand date and time: days of the week, months, seasons
- Understands to concept of space
- Able to answer written questions with short answers or sentences.
- Learning to write paragraphs and give oral reports
- Learning to do different types of chores and work at home and school
- Developing Fine Motor Skills
- Very good with scissors and glue and various craft projects

- Needs to have responsibilities entrusted to them
- Modest about body
- Becoming interested in boy-girl relationships, but does not admit it
- Enjoys various clubs and groups based on interests
- Can learn various life skills, around the home, garage, and yard (cooking, baking, washing cars, fixing with various tools, mowing the lawn, raking leaves, etc)
- Can learn basic “camping skills” – Putting up tent/ planning a meal/ starting a fire

In the Classroom:

- Teach using maps and other visuals.
- Use a variety of materials when teaching.
- Have children participate in the classroom. Give class responsibilities.
- Read the Bible together as a class, taking turns.
- Teach new words and abstract ideas.
- Unite the group in games or teamwork
- Sing together in class.
- Allow children to lead worship or devotionals.
- Allow children to share and show self-expression.

- Children in this age group enjoy these types of play:
 - a) *Written word games, word puzzles and/or math games*
 - b) *Complex group games and even competitive sports (soccer, baseball, volleyball)*
 - c) *Any craft project requiring creativity for self-expression*
 - d) *Singing as a group, playing with musical instruments*
 - e) *Expressing themselves as individuals: Show-and-tell, dramatic acting etc.*

- Bible Comprehension
 - a) Able to listen and understand Bible stories with more detail.
 - b) Memorizing sections of scripture (Examples: Fruit of the Spirit, 23rd Psalm, Beatitudes, etc)
 - c) Memorize books of the Bible, names of disciples
 - d) Can begin to understand historical overview of the Bible
 - e) Learning to look things up in the Bible
 - i) Able to copy passages from Bible or textbook
 - j) Learning to pray individually and with others
 - k) Beginning to understand abstract concepts such as: self-sacrifice, love for others, intercession, faith, doubt, sin, guilt, and forgiveness.

Spiritual Messages they need to hear:

- Salvation message
- We can accept Jesus as our Savior.
- God loves you and know all about you and everyone else that you know and meet
- God has a wonderful plan for your life
- God will never leave you or forsake you
- You can trust God
- God is all powerful, all knowing, and always present
- There is nothing you can do to make God love you any more or any less than He does
- We are saved by grace (because God is generous), not by works (or what we do)
- You can tell others what God has done for you

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*"To train a boy in the way he should go; you must go that way yourself."
- Billy Sunday*