

# DID YOU KNOW AT 4 YEARS OLD I CAN...

## Language Development

- Speak in complete sentences
- Ask many questions
- Enjoy simple songs and nonsense words
- Sometimes add "ed" to words (For example, "I goed to the door and putted the cat outdoors. He hurted me.")
- Tell you my name, address, and phone number
- Carry on elaborate conversations
- Understand the basic rules of grammar and use correct pronouns (he, she, I)
- Sing songs or tell short stories from memory
- Recognize some letters if I am taught
- Learn how to write my name if I am taught
- Tell stories
- Engage in "back and forth" conversations



Read aloud to me each day. Encourage me to help retell familiar stories, and sing songs and fingerplays with me. Show me that words are everywhere, such as the grocery store, restaurants, department stores, and on road signs.

Give me old labels, cereal boxes, or other containers with print to help build my literacy skills. Give me paper, pencils, and crayons so I can draw and write about things I think and feel. Ask me to deliver short messages to family members.

## Cognitive Development

- Place objects from largest to smallest
- Understand the concepts of tallest, biggest, same, more, on, in, under, and above
- Understand the order of daily routines such as breakfast, lunch, dinner, and bedtime
- Continue an activity for 10 to 15 minutes
- Name six to eight colors and at least three shapes
- Draw a person with at least three body parts

- Start to understand time
- Follow two unrelated directions ("Please put your milk on the table and put your coat on.")
- Understand basic concepts related to number, size, weight, color, texture, distance, position, and time
- Understand immediate passage of time (what happened yesterday), but not calendar time
- Understand and remember my own accomplishments

## Play follow-the-leader with me!

When I am doing simple chores, instruct me to sort objects like the silverware, colors of clothes, and other household objects. Talk to me about things being in, on, under, behind, and beside.

## Physical Development

- Walk a straight line
- Hop on one foot
- Jump over objects 5 to 6 inches high
- Unbutton buttons
- Hold writing utensils between fingers and thumb
- Pour liquids and cut objects with supervision
- Run, jump, hop, and skip around objects with ease
- Pedal a tricycle skillfully
- Stack 10 or more blocks
- Form shapes and objects out of clay or play dough
- Thread small beads on a string
- Catch, bounce, and throw a ball easily

## Social/Emotional Development

- Enjoy playing with other children
- Take turns and share most of the time, but I may still be bossy
- Seek out adult approval
- Enjoy helping caregivers with tasks
- Understand and obey simple rules
- Change the rule of a game as it goes
- Feel jealousy



- Persistently ask “why” questions
- Brag and boast
- Be fearful of the dark and monsters
- Understand danger and be fearful at times
- Have difficulty separating make-believe from reality
- Name-call and tattle freely
- Lie sometimes to protect myself and friends (But I do not truly understand the concept of lying as my imagination often gets in the way.)
- Shock others by using “forbidden” words
- Express anger verbally rather than physically, most of the time
- Still throw tantrums when frustrated
- Imitate parent of the same gender
- Tell jokes that may not make sense to adults
- Have a vivid imagination and playmates
- Pretend in more elaborate settings like fire station, ice cream shop, or jungle

Continue to give me choices. If I am resistant to clean-up, ask me which toys I would like to clean up first. Continue to have conversations with me, and answer my “why” questions. Teach me socially acceptable behaviors, like saying “no thank you” and “you’re welcome”.

### Self-Help Skill Development

- Use a spoon, fork, and dinner knife
- Undress and dress myself without much help
- Use the toilet by myself

Teach me how to use the telephone correctly, especially in case of emergencies. Let me help you plan activities and make lists for groceries, shopping, and other errands. Teach me how to brush my teeth each day, and make sure it is part of my daily routine. Even though I will lose my baby teeth, this will establish a healthy, daily routine and keep my gums healthy.

Teach me basic safety rules like looking both ways before I cross the street and holding a caregiver’s hand while crossing the street or walking in parking lots. Also, teach me not to talk to strangers, unless they are community helpers (like a police officer or firefighter).



### Sing and act this “This is the Way” fingerplay with me!

*This is the way we wash our hands, (rub hands together)  
Wash our hands, wash our hands.*

*This is the way we wash our hands,  
So early in the morning.*

*This is the way we brush our teeth... (brush teeth with finger)*

*This is the way we brush our hair... (brush hair with hand)*

### Teach me “Down by the Bay”

*Down by the bay*

*Where the watermelons grow*

*Back to my home*

*I dare not go*

*For if I do*

*My mother will say*

*“Did you ever see a bear*

*Combing his hair*

*Down by the bay?”*

*Down by the bay*

*Where the watermelons grow*

*Back to my home*

*I dare not go*

*For if I do*

*My mother will say*

*“Did you ever see a bee*

*With a sunburned knee*

*Down by the bay?”*

*Down by the bay*

*Where the watermelons grow*

*Back to my home*

*I dare not go*

*For if I do*

*My mother will say*

*“Did you ever see a moose*

*Kissing a goose*

*Down by the bay?”*

*Down by the bay*

*Where the watermelons grow*

*Back to my home*

*I dare not go*

*For if I do  
My mother will say  
"Did you ever see a whale  
With a polka dot tail  
Down by the bay?"*

**Here are some books that I may enjoy:**

*We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Helen Oxenbury  
*The Napping House* by Audrey Wood  
*Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak  
*Corduroy* by Don Freeman  
*I Like Myself* by Karen Beaumont  
*Happy Birthday Moon!* by Frank Asch  
*If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Joffe Numeroff  
*Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* by Bill Martin Jr.

There are toys you can make for me using things from around the house, like **pool-noodle blocks**.

**Materials**

- pool noodles
- scissors (for adult use only)

**Instructions**

1. Cut the pool noodles in small sections of different sizes.
2. Encourage me to build with the different blocks. Talk with me about the different colors and ask me about what I am building with the blocks.

Sleep helps me grow and develop. I should get 10–13 hours of sleep a day.

Remember that each child develops at his or her own rate, and this handout is meant only as a guide of what to expect of your child's development at this age.

For more information about parenting and developmental milestones, contact your county Extension office or visit [extension.msstate.edu](http://extension.msstate.edu).

**References**

American Academy of Pediatrics. 2010. *Policy statement—prevention of choking among children*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2009-2862>  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2022. *Your child at 4 years*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-4yr.html>  
National Sleep Foundation. 2020. *How much sleep do you really need?* Retrieved from <https://www.thensf.org/how-many-hours-of-sleep-do-you-really-need/>



**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™**  
**EXTENSION**

**Publication 2394** (POD-08-24)

By **Louise E. Davis**, PhD, former Extension Professor; **Elizabeth Thorne**, PhD, Project Manager; and **Mary Hannah Mills**, MS, Project Manager, Human Sciences.

*Copyright 2024 by Mississippi State University. All rights reserved. This publication may be copied and distributed without alteration for nonprofit educational purposes provided that credit is given to the Mississippi State University Extension Service.*

Produced by Agricultural Communications.

*Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution. Discrimination in university employment, programs, or activities based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by applicable law is prohibited.*

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. ANGUS L. CATCHOT JR., Director