milestones

Development in Early Childhood

2 YEARS

Physical
- Throughout early childhood, height and weight increase more slowly than in toddlerhood. (216)
- Balance improves; walks more rhythmically; hurried walk changes to run. (223)
- Jumps, hops, throws, and catches with rigid upper body. (223)
- Puts on and removes simple items of clothing. (223)
- Uses spoon effectively. (223)
- First drawings are gestural scribbles. (224)

Cognitive
- Make-believe becomes less dependent on realistic objects, less self-centered, and more complex; sociodramatic play increases. (228)
- Understands the symbolic function of photos and realistic-looking pictures. (229)
- Takes the perspective of others in simplified, familiar situations and in face-to-face communication. (231, 252)
- Recognition memory is well-developed. (239)
- Shows awareness of the distinction between inner mental and outer physical events. (241)
- Attaches verbal labels to amounts and sizes; begins to count. (244)

Language
- Vocabulary increases rapidly. (250)
- Uses a coalition of cues—perceptual and, increasingly, social and linguistic—to figure out word meanings. (250–251)
- Speaks in simple sentences that follow basic word order of native language, gradually adding grammatical markers. (251)
- Displays effective conversational skills. (252)

Emotional/Social
- Understands causes, consequences, and behavioral signs of basic emotions. (260)
- Begins to develop self-concept and self-esteem. (258–260)
- Shows early signs of developing moral sense—verbal evaluations of own and others’ actions and distress at harmful behaviors. (267)
- May display proactive (instrumental) aggression. (272–273)
- Gender-stereotyped beliefs and behavior increase. (276)

3–4 YEARS

Physical
- Running, jumping, hopping, throwing, and catching become better coordinated. (223)
- Pedals and steers tricycle. (223)
- Galloping and one-foot skipping appear. (223)
- Fastens and unfastens large buttons. (223)
- Uses scissors. (223)
- Uses fork effectively. (223)
- Draws first picture of a person, using tadpole image. (224)

Cognitive
- Understands the symbolic function of drawings and of models of real-world spaces. (224, 228–229)
- Grasps conservation, reasons about transformations, reverses thinking, and understands cause–effect sequences in simplified, familiar situations. (231–233)
- Sorts familiar objects into hierarchically organized categories. (232)
- Uses private speech to guide behavior during challenging tasks. (234–235)
- Gains in executive function, including inhibition, flexible shifting of attention, and working memory capacity. (236–238)
- Uses scripts to recall routine events. (240)
- Understands that both beliefs and desires determine behavior. (241)
- Knows the meaning of numbers up to 10, counts correctly, and grasps cardinality. (244)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the page or pages on which each milestone is discussed.
Language

- Aware of some meaningful features of written language. (244)
- Coins new words based on known words; extends language meanings through metaphor. (250)
- Masters increasingly complex grammatical structures, occasionally overextending grammatical rules to exceptions. (251–252)
- Adjusts speech to fit the age, sex, and social status of listeners. (252)

Emotional/Social

- Describes self in terms of observable characteristics and typical emotions and attitudes. (258–259)
- Has several self-estees, such as learning things in school, making friends, getting along with parents, and treating others kindly. (260)
- Emotional self-regulation improves. (261)
- Experiences self-conscious emotions more often. (262)
- Relies more on language to express empathy. (262)
- Proactive aggression declines, while reactive aggression (verbal and relational) increases. (272–273)
- Engages in associative and cooperative play with peers, in addition to parallel play. (263)

5–6 YEARS

Physical

- Starts to lose primary teeth. (217)
- Increases running speed, gallops more smoothly, and engages in true skipping. (223)
- Displays mature, flexible throwing and catching patterns. (223)
- Uses knife to cut soft foods. (223)
- Ties shoes. (223, 224)
- Draws more complex pictures. (224)

Cognitive

- Magical beliefs decline. (231)
- Improves in ability to distinguish appearance from reality. (228)
- Gains further in executive function, including planning. (237–238)

Language

- Understands that letters and sounds are linked in systematic ways. (244)
- Uses invented spellings. (244)
- By age 6, has acquired a vocabulary of about 10,000 words. (250)
- Uses most grammatical constructions competently. (251)

Emotional/Social

- Improves in recognition, recall, scripted memory, and autobiographical memory. (239–240)
- Understanding of false belief strengthens. (241)
- Improves in emotional understanding, including the ability to interpret, predict, and influence others’ emotional reactions. (260–261)

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