



BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PARENT

3 YEAR VISIT

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to your family.

✓ HOW YOUR FAMILY IS DOING

- Take time for yourself and to be with your partner.
- Stay connected to friends, their personal interests, and work.
- Have regular playtimes and mealtimes together as a family.
- Give your child hugs. Show your child how much you love him.
- Show your child how to handle anger well—time alone, respectful talk, or being active. Stop hitting, biting, and fighting right away.
- Give your child the chance to make choices.
- Don't smoke or use e-cigarettes. Keep your home and car smoke-free. Tobacco-free spaces keep children healthy.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs.
- If you are worried about your living or food situation, talk with us. Community agencies and programs such as WIC and SNAP can also provide information and assistance.

✓ EATING HEALTHY AND BEING ACTIVE

- Give your child 16 to 24 oz of milk every day.
- Limit juice. It is not necessary. If you choose to serve juice, give no more than 4 oz a day of 100% juice and always serve it with a meal.
- Let your child have cool water when she is thirsty.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods and snacks, especially vegetables, fruits, and lean protein.
- Let your child decide how much to eat.
- Be sure your child is active at home and in preschool or child care.
- Apart from sleeping, children should not be inactive for longer than 1 hour at a time.
- Be active together as a family.
- Limit TV, tablet, or smartphone use to no more than 1 hour of high-quality programs each day.
- Be aware of what your child is watching.
- Don't put a TV, computer, tablet, or smartphone in your child's bedroom.
- Consider making a family media plan. It helps you make rules for media use and balance screen time with other activities, including exercise.

✓ PLAYING WITH OTHERS

- Give your child a variety of toys for dressing up, make-believe, and imitation.
- Make sure your child has the chance to play with other preschoolers often. Playing with children who are the same age helps get your child ready for school.
- Help your child learn to take turns while playing games with other children.

✓ READING AND TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD

- Read books, sing songs, and play rhyming games with your child each day.
- Use books as a way to talk together. Reading together and talking about a book's story and pictures helps your child learn how to read.
- Look for ways to practice reading everywhere you go, such as stop signs, or labels and signs in the store.
- Ask your child questions about the story or pictures in books. Ask him to tell a part of the story.
- Ask your child specific questions about his day, friends, and activities.

Helpful Resources: Smoking Quit Line: 800-784-8669 | Family Media Use Plan: www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan
 Information About Car Safety Seats: www.safercar.gov/parents | Toll-free Auto Safety Hotline: 888-327-4236

3 YEAR VISIT—PARENT

✓ SAFETY

- Continue to use a car safety seat that is installed correctly in the back seat. The safest seat is one with a 5-point harness, not a booster seat.
- Prevent choking. Cut food into small pieces.
- Supervise all outdoor play, especially near streets and driveways.
- Never leave your child alone in the car, house, or yard.
- Keep your child within arm's reach when she is near or in water. She should always wear a life jacket when on a boat.
- Teach your child to ask if it is OK to pet a dog or another animal before touching it.
- If it is necessary to keep a gun in your home, store it unloaded and locked with the ammunition locked separately.
- Ask if there are guns in homes where your child plays. If so, make sure they are stored safely.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR CHILD'S 4 YEAR VISIT

We will talk about

- Caring for your child, your family, and yourself
- Getting ready for school
- Eating healthy
- Promoting physical activity and limiting TV time
- Keeping your child safe at home, outside, and in the car

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, 4th Edition

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Original handout included as part of the *Bright Futures Tool and Resource Kit*, 2nd Edition.

Inclusion in this handout does not imply an endorsement by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP is not responsible for the content of the resources mentioned in this handout. Web site addresses are as current as possible but may change at any time.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not review or endorse any modifications made to this handout and in no event shall the AAP be liable for any such changes.

© 2019 American Academy of Pediatrics. All rights reserved.

Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

Preschoolers (3-5 years of age)

Developmental Milestones

Skills such as naming colors, showing affection, and hopping on one foot are called developmental milestones. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move (like crawling, walking, or jumping).

As children grow into early childhood, their world will begin to open up. They will become more independent and begin to focus more on adults and children outside of the family. They will want to explore and ask about the things around them even more. Their interactions with family and those around them will help to shape their personality and their own ways of thinking and moving. During this stage, children should be able to ride a tricycle, use safety scissors, notice a difference between girls and boys, help to dress and undress themselves, play with other children, recall part of a story, and sing a song.

For more details on developmental milestones, warning signs of possible developmental delays, and information on how to help your child's development, visit the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." campaign website.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your preschooler during this time:

- Continue to read to your child. Nurture her love for books by taking her to the library or bookstore.
- Let your child help with simple chores.
- Encourage your child to play with other children. This helps him to learn the value of sharing and friendship.
- Be clear and consistent when disciplining your child. Explain and show the behavior that you expect from her. Whenever you tell her no, follow up with what he should be doing instead.
- Help your child develop good language skills by speaking to him in complete sentences and using "grown up" words. Help him to use the correct words and phrases.
- Help your child through the steps to solve problems when she is upset.
- Give your child a limited number of simple choices (for example, deciding what to wear, when to play, and what to eat for snack).



Child Safety First

As your child becomes more independent and spends more time in the outside world, it is important that you and your child are aware of ways to stay safe. Here are a few tips to protect your child:

- Tell your child why it is important to stay out of traffic. Tell him not to play in the street or run after stray balls.
- Be cautious when letting your child ride her tricycle. Keep her on the sidewalk and away from the street and always have her wear a helmet.
- Check outdoor playground equipment. Make sure there are no loose parts or sharp edges.
- Watch your child at all times, especially when he is playing outside.
- Be safe in the water. Teach your child to swim, but watch her at all times when she is in or around any body of water (this includes kiddie pools).
- Teach your child how to be safe around strangers.
- Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it will be time for him to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat of the vehicle. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has information on how to keep your child safe while riding in a vehicle.

Healthy Bodies

- Eat meals with your child whenever possible. Let your child see you enjoying fruits, vegetables, and whole grains at meals and snacks. Your child should eat and drink only a limited amount of food and beverages that contain added sugars, solid fats, or salt.
- Limit screen time for your child to no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programming, at home, school, or child care.
- Provide your child with age-appropriate play equipment, like balls and plastic bats, but let your preschooler choose what to play. This makes moving and being active fun for your preschooler.

A pdf of this document for reprinting is available free of charge from

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/preschoolers.html>

Additional Information:

<http://www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment>

1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) <http://www.cdc.gov/info>

Executive Function Activities for 3- to 5-year-olds

Children’s executive function and self-regulation skills grow at a fast pace during this period, so it is important to adapt activities to match the skills of each child. Younger children need a lot of support in learning rules and structures, while older children can be more independent. Ultimately, the goal is to shift children away from relying on adult regulation, so when the child seems ready, try to reduce the support you provide.



Imaginary play

During intentional imaginary play, children develop rules to guide their actions in playing roles. They also hold complex ideas in mind and shape their actions to follow these rules, inhibiting impulses or actions that don’t fit the “role.” Players often take ideas from their own lives, such as going to the doctor’s office. They might act “sick,” be examined by the doctor, and receive a shot. The “doctor” talks and acts like a doctor (calm and reassuring), the “sick child” talks and acts like a sick child (sad and scared), and the child in the role of “parent” talks and acts like a concerned parent (worried and caring). While younger children tend to play alone or in parallel, children in this age range are learning to play cooperatively and often regulate each other’s behavior—an important step in developing self-regulation.

Ways to support high-level imaginary play:

- **Read books, go on field trips, and use videos** to make sure that children know enough about the scenario and roles to support pretend play.
- **Provide a varied set of props and toys** to encourage this type of play. Younger preschoolers may need more realistic props to get the play started (e.g., toy medical kits), while

older children can re-purpose other things to turn them into play props (e.g., paper towel tube that is used as a cast for a “broken arm”). Reusing familiar objects in a new way also practices cognitive flexibility.

■ **Allow children to make their own play props.** Children must determine what is needed, hold this information in mind, and then follow through without getting distracted. They also exercise selective attention, working memory, and planning. If the original plans don’t work out, children need to adjust their ideas and try again, challenging their cognitive flexibility.

■ **Play plans can be a good way to organize play,** as shown by one early education program designed to build self-regulation, Tools of the Mind. Children decide who they are going to be and what they are going to do before they start playing, and then draw their plan on paper. Planning means that children think first and then act, thus practicing inhibitory control. Planning play in a group also encourages children to plan together, hold these plans in mind, and apply them during the activity. It encourages social problem solving, as well as oral language.

Storytelling

Children love to tell stories. Their early stories tend to be a series of events, each one related to the one before, but lacking any larger structure. With practice, children develop more complex and organized plots. As the complexity of the storytelling grows, children practice holding and manipulating information in working memory.

Ways to support children’s storytelling:

■ **Encourage children to tell you stories,** and write them down to read with the child. Children can also make pictures and create their own books. Revisiting the story, either by reviewing pictures or words, supports more intentional organization and greater elaboration.

continued

■ **Tell group stories.** One child starts the story, and each person in the group adds something to it. Children need to pay attention to each other, reflect on possible plot twists, and tailor their additions to fit the plot, thereby challenging their attention, working memory, and self-control.

■ **Have children act out stories** they have written. The story provides a structure that guides

children's actions and requires them to attend to the story and follow it, while inhibiting their impulse to create a new plot.

■ **Bilingual families can tell stories in their home language.** Research indicates that bilingualism can benefit a variety of executive function skills in children of all ages, so fostering fluency in a second language is valuable.

Movement challenges: songs and games

The demands of songs and movement games support executive function because children have to move to a specific rhythm and synchronize words to actions and the music. All of these tasks contribute to inhibitory control and working memory. It is important that these songs and games become increasingly complex to interest and challenge children as they develop more self-regulation skills.

■ **Provide many opportunities** for children to test themselves physically through access to materials such as climbing structures, balance beams, seesaws, etc. Setting challenges for children—such as obstacle courses and games that encourage complex motions (skipping, balancing, etc.)—can also be fun. When children are trying new and difficult activities, they need to focus attention, monitor and adjust their actions, and persist to achieve a goal.

■ **Encourage attention control through quieter activities** that require children to reduce stimu-

lation and focus attention—such as using a balance beam or yoga poses that include slow breathing.

■ **Play some music** and have children dance really fast, then really slowly. *Freeze dance* is also fun, and it can be made more difficult by asking children to freeze in particular positions. (Tools of the Mind uses stick-figure pictures to direct children.) When the music stops, children must inhibit action and shift their attention to the picture to imitate the shape depicted.

■ **Songs that repeat and add on** to earlier sections (either through words or motions) are a great challenge to working memory, such as the motions to *She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain*, the words to *Bought Me a Cat*, and backward-counting songs, such as *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* and songs repeating a long list (the *Alphabet Song*).

■ **Traditional song games**, like *Circle 'Round the Zero* are also fun. Complex actions, including finding partners, must be accomplished without becoming distracted.

Quiet games and other activities

■ **Matching and sorting activities** are still fun, but now children can be asked to sort by different rules, promoting cognitive flexibility. Children can first sort or match by one rule (such as by color), and then immediately switch to a new rule (such as by shape). For a more challenging version, play a matching game, but change the rule for each pair. *Quirkle* and *S'Match* are commercially available games that challenge cognitive flexibility in this way. Or play a bingo or lotto game, in which children have to mark a card with the opposite of what is called out

by the leader (e.g., for “day,” putting a chip on a nighttime picture). Children have to inhibit the tendency to mark the picture that matches, while also remembering the game's rule.

■ **Increasingly complicated puzzles** can engage children this age, exercising their visual working memory and planning skills.

■ **Cooking is also a lot of fun** for young children. They practice inhibition when waiting for instructions, working memory while holding complicated directions in mind, and focused attention when measuring and counting.

Resources

Pretend play suggestions

■ www.mindinthemaking.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PFL-4-year-old-independent-play.pdf

Montessori activities – Walking on the line

■ www.infomontessori.com/practical-life/control-of-movement-walking-on-the-line.htm

Songs

■ kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/songs/childrens/index.htm