

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 3 to 11 Year Olds

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 3 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
Play is the work of this age – focus on becoming confident and efficient. Quite balanced – normally happy and contented.	Enjoys walking/climbing and running. Likes drawing/threading/play-dough and simple jigsaws.
Still self-centred and magical in thinking – believes wishes make things come true.	Begins to take turns, as a start to sharing. Large vocabulary mainly intelligible to strangers, but many ungrammatical forms persist.
Has imaginary friends who can be blamed when things go wrong.	Able to follow instructions.
Bargaining works but reasoning does not. Distraction still works.	Asks many ‘what, where and who’ questions. Listens eagerly to stories. Uses fork and spoon.
Doesn’t get so frustrated and gets less angry when stopped.	Pulls pants/knickers up/down.
Biggest fear is that their parent will abandon them – especially at night.	

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 4 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
Through play they continue to seek balance between dependence/independence.	Up and down stairs with adult following. Climbs ladders/trees.
May see return of some ‘2-year-old stubbornness’.	Rides tricycle expertly. Increasing skill in ball games. Threads small beads on lace. Holds pencil in mature fashion. Copies an X.
If naughty, may blame others or be naughty on purpose to get a reaction.	Speech grammatically correct and intelligible.
May be aggressive again – biting, kicking, and throwing objects.	Listens to and tells long stories, sometimes getting confused. Repeats nursery rhymes. Eats skilfully.
Has a sense of past/future. Fear of dark remains.	Washes/dries hands, brushes teeth.
Begin to compete with parent of same sex for the attention of parent of opposite sex	

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 5 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
More balanced again.	Runs lightly on toes.
Quite independent and often serious and realistic.	Active and skilful in outdoor play. Grips strongly with either hand.
Less frustrated and less angry – may bang doors/stamp feet, say ‘I hate you’ and ‘I wish you were dead’.	Good control in writing and drawing and painting.

Mostly friendly and talkative to strangers.	Writes a few letters spontaneously. Speech fluent – may have some phonetic confusions.
Bargaining continues to work. Calming down and time-out chairs help them to regain self-control.	Recites rhymes and jingles.
Fears of being hurt are common.	Enjoys jokes – asks meaning of abstract words.
May also worry that parents may not be available when needed, e.g. something happening to a parent while child at school. Tender and protective towards younger child or pet.	Uses knife/fork competently. Undresses/dresses. Appreciates clock time in relation to daily routine.

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 6 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
Parents are less central to the child's world. More involved in school life and making new relationships.	Has a sense of competitiveness and rivalry. Ability varies widely at this age.
Prefer to keep school and home life separate e.g.: 'What did you do today?' 'Nothing!'	Attention span still quite short. Intellectual skills are developing, but still tends to think in concrete images, e.g., moving house (will question if building is moving).
Like their work and efforts to be noticed. Can be very unsettled by a teacher leaving.	Speech difficulties will be improving. Speech may be fluent, vocabulary still limited.
Teacher is seen as 'theirs' and this threatens security and stability.	Has endless questions, very inquisitive. Reading simple stories between ages 6–7. More able to control antisocial impulses and develop a sense of what is right and acceptable.
Preoccupied with aspects of life such as life, death, illness, religion. Searching questions such as 'Where do babies come from?'	Plays in single sex groups and may actively dislike the opposite sex.
Friendships can be intense.	Girls may have a best friend, boys are usually in groups but may have a special friend.
Will be upset if excluded at times of sadness, e.g., family bereavement.	May show interest in bodies of opposite sex.
	Plays 'doctors and nurses'.
	Can sort fact from fiction and believe and not believe at the same time, e.g., Father Christmas.

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 7 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
Clear sense of own identity. Growing confidence and self-esteem through experience	More independent; may want to go to school alone.

of different situations. Understands other people's thoughts, feelings and wishes better.	Self-control increasing; 'more sensible.' Ability to reason develops along with vocabulary.
Argues with parents when views differ. Quarrels with siblings but learning reasoned arguing.	Still has a sense of competitiveness and rivalry.
Feels more secure and able to cope in the 'real' world.	Sense of time still poor – five minutes could be forever.
Can be self critical and sensitive to other people's comments.	Understands pretend play – knows it is not real but enjoy the fantasy.
Likes the order and routine of class groups but still happier in small group activities.	Play tends to be more with other children than parents.
Shows a strong attachment to teacher and may compare parents to teacher.	Friendships may come and go.
There needs to be a strong home/school relationship to leave child free to learn.	Will compare friends.
Can be muddled by complex family relationships as in divorce and stepfamilies. Needs clear explanations and reassurance.	Enjoys board and card games with parents – these help to learn about winning and losing safely.
Generally accepts a new baby without too much jealousy if included and reassured.	Will collect anything: tickets, bottle tops, cards. Like to 'own' them and swap with friends.
May reserve their worst behaviour for those they love best, i.e., family.	Enjoys pocket money and learning how to use it.

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 8 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
A lull between dependence of babyhood and independence of adolescence.	Able to participate in competitive and other sports.
Absorbing all their life experiences – positive and negative – receptive to good experiences – vulnerable to bad.	Speech and ability to count developed further by board games.
Strong emotions felt but can be difficult to cope with.	Co-ordination improves – able to play musical instruments.
May be idealistic, e.g., 'I'll never smoke'. Family very important – assume it is stable. Routine is important.	Enjoys 'facts'.
School and class routine are reassuring especially if have moved to Junior school.	Likes to watch television.
Teacher and peers build confidence in self. Still needs help with decisions and boundary setting. Need 'grown-ups' to listen to their fears and worries.	Enjoys 'lavatory' humour.
Makes 'same sex' friendships.	Likes 'crazes' and collecting items.
Friendships are based on thoughtfulness and consideration as well as mutual activity, rivalry and quarrelling.	

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 9 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
Family important – needed for a secure base and also for encouragement to do well.	Steady growth in height; boys generally taller and heavier than girls.
Aware of family members' strengths, weaknesses and capabilities, and of caregiver's anxieties.	Generally not experienced bodily puberty changes. However, some girls experience early changes and may have started menstruating.
Growing independence but can still act impulsively, with variation in degree of organisation.	Boys generally do not start bodily changes for some years.
Many can express themselves verbally, but may need help to express their thoughts and fears at difficult times, particularly around parental separation, divorce and life events. May benefit from talking to someone outside of family.	Personal hygiene and the importance of keeping clean becoming increasingly important as sebaceous and sweat glands start to become more active.
Beginning to understand parents and people in power do not always have all the answers.	Aware of how they fit in – aware of slight physical characteristics – and can be magnified – calling each other names.
Perceptive and beginning to understand groups and individuals, and what is important about the opposite sex.	Although they may tease about physical and personality defects/differences, also show concern for others.
Play is still important with a need for a 'best friend', though there may be more than one 'best friend'.	
Curious about death and dying, but beginning to have a more adult understanding of the finality of death and its implications.	
Interested in sexual matters and relationships.	
Joke about sex but do not necessarily understand the language used and the implications.	
Some nine-year-olds experience anxiety about whether they will grow up to be 'normal' – they are aware of the talk, e.g., homosexuality, but do not fully understand and remain anxious.	

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 10 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
Discovery that the rules of life are increasingly complicated, and that the world seems a much bigger place.	Can master most things to do with the body, intricate co-ordination skills are developed by practising and honing their preferred sporting activities.
More independence is achieved, and the nature of friendships is changing.	There may be a generalised body growth, with a changing of the shape of the body. Although there are issues that are common to both sexes, the experience of boys and girls is different.

Now able to set and achieve own goals. There is a mental change that occurs at this time, they discover the wider picture and have to think around subjects.	Sexual matters are usually approached in a joking, bantering manner within their separate groups. Knowledgeable joking by boys that conveys they have a wealth of knowledge, means they don't have to worry about girls.
Increased awareness of where they stand in relation to others, they will know their ranking in class.	Some girls may have started their periods and be more advanced physically than other girls, and than boys as a group.
Aware of social and cultural differences. They may feel pressured if they have learning difficulties, or considered very able.	Girls Breast buds may start to develop, and may be uneven, one side developing before the other. Pubic hair may have already started to appear and underarm hair usually appears two years after pubic hair. Sweat glands will start to increase, and the skin may start to become spotty and blackheads appear.
Anxious to please their parents and feel the pressure to succeed, and often seek out a middle position so as to not stand out from their peers.	Boys Growth of testes, and pubic hair. Facial and underarm hair growth starts approximately two years after pubic hair growth. Sweat glands will start to increase and this may cause spots and blackheads. The voice may start to deepen but this usually develops at a later age.
Friendship provides opportunity to move away, both emotionally and actively from a focus within the family.	
Hobbies and pursuits are important, allowing them to make gains.	
Increasingly concerned about issues of justice and fairness.	

Developmental and Emotional Milestones for 11 Year Olds

Emotional milestones	Developmental milestones
Increasing independence, becoming more self-aware.	Puberty – boys: physical changes often start later than in girls, lack of height may affect self-esteem.
Developing own interests can lead to conflict in family.	Some boys may start to notice broader shoulders and an enlarged scrotum.
Developing ideas of what it is to be a man or a woman. Parental attitudes will be a big influence.	Puberty – girls: a time of rapid physical development, hips widen, breasts developing, getting taller, periods starting for some.
Needs parental support to help explore and understand their developing skills and relationships.	11-year-olds need to be kept informed about the changes that are happening to them so they understand their bodies and feel prepared.
Adopted children become increasingly curious about birth parents.	Changing school – some children look forward to the change as a step towards growing up, others find the upheaval difficult.

May join with older children as want to feel more grown-up and be tempted into risky behaviour, e.g., smoking, drinking alcohol.	Developing an independence of mind, having own opinions, thinking and learning in a more logical way.
Friendships – girls: although part of a larger group of friends, a lot of ‘best friend’ swapping can happen, causing upset.	Hygiene – may need reminding about personal hygiene.
Friendships – boys: groups are often more activity-based, e.g., football, skateboarding, rather than focused on interpersonal relationships.	Appetite – usually good, some girls may start to diet.
	Sleep – reluctant to go to bed and get up!