

# AGES & STAGES

4 years



*Energetic and imaginative best describes four-year-olds. They are able to learn new words quickly, and use them in chatting with you, and telling you jokes and wild stories.*

## 4-YEAR-OLDS

### Growing and Moving

WEIGHT: 27-50 pounds

HEIGHT: 37-46 inches

- runs, jumps, hops, skips around obstacles with ease
- enjoys climbing and jumping off of things
- catches, bounces, and throws a ball easily
- walks in a straight line
- can pedal and steer a tricycle
- can unzip, unsnap, and unbutton clothing
- uses a spoon, fork, and dinner knife skillfully
- can feed self, brush teeth, comb hair, wash hands, dress
- can lace shoes, but not tie shoes yet
- threads small beads on a string
- stacks 10 or more blocks
- forms shapes and objects out of clay or play dough
- needs 10-12 hours sleep each night

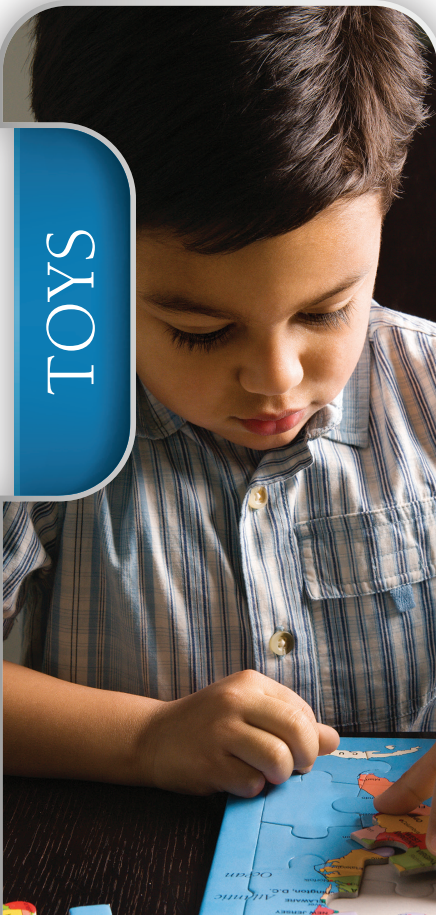
### Thinking and Learning

- can place objects in a line from largest to smallest
- counts 1-7 objects out loud but not always in the right order
- names 6-8 colors and 3 shapes
- continues one activity for 10-15 minutes
- understands the concepts of tallest, biggest, same, more, on, in, under, and above
- learns name, address, and phone number if taught
- understands order of daily routines (breakfast before lunch, dinner before bedtime)
- follows two unrelated directions: "Put your milk on the table and get your coat on."
- asks and answers who, what, when, why, where questions
- understands immediate passage of time – "what happened yesterday" but does not yet understand calendar time



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# TOYS



## Toys

matching games, puzzles  
(12-15 pieces)

board games, dominoes

pretend cash register, play  
money

plastic blocks

balls (all sizes)

glue, crayons, paint, scissors  
and paper, washable markers,  
colored chalk, play dough

trucks and cars

bicycle with training wheels

dress-up clothes

puppets

doll with clothes

## Listening, Talking, and Reading

- likes to talk and carries on elaborate conversations
- speaks fairly complex sentences. "The baby ate the cookie before I could put it on the table."
- can recognize some letters if taught and may be able to print name
- recognizes familiar words in simple books or signs (STOP sign)
- enjoys singing simple songs, rhymes, and nonsense words
- adapts language to listener's level of understanding. To baby sister: "Daddy go bye-bye." To mother: "Daddy went to the store to buy food."
- may add "ed" to words. "I 'put-ed' the cat outdoors. "He 'hurt-ed' me."
- loves to play with words and tell jokes that may not make any sense at all to adults

## Feeling and Relating

- takes turns and shares (most of the time); may still be bossy
- understands and obeys simple rules (most of the time) BUT makes many changes to the rules of a game during every day play
- persistently asks why
- begins to understand danger —at times can become quite fearful
- has difficulty separating make-believe from reality - fearful of the dark and monsters
- lies sometimes to protect self and friends, but doesn't truly understand the concept of lying— imagination often gets in the way
- enjoys showing off and bragging about possessions
- may call others names and tattles freely
- likes to shock others by using "forbidden" words
- still throws tantrums over minor frustrations
- expresses anger verbally rather than physically (most of the time)
- pretending goes far beyond "playing house" to more elaborate settings like fire station, school, shoe store, ice cream shop

## LET'S TALK!

### *Ideas to help children build communication skills*

**Be a good model.** Four-year-olds are just learning how to get along with others and it is not always easy. They watch you closely for tips on how to do this. Demonstrate and give your 4-year-old the words to use to ask another child to play. Be respectful to others, including children! Show appreciation and speak kindly of others. "It was nice of Amy to help you with your boots."





## Books for Children

*Caps for Sale*

*Esphyr Slobodkina*

*Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!*

*Mem Fox*

*If You Give A Mouse a Cookie*

*Laura Joffe Numeroff and Felicia Bond*

*Little Bear*

*Elsa Holmelund Minarik*

*My Many Colored Days*

*Dr. Seuss*

*Mr. Gumpy's Outing*

*John Burningham*

*Nuts to You!*

*Lois Ehlert*

*The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear*

*Don Wood*

*The Mitten*

*Jan Brett*

*We're Going on a Bear Hunt*

*Helen Oxenbury and Michael Rosen*

*Whistle for Willie*

*Ezra Jack Keats*

## IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Help children test their physical strength and take "safe" risks by setting up an obstacle course with challenges to crawl, climb, leap and balance.
- Encourage children to "take charge" and play follow the leader.
- Provide puzzles, blocks, markers, scissors, and play dough to support development of finger coordination skills.
- Read aloud each day and encourage your child to help you tell the story. "What happens next?"
- Talk about reading. Show your child that words are everywhere: grocery labels, restaurant menus, department store signs, etc.
- Encourage your child to pretend play with everyday words by providing old coupons, junk mail, newspaper ads, and old cereal boxes.
- Ask your child to deliver short messages to family members.
- Say nursery rhymes and finger plays together.
- Make play dough.
- Cut out magazine pictures of different shapes, colors, or animals.
- Talk about things being in, on, under, behind, or beside.
- Pretend to walk like various animals.
- Sort and count everything in sight like silverware, socks, and rocks.
- Teach your child the correct use of the telephone.
- Let your child help you plan activities and make lists for groceries and errands.
- Have many back-and-forth conversations to strengthen children's communication skills.

### A Word on Development

Every child is unique. Each child's learning and growth rates may differ slightly from other children the same age. If, however, you notice a child is unable to do many of the skills listed for his or her age group, you may wish to talk with a health professional. In Iowa, you may request a free evaluation and assessment from **Early ACCESS** at 1-888-425-4371. [www.iafamilysupportnetwork.org/early-access-iowa](http://www.iafamilysupportnetwork.org/early-access-iowa)

If your child has special needs, early help can make a difference.

### Resources

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

- Human Sciences [www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences)
- Extension Store [store.extension.iastate.edu](http://store.extension.iastate.edu)

Search "Ages and Stages" for information about specific development milestones.

The developmental information provided in this bulletin has been combined from a variety of professional resources to help you understand your child's overall growth. It is not a standardized measurement tool.

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Ages & Stages 4 Year-Olds is available online at: [store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/5025](http://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/5025).

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