

Three to Four Years

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What should my child be able to do?

Hearing and Understanding

- Hears you when you call from another room.
- Hears television or radio at the same loudness level as other family members.
- Understands words for some colors, like red, blue, and green
- Understands words for some shapes, like circle and square
- Understands words for family, like brother, grandmother, and aunt

Talking

- Talks about activities at school or at friends' homes.
- Talks about what happened during the day. Uses about 4 sentences at a time.
- People outside of the family usually understand child's speech.
- Answers simple "who?", "what?", and "where?" questions.
- Asks when and how questions.
- Says rhyming words, like hat-cat
- Uses pronouns, like I, you, me, we, and they
- Uses some plural words, like toys, birds, and buses
- Uses a lot of sentences that have 4 or more words.
- Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words.

What can I do to help?

- Cut out pictures from old catalogs. Then make silly pictures by gluing parts of different pictures together in an improbable way. For example, glue a picture of a dog to the inside of a car as if the dog is driving. Help your child explain what is silly about the picture.
- Sort pictures and items into categories, but increase the challenge by asking your child to point out the item that does not belong in a category. For example, a baby does not belong with a dog, cat and mouse. Tell your child that you agree with his or her answer because a baby is not an animal.
- Expand vocabulary and the length of your child's utterances by reading, singing, talking about what you are doing and where you are going, and saying rhymes.
- Read books that have a simple plot, and talk about the story line with your child. Help your child to retell the story or act it out with props and dress-up clothes. Tell him or her your favorite part of the story and ask for his or her favorite part.
- Look at family pictures, and have your child explain what is happening in each one.
- Work on comprehension skills by asking your child questions. Have him or her try to fool you with his or her own questions. Make this game playful by pretending that you have been fooled by some of his or her really hard questions.
- Expand on social communication and storytelling skills by "acting out" typical scenarios (e.g., cooking food, going to sleep, or going to the doctor) with a dollhouse and its props. Do the same type of role-playing activity when playing dress-up. As always, ask your child to repeat what he or she has said if you do not understand it completely. This shows that what he or she says is important to you.