

Developmental Milestones & Widely Held Expectations at 4-5 Years

(Taken from Child Development: A Primer by Ingrid Crowther & NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practice)

Note: Experts say every child develops differently. These Developmental Milestones are designed to give a general idea of how a child of this age may develop.

Gross Motor Development (large muscles of arms & legs)

- **Balancing**—walks on circular line; walks confidently/quickly across balance beam; can balance on one foot for about 10 seconds
- **Walking/Running**—runs with increased speed & agility; skips; walks backwards
- **Climbing**—uses alternating feet to ascend/descend stairs; climbs up & down all parts of playground equipment (ladders, ropes, poles, monkey bars)
- **Jumping**—jumps down from higher heights; hops on 1 foot for short time
- **Ball skills**—throws ball overhand; uses just hands to catch ball; has better control when throwing/kicking ball
- **Using Riding Toy**—pedals tricycles with increased speed & control
- **Sledding**—brings sled up hill, sits and pushes off to descend
- **Skating**—able to skate with the help of a skate walker and/or on their own
- **Skiing**—increasingly able to cross-country ski on a flat surface; climb small hill on skis and keep balance to descend; get up independently if they fall

Fine Motor Development (small muscles in thumb & fingers)

- **Manipulation**—cuts out simple shapes using scissors, uses tripod grasp (thumb & 2 fingers); draws simple shapes; makes some letters; writes all or part of own name
- **Artwork**—draws geometric shapes; draws human figures (not all parts of body may be present); generally draws only one view of objects (eg: front view of house or person and side view of vehicles)
- **Hand-Eye Coordination**—threads small beads onto gimp; sews around outside of sewing card; increased complexity in construction with Lego, magna-tiles, etc.

Cognitive Development (thinking skills)

- **Symbolic Function**—chooses one object to represent another in pretend play
- **Attention Span**—increased attention span for areas of interest; may return to an activity over several days
- **Sorting**—increasingly sorts using 2 criteria (out of color, size & shape); sorts a variety of objects into groups that share a characteristic (eg: all vehicles, all farm animals)

- **Concept Development**—*size*: can identify smallest & largest or shortest & longest objects; *quantity*: can identify more and less in both volume and number; *seriation*: arranges objects from smallest to largest; identifies first, second and last; *time*: understands daily routine; *differences*: can identify what is missing from a picture or puzzle; *similarities*: matches things that are the same
- **Numbers**—rote counts to 20+ but may miss numbers or insert incorrect numbers; identifies concept of “half”
- **Alphabet**—may name most uppercase and lowercase letters
- **Problem Solving**—enjoys more complex puzzles & games; begins to focus on more than one aspect of a problem or situation (called decentration; for example, will figure out if a tall thin glass holds more than a short fat glass by pouring the water from one glass to the other.)

Communication & Language Development

- **Language Usage**—creates more complex sentences; puts more than one sentence together to tell a story or relate an experience; asks and answers questions involving who, what, why; changes voice in role playing to imitate different individuals; remembers an increasing repertoire of songs or rhymes; states full name
- **Grammar**—uses prepositions (eg: on, in ,under); uses possessive pronouns & nouns (eg: his, hers, theirs, Mommy’s); uses the past tense
- **Vocabulary**— by end of period employs 5,000- 8,000+ words
- **Reading**—recognizes some words (own name and other meaningful words); names most of the letters of the alphabet in both upper & lower case
- **Writing**—prints part or all of own name; may print names of significant others; uses invented spelling and/or may like to copy words; dictates stories

Social/Emotional Development

- **Emotional Control**—shares ideas & materials but not consistently; empathetic towards children or animals who are hurt; has difficulty dealing with frustration; may sulk if left out of activity; understands the power of rejecting others; understands the concept of fairness (but may still want to apply it to their benefit); may attempt to resolve negative interactions on their own
- **Peer Interaction**—forms friendships; may call peers names or disown a friend because of a disagreement; may use humor inappropriately (“bathroom talk”)
- **Pride in Accomplishments**—asks to have efforts displayed; asks adults/peers for approval of accomplishments

- **Making of Choices**—makes appropriate choices from a wide range of materials & activities; focuses for increased length of time; often interacts with peers to make group decisions & collaborative efforts
- **Self-Help Skills**—generally quite independent in toileting & eating with spoon/fork; pours milk into cup; able to dress/undress (possibly needing help only with starting zippers, doing buttons or tying shoes); cleans up toys & belongings
- **Self Regulation/Coping Skills**—able, with advanced warning, to change activities or adjust to changes in the regular routine; able to lie quietly on bed for duration of nap
- **Identity**—gender identity is generally understood to be permanent

Creative Development

- **Water, Sand & Playdough/Clay**—creates increasingly complex structures/objects; experiments to make connections (eg: sink/float) and weight/volume comparisons
- **Music & Movement**—reproduces sounds, tones and rhythmic patterns using instruments; demonstrates an understanding of using tempo, volume & pitch with voice & instruments; coordinates two movements (marching & keeping a steady beat); greater repertoire of songs; more self-expressive in dance & movement
- **Art**—enjoys different art mediums; produces three-dimensional art
- **Blocks/Construction Toys**—builds combinations of rows, towers, enclosures, bridges; creates more complex structures/objects & uses for imaginative play
- **Dramatic Play**—uses more symbolic representations to support play; creates own props such as menus, tickets, money; dramatic play can extend over several days/weeks; takes on roles of non-familiar people (eg: police officers or fire fighters); enjoys adventure play (super-heroes, princesses, monsters) but understands that this is pretend play; re-enacts experiences (train trip, etc);