

Staff

- Are the adults warm, caring people who have time to spend with each child? Do the adults treat each child as an individual? Are adults available to sit and talk to a child and comfort him when he has a problem?
- Are those in charge willing to answer your questions?
- Are staff trained to meet the needs of preschoolers?

Program

- Are there blocks of time for free play when children can explore their own interests?
- Is time scheduled for both quiet and active play?
- Is the focus on social/emotional development rather than cognitive (academic) skills? (Social/emotional development is more important at this age.)
- Is TV watching part of the program? (TV watching should be limited only to selected, positive programs.)

Facilities

- Is there room for children to be alone if they want?
- Are the buildings and grounds clean and safe?
- Are there arrangements for meals and nap time?
- Are there plenty of toys and a variety of them stored within easy reach of the children?
- Are areas and equipment provided for art, music, housekeeping play, reading, puzzle and block play, climbing and outdoor play?

Children

- Do the children seem happy and involved?
- Are the children given choices about activities and encouraged to make choices?
- Are children clean, well rested and fed?

Health

- Are menus well balanced, appealing to children?
- Is there a regular procedure for handling sick children and emergencies?

Parent Involvement

- Are parents encouraged to visit and talk with staff?
- Is there regular communication with parents (newsletters, progress reports)?
- Is the center's use of discipline consistent with yours?
- Do children often bring home projects for parents to see?

Next Issue: All About Food

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Putting Knowledge to Work

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1-2-3 Grow!

3 YEARS 4 MONTHS - 3 YEARS 6 MONTHS

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
The University of Georgia
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3 Years 4 Months - 3 Years 6 Months

1-2-3 Grow!

Three-year-olds are sometimes called “runabouts.” You can see from watching preschoolers’ activity why this name is right on target. Running, jumping, rolling, dancing and any other motion is fun for a 3-year-old. It feels good to be able to move so easily after those trying months of stumbling. You may notice some clumsiness and bumping into things. This is just because preschoolers are so excited about all the things they want to do that they rush, rush, rush.

HOW DOES YOUR PRESCHOOLER GROW?

Along with better physical coordination comes better language. Preschoolers learn new words every day. Their sentences are getting longer, too. Their speech is easier to understand, even to people outside the family. By the end of the fourth year, a child has developed most of the basic speech that adults use. Preschoolers can understand and use almost 1,000 words. They also use correct grammar, including prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, plurals and pronouns. You can hear these differences by listening to your child talk. Instead of saying, “me go bathroom,” you will soon hear, “I have to go to the bath-

room.” Instead of pointing and saying, “doggie,” you will hear, “Look at the dog.”

From 36 to 60 months of age, the preschooler talks with many people — family members, playmates, caregivers, teachers and other adults. Talking with all these people is good practice. The purpose of speech is communication. The more your child talks and listens to others, the more words and expressions he will learn and use. You may also hear your preschooler using words or slang that he has picked up from playmates. This is natural. Children like to try out new expressions they hear. If you do not like a certain expression, gently tell your child, “We don’t use that word,” and suggest a better word to express the same feeling. Sometimes ignoring the slang works because your child is really trying out the word to see how you will react. If you don’t react at all, he will find words that bring a better reaction. Many children at this age seem to stutter. This is because they think of words faster than they can say them. This sounds like stuttering. Don’t worry. Be sure to give your child plenty of time to speak. Listen patiently and look at her. Encourage speech so she is not afraid to talk. If some words are pronounced wrong, include the right pronunciation in your answer. For example:

Child: Can I have a bebana?

You: Yes, I will get a banana for you.

This kind of response gives children confidence and a desire to try the word again. Of course, if your preschooler seems to have sig-



nificant problems speaking, you may want to mention it to a doctor or childcare provider. They may be able to refer you to a person who specializes in children’s speech.

ACTIVITIES/GAMES/TOYS

Word games are lots of fun for 3-year-olds and adults. But get ready to be silly.

Play rhyming games. Say, “What rhymes with hat?” Take turns thinking of words. Any sound that rhymes is OK even if it’s not a real word. The idea is to practice listening to sound and repeating similar ones. So ... what rhymes with hat? Bat, mat, sat, cat, blat, dat, fat, zat, lat, nat ... Another word game is the Name Game. Say, “I’m looking at a door. What are you looking at?” Take turns looking around the house and yard naming as many things as you can.

Play telephone. Use a play telephone or just hold your hand up to your ear and call each other. Start by “ringing” the phone.

Have your child answer. Talk about his toys, the weather and what he has been doing. Then say goodbye and hang up. Then have your child call you. Then say, “Who else can we call?” Your child may carry on an imaginary conversation with Grandma or teddy bear without your having to say anything. Sometimes you may have to play along and be the “other person.”

Toys that encourage language development are fun for preschoolers. Toys with a pull string that “talk” are good. Some have nursery rhymes, the alphabet or name objects.

Between the ages of 2 and 5, children express themselves as naturally through art



as through play. You may not recognize what some artwork represents, but ask your preschooler to explain it to you and encourage his efforts, not necessarily the quality of the final product. Always have crayons, paints, safety scissors, glue and paper available for your little artist.

Visit your local library to find books, magazines, story hour and reading clubs geared for the preschooler. If you are not familiar with children’s books, ask the librarian to suggest some.

Cassette tapes with rhymes, songs and games teach both rhythm and words. Your child may not be able to remember a song or rhyme yet, but after listening to it over and over, he will soon be able to sing along or remember it on his own. “Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush,” “Old MacDonald,” and “Mary Had a Little Lamb” are some favorites.

CHOOSING A PRESCHOOL

Many parents start to think about school experiences when their child reaches 3. As children get older, their needs change. The child who has been in a home setting may be ready for more group experiences. At-home parents can choose between all-day and part-time programs. Working parents will want a preschool to meet the daily needs of their child and the parents’ schedules.

All preschools are different. You will want to find out about their philosophy, the staff, the schedule and the curriculum. The key is to find the school that best matches your child’s temperament, emotional development and abilities. Here is a list of things to look for when you visit preschools: