

## MOVEMENT & MOTOR SKILLS

Children in the Early Years should be able to...

### Use Their Body

- To pedal a small bike.
- Run around.
- Climb up stairs.
- Kick, catch and throw a large ball.
- Balance on each foot for a moment.
- Stand on tip toe.
- Jump with both feet.
- Sway and march to music.
- Begin to hop on one foot.

### Use Their Hands

- To do simple finger actions to songs.
- Build with construction toys.
- Hold a pencil and draw simple lines.
- Manipulate large buttons.
- String beads onto a shoelace.
- Complete simple puzzles.
- Use scissors to make simple cuts.

### Make Sense of the World

- Recognise up to 5 colours.
- Show their age using fingers.
- Count 5 objects aloud.
- Put 2 halves of a picture together.
- Understand hot and cold.
- Start to remember details on a picture.
- Start to sort real objects into groups of things which are the same in some way.

### Tips for Home

- Encourage your child to undress and dress independently. Help only in the parts they have difficulty with.
- At mealtimes encourage your child to eat their meal independently. Prepare to get messy!
- Provide a range of manipulative activities, e.g. play dough, drawing, cutting, gluing, puzzles, beads and pegboards.
- Build some outside playtime into your day, use your local parks or your backyard to run, climb, swing, jump and play ball.
- Join in activities with your child. It is more fun to play together.

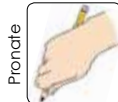
### Development of Hand Function, Grasps and Drawing Skills

In a natural developmental sequence children will hold the writing implement in a variety of grasps until they settle on a functional tripod grip for handwriting. The complexity of drawing skills increases as the child develops more control over the pencil or crayon in their hand.

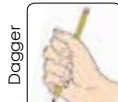
#### A 2 - 3 year old can:

- Imitate drawing a circle.
- Copy a horizontal line and a vertical line.
- Draw 2 or more strokes when attempting to copy a cross.

#### 1-2 Years



#### 2-3 Years



#### 3-4 Years



#### A 3 - 4 year old child can:

- Copy a circle.
- Imitate a horizontal cross.
- Imitate a zig-zag line.
- Join two dots.
- Draw a diagonal line by following dotted line.
- Trace over a diamond shape.
- Draw a man with a head and one other body part (e.g. arms, legs).
- Trace and stay on a 7cm wide horizontal line most of the time.

For more information see PLD sheet <http://pld-literacy.org/product/pencil-grip-drawing-skills-fact-sheet/>

### Causes for Concerns

- Avoids or has difficulty with hand activities, eg: drawing, puzzles, scissor use.
- Difficulties with dressing or eating.
- Stumbles or falls frequently or often bumps into people or objects.
- Has trouble keeping their eyes on what they are doing.
- Avoids or dislikes messy play or unexpected touch.
- Seems very busy and isn't able to calm or quiet self.
- Avoids or dislikes equipment that is fast moving or off the ground, eg: swings, roundabouts.
- Difficulty matching colours, sizes and shapes.

### Development of Cutting Skills

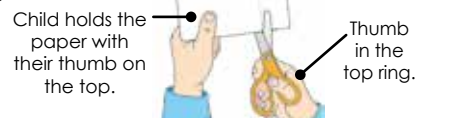
Children should progress through the following 4 stages in order to develop good cutting skills:

**Stage 1** – Children learn to hold scissors appropriately and to open and close scissors.

**Stage 2** – Children learn to hold and snip paper.

**Stage 3** – Children learn to cut in a single direction and to cut along a line.

**Stage 4** – Children learn to cut corners and curves.



**2½ - 3 years:** Child is able to snip paper. Child holds scissors in one hand (dominant hand is not likely established at this stage). The paper may be held by an adult.

**3 - 4 years:** Child is able to cut a 10cm piece of paper in approximate halves (no line placed on the paper). Child is able to cut along a 10cm straight line with their cut no wider than 1.7cm.

**4 - 5 years:** Child is able to cut along a curved line and cut out a range of shapes including squares, triangles and circles with their cut line no wider than 1 cm.

For more information see PLD sheet <http://pld-literacy.org/product/developing-cutting-skills-milestone-fact-sheet/>

# The Early Years

3 & 4 year olds

## Language, Literacy and Motor Milestones



Three and four year olds approach the world with great curiosity and a desire to explore. As a result, this age range is considered to be one of the most significant periods for the development of language, motor and cognitive skills. 3 and 4 year olds are increasingly verbal, typically learning multiple new words each day. In addition they are forming longer sentences and their pronunciation is becoming clearer. Motor skills are becoming more refined (showing independence with riding, jumping and catching). From 3 years, children demonstrate an emerging awareness of words, letters and numbers.

### How to Use...

This booklet has been designed to give an overview of the language, literacy and motor milestones to be expected in a child of 3 and 4 years old. Please keep in mind however, that every child's development is unique and complex and a child may not follow these developmental milestones exactly. Although each child may develop skills at different rates, there is a predictable sequence of development. It is therefore important to consider the individual child when using these milestones.

**Use these milestones and the associated tips and activity ideas to:**

1. Gain a sense of your child's strengths and areas requiring development.
2. Get tips for helping your child to develop strong language, literacy and motor skills.

**REMEMBER: Always join in activities with your child. It is more fun to play together plus your child will learn so much more!**

### A Note on Screen Time...

Technology is a big part of our world today, however it is very important for a child's language, literacy and physical development that screen time is limited and children are encouraged to engage in a variety of activities. Overuse of technology limits a child's imagination and creativity and can lead to delays in attaining developmental milestones in the areas of language, literacy and motor skills.

### If You Have Concerns...

It is recommended that if your child has not attained the skills outlined for his/her age, that a school-based meeting be scheduled. If you have concerns regarding oral language or literacy skills, consult a Speech Pathologist. If you have concerns regarding motor skills, consult an Occupational Therapist. Research clearly states that the earlier intervention commences the better the outcomes for the child.



116 Parry Street, Perth WA 6000, Australia

T: +61 (08) 9227 0846 • F: +61 (08) 9227 0865

[www.pld-literacy.org](http://www.pld-literacy.org) • [mail@pld-literacy.org](mailto:mail@pld-literacy.org)

© PLD Organisation Pty. Ltd.. This booklet can be downloaded and distributed providing PLD's logo and contact details are not removed.

## ORAL LANGUAGE SKILLS

### Speaking

By 3 and 4 years, children should be **very verbal** and be able to speak for themselves. A 3-4 year old should be able to...

- Use speech that is 80% intelligible to a familiar listener.
- Use 1000-1500 different words.
- Use sentences of 4-6 words.
- Tell news or stories with support.
- Ask 'what', 'where' and 'why' questions.
- Use joining words (and, then) to connect ideas.

*For a full overview of the development of speech sounds and how to help a child who is difficult to understand, refer to the PLD sheet <http://pld-literacy.org/product/speech-sound-development-milestones-fact-sheet/>*

RECOMMENDED BOOKS	
Choose short stories with simple repetitive sentences that may have an introduction and conclusion.	
	BOOK TITLE
Vocabulary Enrichment	Dear Zoo
	Imagine
	Oh Dear
Narrative Retell	Bear Hunt
	Hattie and the Fox
	Mr Grumpy's Outing
	Rosie's Walk
	The Magic Hat
	The Very Hungry Caterpillar
	Time for Bed
Textless Picture Books	Who Sank the Boat?
	Sunshine
	Hug
	Tall
	Yes
SUPPORTING THE UNDERSTANDING OF QUESTIONS	
EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS	
What is it?	If a child has difficulty understanding a question:
What are you doing?	
What is this for?	
Where is it?	
What (size/colour/shape) is it?	
Who is this?	1. Repeat the question using visual cues to support (e.g. pictures and gestures). 2. Rephrase the question or ask it in a different way. 3. Give two alternatives for the child to choose between. 4. Model the correct answer.

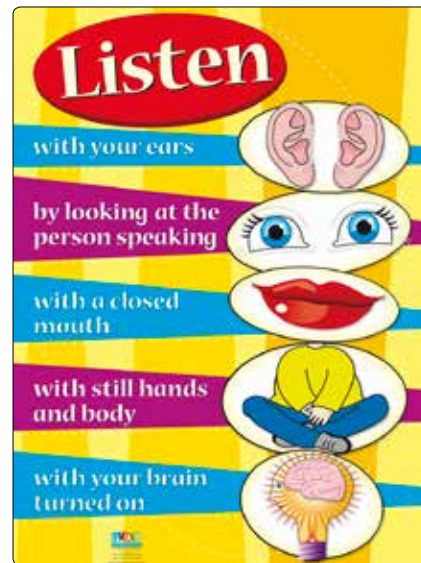
### Tips for Home

- Talk with your child about past, present and future events.
- Give your child instructions to follow within daily activities.
- Read stories and ask questions about the book. Re-read the same books with your child.
- Encourage your child to retell stories or things they have done using their own words. You can teach your child to do this by:
  1. On one day re-telling the story using the pictures yourself.
  2. On the next day re-telling the story with the child, the adult tells one page then the child tells one page. Or the adult tells the first part of the sentence and lets the child finish the sentence.
  3. Finally ask the child to re-tell the story in their own words. (This may be too difficult for younger children, if so continue with step 2).
- Encourage your child to make up stories from pictures.

### Understanding / Listening

By 3 and 4 years, children should have a receptive vocabulary (understanding) of 1000 - 2000 words and be able to...

- Follow 2-step unrelated instructions (e.g. "Get your bag and put your shoes on.").
- Understand what objects are used for (e.g. "Show me something that we can eat.").
- Understand basic concepts of size (big/small), location (in/on/under) and shape (circle/square).
- Understand words such as 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow'.
- Understand a variety of concrete questions.



*For more information about comprehension development and tips for helping a child to understand and answer questions, refer to the PLD sheet <http://pld-literacy.org/product/comprehension-development-fact-sheet/>*

### Causes for Concerns

- Child is frustrated when trying to talk.
- A small vocabulary.
- Only uses short sentences or sentences with grammatical errors.
- Can not retell an event or simple story even with support.
- Difficulty following instructions.
- Difficulty answering simple 'who', 'what', 'where' questions.
- Child's speech is difficult to understand.
- Does not enjoy listening to stories.
- Short attention span.
- Child stutters or words seem to get stuck when they talk.

## LITERACY SKILLS

Many parents wonder if their child's reading skills are developing at the normal rate. While there are individual differences, there is a general progression of skill development.

### During the Early Years, children will...

#### Discover writing:

- They become interested in the print on signs or labels and may come to recognise some of these in particular.
- They may recognise several books by their covers, know the titles, understand that they are read front to back, from left to right and by looking at the print rather than just the pictures.
- They may understand that one can use writing for communication through cards and notes, for list making, for finding television programs in the guide and for a host of other purposes.
- Through focusing on print, 3 year olds start to become familiar with letters and may learn to recognise and name some.
- Story telling skills are important for literacy. 3 year olds should start to move from just requesting and commanding to explaining their experiences and telling stories.

#### Start to engage in sound play:

- They begin to focus on the sounds within words (phonological awareness). 4 year olds begin to appreciate and produce rhymes, clap syllables in words and start to notice how certain words sound the same.
- They continue to make progress identifying and reproducing letters. They may even be able to write their own name and mix scribble, some letters and drawing in 'writing' notes and stories.
- Story telling skills should continue to develop. Their stories should become fairly easy to follow.

### Tips for Home

- Read books with your child. Point out titles, talk about the covers and see if your child can guess what the book might be about. Point to words as you read and help them to understand that we read from left to right.
- Provide paper and pencils or crayons and encourage your child to "write" their own lists and stories (of course these may seem like scribbles – but that is early writing!).
- Encourage your child to tell stories about what they have done or retell books read to them.
- Encourage your child to write their own name using pencil and paper or magnetic letters on the fridge.
- Help your child to think of words that rhyme. (For example as you look at a book, point to the picture of the cat and say "Cat. Can you think of a word that rhymes with cat? A word that sounds a bit the same?").

### Causes for Concerns

- Cannot tell simple stories about experiences, events or retell stories read to them.
- Will not attempt to write letters or scribble notes.
- Do not enjoy having books read to them.

**NOTE:** When introducing the alphabet, remember to reinforce the alphabet sounds more than the letter names. Why? Alphabet sounds are more important to early reading and spelling than the letter names. Young readers will read the word "sun" "sss-u-n".

