

Preschool Parent Essential Reading & Developmental Checklists

A practical family guide for ages 3-5, including essential topics, trusted resources, and age-based developmental milestone checklists.

Important

These checklists are for developmental monitoring and family-teacher discussion. They are not diagnostic tools and do not replace standardized developmental screening, medical evaluation, or professional advice.

How to Use This Guide

1	Read one topic at a time Choose the section that matches your family's current need.
2	Observe during normal routines Notice what your child does during play, meals, conversations, and transitions.
3	Mark the checklist Check skills you see consistently. Add notes for emerging skills or concerns.
4	Share and follow up Discuss questions with your child's teacher and pediatric healthcare provider.

Essential Reading for Preschool Families

<u>1. Play Is Learning</u>	Play supports planning, problem-solving, language, social relationships, creativity, movement, and emotional regulation. Provide open-ended materials, outdoor time, pretend play, and opportunities to play with others.
<u>2. Read and Talk Every Day</u>	Shared reading builds vocabulary, comprehension, story knowledge, and connection. Ask what is happening, what may happen next, and how characters feel. Let your child retell the story from pictures.
<u>3. Social-Emotional Development</u>	Children need repeated practice naming feelings, waiting, taking turns, solving conflicts, asking for help, and calming with adult support. Consistent relationships and predictable routines provide the foundation.
<u>4. School Readiness Is Whole-Child Readiness</u>	Kindergarten readiness is not only letters and numbers. Attention, impulse control, communication, cooperation, independence, empathy, and the ability to follow directions are equally important.
<u>5. Healthy Routines</u>	Preschoolers benefit from regular sleep, active play, nutritious meals, consistent limits, and family routines. Keep screens limited and prioritize conversation, movement, and hands-on play.

<u>6. Bilingual Development</u>	Continue speaking, reading, singing, and telling stories in the language your family uses most comfortably. A strong home-language foundation supports communication, belonging, and continued language development.
<u>7. Developmental Monitoring and Early Action</u>	Track progress over time. When a child is not meeting milestones, loses a previously acquired skill, or a parent or teacher has concerns, discuss the concern promptly and request developmental screening.

Developmental Checklist: Age 2

Mark skills you observe consistently during everyday activities. A skill may be emerging before it becomes consistent.

CDC milestone standard

The CDC describes milestones as skills that most children - approximately 75% or more - can do by a given age. This checklist is for developmental monitoring and is not a diagnosis.

Social and Emotional

- ☐ Notices when another person is hurt or upset, such as pausing or looking sad when someone cries.
- ☐ Looks at a caregiver's face to see how to react in a new situation.

Language and Communication

- ☐ Points to objects or pictures in a book when asked.
- ☐ Uses at least two words together, such as "more milk."
- ☐ Points to at least two body parts when asked.
- ☐ Uses gestures in addition to waving and pointing, such as blowing a kiss or nodding yes.

Learning and Thinking

- ☐ Holds an object in one hand while using the other hand, such as holding a container and removing its lid.
- ☐ Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy.
- ☐ Plays with more than one toy at the same time, such as placing pretend food on a toy plate.

Movement and Self-Help

- ☐ Kicks a ball.
- ☐ Runs.
- ☐ Walks up a few stairs with or without help.
- ☐ Eats with a spoon.

Notes / Questions for Teacher or Healthcare Provider

[Open the official CDC Age 2 Milestone Checklist](#)

Developmental Checklist: Age 3

Mark skills you observe consistently during everyday activities. A skill may be emerging before it becomes consistent.

CDC milestone standard

The CDC describes milestones as skills that most children - approximately 75% or more - can do by a given age. This checklist is for monitoring, not diagnosis.

Social and Emotional

- ☐ Calms down within about 10 minutes after a caregiver leaves, such as at child care drop-off.
- ☐ Notices other children and joins them in play.

Language and Communication

- ☐ Has a conversation with at least two back-and-forth exchanges.
- ☐ Asks who, what, where, or why questions.
- ☐ Names the action shown in a picture or book when asked.
- ☐ Says first name when asked.
- ☐ Speaks clearly enough for other people to understand most of the time.

Learning and Thinking

- ☐ Draws a circle after an adult demonstrates.
- ☐ Avoids touching a hot object after being warned.

Movement and Self-Help

- ☐ Strings large items such as beads or macaroni.
- ☐ Puts on some loose clothing independently.
- ☐ Uses a fork.

Notes / Questions for Teacher or Healthcare Provider

[Open the official CDC Age 3 Milestone Checklist](#)

Developmental Checklist: Age 4

Mark skills you observe consistently during everyday activities. A skill may be emerging before it becomes consistent.

CDC milestone standard

The CDC describes milestones as skills that most children - approximately 75% or more - can do by a given age. This checklist is for monitoring, not diagnosis.

Social and Emotional

- ☐ Uses pretend roles during play, such as teacher, superhero, or animal.
- ☐ Asks to join other children in play.
- ☐ Comforts someone who is hurt or sad.
- ☐ Avoids obvious danger, such as jumping from unsafe heights.
- ☐ Enjoys being a helper.
- ☐ Adjusts behavior based on the setting.

Language and Communication

- ☐ Uses sentences containing four or more words.
- ☐ Says words from a familiar song, story, or nursery rhyme.
- ☐ Talks about at least one thing that happened during the day.
- ☐ Answers simple questions about what common objects are used for.

Learning and Thinking

- ☐ Names several colors.
- ☐ Predicts what may happen next in a familiar story.
- ☐ Draws a person with three or more body parts.

Movement and Self-Help

- ☐ Catches a large ball most of the time.
- ☐ Serves food or pours water with adult supervision.
- ☐ Unbuttons some buttons.
- ☐ Holds a crayon or pencil with fingers and thumb rather than a fist.

Notes / Questions for Teacher or Healthcare Provider

[Open the official CDC Age 4 Milestone Checklist](#)

Developmental Checklist: Age 5

Mark skills you observe consistently during everyday activities. A skill may be emerging before it becomes consistent.

CDC milestone standard

The CDC describes milestones as skills that most children - approximately 75% or more - can do by a given age. This checklist is for monitoring, not diagnosis.

Social and Emotional

- ☐ Follows rules or takes turns while playing games with other children.
- ☐ Sings, dances, or performs for familiar adults.
- ☐ Completes simple chores, such as matching socks or clearing the table.

Language and Communication

- ☐ Tells or makes up a story containing at least two events.
- ☐ Answers simple questions after hearing a book or story.
- ☐ Maintains a conversation for more than three back-and-forth exchanges.
- ☐ Uses or recognizes simple rhymes.

Learning and Thinking

- ☐ Counts to 10.
- ☐ Names some written numbers between 1 and 5.
- ☐ Uses time words such as yesterday, tomorrow, morning, or night.
- ☐ Pays attention for 5-10 minutes during a non-screen activity.
- ☐ Writes some letters in own name.
- ☐ Names some letters when they are pointed out.

Movement and Self-Help

- ☐ Buttons some buttons.
- ☐ Hops on one foot.

Notes / Questions for Teacher or Healthcare Provider

[Open the official CDC Age 5 Milestone Checklist](#)

When to Ask for Additional Support

Act early when

Your child is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost a skill previously acquired, or you, a teacher, or another caregiver has a developmental concern. Share specific examples and ask for developmental screening.

Talk with the teacher	Compare observations across home and school routines.
Contact the pediatric healthcare provider	Share the completed checklist and request developmental screening when appropriate.
Request a formal evaluation	A specialist or local public agency may evaluate speech-language, motor, learning, or social-emotional development.
Document progress	Keep examples, dates, teacher notes, and any screening or evaluation reports.

Trusted Family Resources

<u>CDC Developmental Milestones</u>	Age-based checklists, milestone videos, a digital checklist, and the Milestone Tracker app.
<u>HealthyChildren.org - Preschool</u>	Parent guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics on development, health, behavior, reading, play, and school readiness.
<u>Head Start School Readiness</u>	Resources covering physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development.
<u>Head Start Social-Emotional Learning</u>	Resources about relationships, routines, emotional skills, friendship, and problem-solving.
<u>NAEYC Resources for Families</u>	Research-informed family articles about play, learning, development, and developmentally appropriate practice.

Family reminder: Development is not a race. Observe the whole child, celebrate progress, and seek support promptly when something does not feel right.