**Your child 3-5 years**

**Your child is becoming more independent and capable of doing things on their own.**

Your child is becoming more independent and capable of doing things on their own. They are at the beginning of learning how to get on with others, and can control their feelings better (although they may still have the odd tantrum).

At this stage your child is moving out of babyhood into childhood. Try to be patient as your child builds new skills. Although your child is getting very independent they still need lots of hugs and encouragement from you. When you praise your child and give them lots of positive attention it builds their self-esteem and helps them to learn.

The following information provides information about the stages of your child’s development and some tips for what you can do to support your child. Your child may do some things earlier or later than described here.

If you are worried about your child’s development – ask your health visitor, GP or Foundation Phase setting/school.

**Between 3-4 years your child may:**

* Like to play with other children and friendships are becoming more important.
* Talk well in sentences and talk clearly enough to be understood. (If your three-year-old is hard to understand mention this to your GP or health visitor).
* Ask lots of questions.
* Talk with other children when playing.
* Draw a recognisable person with a face and maybe arms and legs. This will depend on how much practice and encouragement they get.
* Eat independently.
* Put on and remove their clothes
* Like to play pretend games and understand simple rules in games like hide and seek.
* Be able to recognise and express different emotions

**Between 4-5 years your child may:**

* Talk well and be understood by most people.
* Have developed fine motor skills like using scissors and buttoning up small buttons.
* Be able to produce pictures and symbols.
* Know the names of primary colours and can match them.
* Have developed gross motor skills like running, jumping, skipping and climbing.
* Play confidently with balls and be able to throw, kick, bounce and catch.
* Play cooperatively with other children.

**Tips to encourage and support your toddler's development**

* [**Give your child lots of cuddles, attention and praise.**](https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-for-praise)Give them individual attention whenever you can.
* [**Keep things the same as much as possible.**](https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-to-create-order-and-structure-to-your-day)It will help your child feel more secure if you have a routine. Try to have mealtimes, bath times and bed times at similar times each day.
* **Give your child plenty of warning about what you are going to do next.**“When you’ve finished your breakfast we’re going to get dressed”.  Your child will come to expect and accept change better when they know it’s coming.
* [**Have a few clear and simple rules**](https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-to-create-order-and-structure-to-your-day)your child can understand and follow. Focus on what you do want them to do, not what you don’t want them to do.
* [**Ignore minor irritating behaviour.**](https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/take-time-to-model-the-behaviour-you-want-to-see)Give your child lots of praise and attention when they are doing something positive.
* **Avoid too much television and other devices like tablets or smart phones.** These can be entertaining for your child, but try to limit their use to no more than an hour each day. The National Literacy Trust has advice on [**Making the most of TV**](https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/2017_07_06_free_ELY_resource_-_televisionblank_pPD4WKD.pdf) (External link).
* **Give simple choices.** “Do you want an apple or a banana?”  “Do you want to wear your red or blue top?”
* **Show an interest in what your child has to say.** Try to focus on what they are saying. This will let your child know they are important to you. Encourage your child to talk by using open-ended questions like “Tell me the best thing about your day”.
* [**Make meal times enjoyable**](https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/tricky-moments-and-behaviours/mealtimes)**.** Sit down and have a chat about things and try to eat together. [**Change 4 Life**](http://change4lifewales.org.uk/splash?orig=/) (External link) has lots of recipes you could try.
* [**Share a book**](https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/reading-aloud-and-sharing-books-good-talking/)(External link). Your child will love this special time with you and it can help them wind down before bed time. Talk about what is happening in the story and in the pictures. You can ask for suitable books at your local library.
* **Get creative.** Give them lots of opportunities to draw, paint and model with clay or play dough.
* [**Play!**](https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-to-listen)Active play will help your child develop their physical skills like running, jumping, throwing and climbing.  Pretend play gives your child a chance to use their imagination and develop their talking and listening skills. Board games, memory and guessing games will encourage your child’s thinking skills.

There are ideas for songs, books and play activities on [**Words for Life**](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/baby) (External link), [**Read on. Get on**](http://readongeton.org.uk/) (External link) and [**Education Begins at Home Facebook page**](https://www.facebook.com/beginsathome) (External link).

**Your child is entitled to a free, part-time pre-school Foundation Phase place** (of at least 10 hours a week), from the start of the school term following their third birthday. The Foundation Phase encourages children to be creative, imaginative and to have fun while making learning more effective.

The Family Information Service can tell you about Foundation Phase places in your area. You can telephone 0300 123 7777 to be put through to your local FIS.

**Dads matter too**. Research has shown that Dads have a big impact on their child’s development. Getting involved in daily activities like playing, mealtimes and reading create lots of opportunities to encourage your child’s development and build a good relationship.

**What doesn’t work**

* **Smacking doesn’t work.** It can turn things into a major battle. It may teach your child that it is OK to hit someone younger than them.
* **Avoid put downs.** If your child hears too many put downs it can affect their self-esteem. Try to encourage effort instead.
* **Don’t punish your child’s** **mistakes and accidents or criticise your child when they get it wrong.** Your child is still learning. Praise them and encourage them when they get it right.

**It’s OK to ask for help.** If you are worried about feeling stressed, low or depressed talk to your health visitor or GP.