

The Growing Years

Child Development Fact Sheet

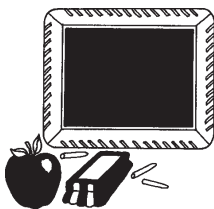
Bulletin #4251

5 Years

Questions Parents Ask: Is My Child Ready for Kindergarten?

Many educators recommend that a child entering kindergarten have the ability to do the following:

- ♦ Follow simple directions.
- ♦ Complete toileting procedures by themselves.
- ♦ Have some experience in using writing tools (pencil, crayon, etc.).
- ♦ Make their needs known through language expression.
- ♦ Attend to a task for at least several minutes or until it is complete.
- ♦ Have the ability to work at tasks independently.



What are 5-Year-Olds Like?

How I Move:

- ♦ I enjoy activities requiring hand skills.
- ♦ I draw a recognizable person.
- ♦ I am skilled and accurate with simple tools.
- ♦ I can sit still for brief periods.
- ♦ I enjoy jumping, running and skipping.
- ♦ I have adult-like posture in throwing and catching.
- ♦ I have great physical drive.
- ♦ I like dancing, am rhythmic and graceful.
- ♦ I sometimes roughhouse and fight.
- ♦ I am well coordinated.

How I Think:

- ♦ I am curious about everything.
- ♦ I am ready for short trips into the community.
- ♦ I know my family name and address.
- ♦ I talk clearly about my ideas.
- ♦ I am self-centered about my ideas.
- ♦ I like to be busy making something.
- ♦ I make a plan before starting a project.
- ♦ My attention span is 12 to 28 minutes long.

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- ♦ I can carry over play interests for more than one day.
- ♦ I play on a realistic level in dramatic play.
- ♦ I readily use complete sentences.
- ♦ I count 10 objects.

How I Get Along:

- ♦ I am becoming poised and self-confident.
- ♦ I copy adult behavior and act grown-up.
- ♦ I am aware of rules and define them for others.
- ♦ I play in groups of two to five children.
- ♦ I am less competitive than at age 4.
- ♦ I am sensitive to teasing and get hurt feelings easily.
- ♦ I like the companionship of adults.
- ♦ I have to be right.
- ♦ I am sociable and like to visit.
- ♦ I may get wild, silly and giggly.



Vision

Young children are farsighted due to the shape of the eyeball. At 5 years of age, the young child's vision is not completely mature. Even when a child is 6, vision will not be fully developed.

Teeth

For some children, as they near 5 years of age, the loss of the first tooth may occur. Other children will not lose a temporary tooth until the early school years.

Height and Weight

By 5 years of age, an average child is 43 ½ inches tall and weighs about 41 pounds. At 5 years of age, height can range from 40 to 47 inches and weight can range from 34 to 52 pounds.

Nutrition

A 5-year-old child needs about 1,700 calories each day. This is more than half the number of calories required by adult men. However, children have less than half the stomach capacity of an adult. The young child needs to eat small, but more frequent meals to have enough energy for growth and other activities. Mid-morning and mid-afternoon nutritious snacks are important for the young child's physical development.

How I Think

Children from 5 to 6 years of age are in a stage of egocentric thinking. This does not mean they are selfish. It means they have trouble taking another person's point of view because they have neither the developmental maturity nor the experiences to think as adults do.

Young children think everyone views the world as they do. Five-year-olds are likely to believe you are seeing the book or picture just as they are, even though you are seated behind the object and they are seated in front of it.

Here are some characteristics of 5-year-old thinking:

- ♦ They can be taught to distinguish their left hand from their right, but show confusion when thinking about another person's right or left hand.
- ♦ They tend to ask questions and answer them in literal terms.
- ♦ They define things by their use. "A ball is for bouncing" or "The pink medicine is for taking when I throw up!"
- ♦ They often have a vocabulary of more than 2,000 words. Many seem to practice using all 2,000 of these words at the dinner table each evening.
- ♦ They enjoy beginning to learn letters, numbers and colors. Though few can actually read, it is not unusual for a child to be able to "recite" a favorite story word-for-word or to recognize favorite words in that story.

Parenting the 5-Year-Old

The parents of a 5-year-old hold a most important place in the life of their child! It is from the parent, the child's first teacher, that a child will gain information and seek answers to questions about her world. Here are some suggestions for getting involved with your 5-year-old.

Talk with your child. Not only does talking help to demonstrate "You are an important person to me," talking helps to establish communication habits that can be long-lasting. Set aside a time each day (away from the TV and radio) when discussions can be held about the day's event and activities.

Listen to your child. Five-year-olds can be quite chatty, but through careful listening, parents can understand how their children are thinking or understanding a situation. Likewise, they may need some gentle reminders about being listeners themselves. Parents who model listening skills are more likely to have children who understand and use this ability to listen to others.

Read to your child. Children at age five enjoy having books read to them. They gain new information, have fun with story characters and situations, and think about what could have happened. Reading to children teaches them that books are important and that words put together can create ideas.



Provide plenty of time for your child to play. It is through play activities that children explore and discover what the world is like. Texture, size, shape, color, smell or weight of objects are all important discoveries. It is tempting for adults to over-plan the 5-year-old's time. Swimming, gymnastics, art, soccer, T-ball, language and

music classes are available in many communities. However, children this age need time to develop skills at their own pace, and in a leisurely fashion. Unnecessary pressure to accomplish and succeed can cause a child to feel greatly stressed.

Praise and reinforce your child for his accomplishments. A "spoonful of sugar" helps a child this age feel good about himself. When the 5-year-old's self-esteem is high, she/he will feel that a task can be attempted even if it is too difficult or is totally new. They will feel less distressed if an attempt is not successful. They can feel, "It's all right! I can try again. Mom and Dad think so, too."

Emotional Growth of the 5-Year-Old

Emotional growth is, at times, not easily identified, but there are many changes that will occur in the child's ability to express and control emotions. Children, like adults, get angry or fearful, feel jealous, frustrated or sad. They also feel happy, elated, proud, delighted, excited and overjoyed. It is important to remember that it is impossible to stop children from feeling any of these things. However, it is possible to set up guidelines for showing children acceptable ways to express their feelings.

Emotionally, there is a dilemma that 5-year-olds will begin to face. There is a strong conflict between wanting to be grown up and needing to be a child. As children get out into the world, meet more people and have new experiences, they learn more about themselves and how to survive emotionally.

People often refer to childhood as "carefree and happy years." However, at times, the pressure of growing up can be overwhelming for some children. Adults need to be sensitive to the intense feelings children show. It is not the emotion, but rather the way it is expressed and how it affects the child, that determines whether it builds or damages personality and adjustment.

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As 5-year-olds grow and mature, they will learn to behave in more socially appropriate ways. Socially appropriate behaviors will continue to be learned beyond the 5th year until well into the adolescent and young adult years.



Here are some general characteristics of emotional development during the 5th year:

- ♦ Five-year-olds are both cooperative and helpful. They like the feeling of pleasing the special adults in their world.
- ♦ They may have great difficulty waiting for a special day, then get physically ill from excitement when the big day finally arrives.
- ♦ Once they have made up their minds, 5-year-olds do not change it easily and often get upset with changes in routines or plans. They often cry if they are contradicted or scolded.
- ♦ Many 5-year-olds express anger by saying, "I hate you" and affection by saying, "I love you." These statements may not be far apart within a conversation.

Five-year-olds release tension in a variety of ways, including thumb-sucking, rhythmic movements or touching genitals.

Relationships and the 5-Year-Old

The 5-year-old is entering a period of self discovery in establishing relationships with others. It is a time when social skills first seen in the preschool years are beginning to be polished. Children find out about themselves

by relating to other people in the larger world around them. Relationships form the backbone of this discovery.

The number, quality and kinds of relationships constantly change during childhood. The peer group will become increasingly important as children spend more time with each other and less time with their families. The peer group gives children the chance to measure the development of their abilities and skills in relation to other children. It also contributes to how children feel about themselves.

As children grow and develop, interactions with parents change. Their independent/dependent struggle can be hard for parents to understand. However, throughout the 5th year, the home and family are still very important to children. They provide psychological safety, a place where children know what is expected of them, sense that they are valued, and still can let their true selves and deepest feelings show.

Quarreling among siblings happens in every group and every family despite ages and numbers of people. Some of the most quarrelsome children are the quickest to defend their brothers and sisters from outside attack. Arguing may tax adults, but it contributes to a child's development. Within families, children learn much from each other like how to argue, defend themselves, stand up for their own rights and make peace.

Here are some characteristics of a 5-year-old's relationships:

- ♦ Many 5-year-olds fall in love with their kindergarten teachers. Everything teacher says may become law and the child may often misinterpret what the teacher tells them.
- ♦ Although 5-year-olds love their teachers, their closest ties are still to parents.

- ♦ Socially, one-to-one contacts are best and they easily choose friends of either sex as playmates. However, their playmates may change from day to day.
- ♦ Five-year-olds have a great need to be first, to win, to be the best. They often tell one another, “You are a dumb painter” or “You run too slowly to be on my team.”
- ♦ Five-year-olds will bribe peers with grand promises, at least for a while (for example, “If you let me go first, I’ll bring you gum tomorrow”). However, by the end of the year, they begin to recognize which children follow through with promises and which don’t.
- ♦ Nearly every 5-year-old reports at some time that, “No one likes me,” “Sarah never lets me play,” or “Everyone is mean to me. These remarks are as apt to be expressions of fears as they are accounts of actual events or circumstances.
- ♦ Five-year-olds like to role play and to be picked for special jobs. They are able to choose their activities and friends more easily at this age than they will be able to just one year later.

Preparing Children for School: A Primer for Parents

When your children are about to start formal schooling, you may worry: “Are they ready?” “Have I done enough?”

Actually, you may have taught your children more than you realize. You have helped them learn basic survival skills. You have taught them to feed themselves, cross a street and get along with others. By teaching them language, you have given them the foundation for all later learning.



You have also given your children attitudes toward school and education. Those attitudes are far more important than numbers and letters. Attitudes determine how children feel about school and how hard they try. Making sure children form positive attitudes is one of your most important tasks.

Butterflies

Most young children are eager to go to school. They talk and talk and talk about it. They want to learn how to read, and they are anxious to please and do well. In fact, most children feel so excited they begin to get “butterflies” inside. They may be:

- ♦ Worried about their parents. “Will Daddy leave me there and never come back?”
- ♦ Nervous about being with strangers. “Who will play with me?”
- ♦ Scared about going to a new place. “How will I find kindergarten?” “What if I get lost?”
- ♦ Afraid they will not fit in. “But I cannot read yet.”

Parents, too, feel excited. They have looked forward to this time as well. They are glad their child is growing up and becoming independent. Yet, parents may be apprehensive. They may be:

- ♦ Upset about leaving their child. “Will Tammy miss me? Will she cry?”
- ♦ Nervous about their child’s health and safety. “Will she be worn out from riding the bus so long?”
- ♦ Anxious for their child to succeed. “Did I do enough to prepare him?”
- ♦ Unsure of their new responsibilities. “What will Billy’s school expect of me?”

Even if a child has been in school settings before — play groups, nursery school or day care — the start of formal schooling is a new experience for both child and parents. In their

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minds, this is the day the child begins “real” school. Like any big change, it brings apprehension as well as joy.

Confidence

Preparation helps. At the start of formal schooling, a child needs to learn new skills — waiting in turn and being tested, for example. Preparing a child for these experiences gives both parent and child confidence and direction.

To make the change easier for you and your child, there is some homework that you can do:

- ♦ Visit the classroom where your child will be.
- ♦ Find out what the school expects of you.
- ♦ Become involved in your child’s school.

Learning about your child’s school program and your new role as a school parent may help you in two ways. It may ease your worries and fears. It also may help you do a better job preparing your child.

Of course, your job will not be over the day your child enters school. Children continue to need preparation each year they join a new classroom or school. They need your enthusiasm and interest in education, and they always need your confidence in their ability to learn.

A Lesson Plan for Parents

As a parent, you have been helping your child develop the skills and attitudes needed in school. However, right before your child starts school, he or she needs some special preparation. Here are a few things you can do to help your child adjust to school more easily.

Take your child to visit the school.

- ♦ Walk or ride the route to school.
- ♦ Wander down the halls.

- ♦ Look around the classroom and point out different things.
- ♦ Watch what children are doing.
- ♦ Find the bathroom.
- ♦ Look for the nurse’s office.
- ♦ Play on the playground.
- ♦ Draw a map of the route to school.
- ♦ Draw a picture of the school.
- ♦ Take a photo of your child at school.
- ♦ Talk about what you saw.

Talk about what your child will do in school.

- ♦ Find out what your child expects.
- ♦ Clear up misconceptions, such as “but I can’t read yet.”
- ♦ Describe activities your child will do in school. Discuss why they are important.
- ♦ Explain some rules your child will have to follow in school and why they are necessary.
- ♦ Talk about the purpose of tests and grades.

Introduce your child to people at school.

- ♦ Introduce your child to the teacher and principal.
- ♦ Tell your child something about the teacher — where he or she lives and whether he or she has children.
- ♦ Explain who other people are — custodians, secretaries and assistant teachers.
- ♦ Invite a few of your child’s future classmates home to play and get acquainted.

Help your child feel he or she will like school and learning.

- ♦ Find out why your child thinks school is important.
- ♦ Explain why you think school is important.
- ♦ Share some of your good experiences in school.
- ♦ Show your child how skills learned in school may be used in later life.
- ♦ Explain how the teacher will help your child learn.

- ♦ Start a school scrapbook to record important events and progress.

Games for Growing

A Picture Strip

Making a picture strip of one of your child's familiar routines is a great way to develop pre-reading skills. Take a few photos (or draw pictures) of a simple routine your child does often such as getting ready for bed, going to preschool or grocery shopping. Mount the pictures in order, write a simple sentence describing each step under the pictures and hang it on the wall for your child to "read."

Toys for Growing

For Active Play and Physical Development

Assorted blocks
Balls and bean bags

Push and pull toys

Hollow blocks
Carpenter's bench

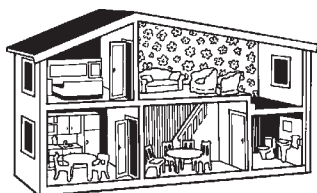
Tools

Wheelbarrow
Crates and boxes

Ladders
Bikes

For Dramatic and Imaginative Play

Doll corner materials
Costumes
Children's house play materials



Telephone
Puppets and stage
Tents or "caves"

For Creative and Constructive Play

Crayons and paper
Clay

Blunt scissors
Colored cubes
Simple puzzles
Large wooden beads

Easel, paints,
paper, brushes

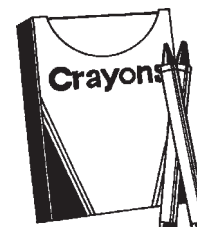
Scrapbooks and pictures for pasting

Simple paper dolls

Materials for dressing dolls

Knitting wool
Simple cut-outs
Sewing material

Musical instruments



Although there is no specific age when a child starts using playground equipment, skates, bikes or other outdoor toys, the child should be old enough to know the dangers of such equipment and be taught to follow certain rules:

- ♦ Bicycles, tricycles or sleds should not be used where there is traffic, and should be used carefully in areas where other children are at play.
- ♦ Roller skates should be taken off before crossing the street, and should be used with the appropriate safety gear.

Adults or parents should see to it that swings and other playground equipment are firmly placed in the ground, away from walls and fences, and out of the direct line of automobile or pedestrian traffic. The equipment should be the right size for the child, assembled according to the directions of the manufacturer and properly used.

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Remember, this fact sheet describes a typical child at each age. Each child is special, and each child develops at his or her own pace. Perfectly normal children may do things earlier or later than those described in this fact sheet. If you are concerned about your child's development, see your doctor.

He or She? Him or Her?

This fact sheet gives equal time and space to both sexes. That's why we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." Please note: when we use he or she, we include all children.

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