

swing, jump and shout. Tricycles, wagons, a balancing board, sandbox and tire swing are great to share with friends.

**Indoor Play**

Anything to draw with will keep your preschooler occupied. Crayons, chalk, markers, pencils and paint are a few ideas. Children like to try different materials. Collect scrap paper every time.

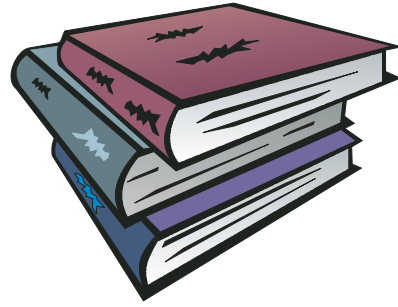
A variety of blocks and construction sets are good for building. Small cars, trucks, people and signs can be added to make streets or villages.



**Books and Reading**

Your 3-year-old can handle books, talk about pictures, and ask questions about the stories you read. Children at this age love words and sounds. Nursery rhymes and silly stories are fun.

Hold a book so your child can see the pictures and words. Ask questions about the pictures so your child will learn to pick out the details. Don't be surprised if she wants to read the same story every day. She may also want to spend time on each page talking about her favorite parts. This is excellent preparation for learning to read.



**Games While You Work**

Children at this age are very willing to help. Turn picking up toys into a game. Say, "Can you pick up all the cars?" or "How many books can you put on the shelf?" At first, you will have to be there to supervise, but as your child grows older, you will be able to give directions, then go to your own work. Don't underestimate your preschooler's ability to manage simple chores. By helping around the house, he learns important lessons of responsibility, decision making, pride in accomplishment and a sense of belonging.

**Next Issue:**

**New words, choosing a preschool and more!**

*Prepared by Don Bower,  
Extension Human Development Specialist,  
and reviewed by Mary Anne Pace-Nichols, Karen  
Shetterley, Katrina Bowers, Holly Alley, Judy Hibbs,  
Esther Maddux and Cindy Darden.*

**Putting Knowledge to Work**

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*Gale A. Buchanan, Dean and Director*

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College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences  
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**1-2-3  
Grow!**

**3 YEARS**

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
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## 3 Years

# 1-2-3 Grow!

Another birthday has gone by and your child is now 3 years old. Your child is no longer a baby, or even a toddler. He is now officially considered a preschooler! The next four issues of “1-2-3 Grow!” will describe early preschool behavior and growth, along with suggestions for guiding and encouraging your little one through the coming year.

## HOW DOES YOUR PRESCHOOLER GROW?

Your 3-year-old will soon (or may already) be able to:

- have a sense of past, present and future time
- recite numbers to five (but may be able to count only to two)
- understand and accept simple explanations
- enjoy a lot of dramatic play
- show more independence

Physical growth is slower now than in the past. The 3-year-old is taller, leaner and more coordinated. You will probably notice that she outgrows pants very quickly. This is

because most growth will be in height, both in the legs and in the midsection.

Physical activity now includes pedaling a tricycle, throwing and catching a ball and jumping.

Hand and fingers are more coordinated, too. Using a fork and spoon for eating, drawing squiggly lines and cutting with scissors are skills the 3-year-old is practicing. The preschooler’s emotions are still intense. Affection, joy, fear, anger and frustration are often expressed loudly and very physically. Throwing a block across the room when a tower falls is the way many 3-year-olds deal with frustration. “Leave me alone, stupid,” is a common way to show anger. Enthusiastic hugs and kisses along with “I love you” let you know how happy your youngster is.

Aren’t you amazed at the new problems your preschooler can solve? Your child will be ready to learn concepts such as colors, numbers, counting and the alphabet. He will learn ideas like “over/ under” or “in/out.”

It may be hard to answer questions all day long, but your child will have hundreds! He wants to learn about everything. The 2-year-old asked, “What is this?” The 3-year-old will want to know, “Why?” Don’t be surprised by questions like:

- Why are you doing that?
- Why is the ceiling high?
- Why do the clouds move?
- Why aren’t the clouds moving?
- How did you do that?
- What is this for?



Although you may get tired of answering so many questions, your answers help your child learn. If a child gets no answer, he may stop asking. Answering questions encourages curiosity. Try to give simple answers. Avoid too many details. If you haven’t given enough information, your 3-year-old will ask for more! Try asking him what he thinks the answer is!

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

Some parents think that play is not serious and is just for fun. But children learn through play. It is serious business to them. Just watch how hard a child works at stacking blocks to make a tower. Play is natural to all children. Many different kinds of activities help children understand themselves, discover how things work and solve problems.

Parents are often frustrated when children grow tired of toys. It seems that they play with them for only a short time. Most toys teach a skill. When the child has learned that skill, he is ready to move on to something else. For example, a shape sorting toy keeps a toddler busy trying to put the circle object in the circle hole. When he can do this over and over, it is not challenging any more. The child is now ready to learn a harder task such as a puzzle with different shapes.

Play is important for all areas of development. A child’s play changes as his abilities and interests change. The four main kinds of play are:

- **Active, physical** – increases muscle strength and coordination
- **Manipulative, creative** – good for practicing eye-hand coordination; gives opportunity to express ideas, use initiative, solve problems, make decisions

- **Imitative, imaginative** – encourages emotional expression; helps child understand others and himself; lets child practice different ways of behaving
- **Social** – provides ways for learning about how to get along with others, fair play, sharing, friendship

Play is important during the preschool years. You may notice your child talking to a doll or favorite stuffed animal as though it were real. Imaginary friends often appear now. You may overhear very detailed conversations between your child and his imaginary friend.

This pretend play helps children deal with their emotions. It helps develop emotional stability. Children who play make-believe games can handle frustration better. They are also less aggressive and get along better with others.

Parents can encourage imaginary play. When your child wants to “feed” his teddy bear, play along and set a place at the table for this special friend. Often, you will not need to actively participate in make-believe play, but avoid criticism. Allow your child the freedom to create his own imaginary world for learning.

## ACTIVITIES/GAMES/TOYS

### Outdoor Play



A tree house or playscape built low to the ground with a ladder and slide provides hours of fun and creative play. This does not have to be in your own yard. Find one at a park or nearby school. Plan a picnic or after-work walk to a play area to let your child climb,