

Physical Development: Three to four years

Preschoolers are all about the physical - they love to jump, skip, run, climb and dance. In fact, anything that's new and that won't require them to sit still for too long. But they're also like puppies - running full steam until they completely run out of energy, at which point they'll collapse somewhere utterly exhausted.

Developmental milestones include:

- Balancing to walk along a plank
- Pedalling a tricycle
- Rolling and bouncing a ball - and a few can catch a ball, too
- Holding a pencil with the correct grip
- Buttoning up clothing
- Cutting with scissors
- Climbing a ladder and trees
- Standing, walking and running on tiptoes
- Balancing on one foot for several seconds
- Using a spoon and fork correctly
- Building a bridge using three blocks

How can I encourage his physical development?

- Ensure that he has plenty of physical freedom where he can develop some independence.
- Teach him some skills that will open new doors for him - how to swim, how to pedal a bike, how to hit a ball with a bat.
- Give him the space to work things out for himself. He'll build his self-esteem if he can work something out on his own.
- Allow him the time he needs to 'get things right' himself. Some pre-schoolers really resist help, so don't jump in unless you're asked.

Signs there could be a developmental problem include:

- He isn't interested in interacting with other children or with adults while he plays.
- He's either overly aggressive or introverted when he plays with other children.
- He plays in a repetitious way that shows little use of his imagination.
- He has difficulty keeping up physically with children his own age.
- He isn't able to jump with his two feet together.

REMEMBER!

All children are different and develop at different rates, so don't be overly concerned if your pre-schooler is acquiring new skills at a different rate to those around him. But if you are worried about his development, or it seems to have stalled or be going backwards, talk to a health professional.