

the school years toolkit

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Development milestones

Age four to five (Reception)

Movement

- Uses playground/gym equipment independently (climbing frame with ladder slide, low balance beams, swings – may not be able to initiate the swing).
- Stands on one foot for five seconds or more.
- “Gallops” along for 4 – 5 metres.
- Hops on one foot five or more times.
- Skips along on alternate feet four or more times.
- Runs around obstacles and turns corners with agility.
- Goes upstairs and downstairs without support and with one foot to each step.
- Kicks ball forward with good aim.
- Throws ball overhand with accuracy.
- Bounces/catches football to self.
- Catches bounced ball most of the time with hands only not against their body.
- Moves forward and backward and sideways with agility.
- Walks along a line heel-to-toe and backwards six or more steps.
- Walks sideways on a 10cm beam without stepping off.
- Shows ability in personal hygiene.

Hand and finger skills

- Draws a person with two to four body parts, includes head, legs, trunk and usually arms and fingers.
- Holds implement with proper tension and grasp (scissors, pencils, pen, paintbrush).
- Turns book pages one at a time.
- Hands out individual sheets from a stack of paper.
- Uses scissors.
- Draws circles and copies a square.
- Begins to copy some capital letters.
- Attempts to do buttons and other fastenings on self or dolls.
- Able to screw and unscrew.

Language and Social Communication

- Produces speech which is mostly easy to understand.
- Produces most consonant sounds but "r", "th", "l", "ch" and "j" may still not be correct.
- Simplifies some sound combinations e.g. "tain" for "train", "boon" for "spoon".
- Words may be less clear in sentences than spoken singly.
- Attention skills are generally two-channelled ie the child can do a task while listening to a simple instruction.
- Many can remember a sequence of four digits.
- Understands sentences with four information carrying words, e.g. "Put the dog under the little table".
- Understands simple question words: "where", "who", "what".
- Listens to and follows quite a long story with pictures.
- Uses regular grammatical endings but often over-applies rules e.g. "runned", "mouses".
- Refers to activities and events that are not present.
- Tells a familiar story while looking at a book.
- Average sentence length is five – seven words.
- Uses words such as "and" and "so" to form longer sentences.
- Vocabulary of around 1,500 words.
- Understands a range of prepositions eg "on", "under", "behind".
- Understands and names most colours.
- Starts to link words by meaning eg opposites, categories.
- Can be literal in interpretation of language, eg "it is raining cats and dogs".
- Can cooperate with others in play for some periods of time.
- Not always able to take turns and appreciate other children's point of view.
- Begins to have "best" friends.
- Can role-play and make-believe.
- Cannot negotiate when things don't go their way.
 - Can recognise and produce rhyming words in nursery rhymes.
 - Can clap the beats in long words.



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Age five to six (Year one)

Movement

- Stands on one foot for 10 seconds.
- Skips along for four to five metres.
- Walks around classroom/school avoiding collision with stationary objects and people.
- Carries objects around classroom/school avoiding collision with stationary objects and people.
- Hops on either leg five to 10 times or more.
- Swings, climbs with agility.
- Able to ride bicycle without stabilisers (girls can be a little slower to achieve)
- Dribbles a ball
- Kicks a rolling ball with accuracy
- Bounces and catches a tennis size ball
- Throws a ball with accuracy
- Able to skip with a rope (boys can be a little slower to achieve)

Hand and finger skills

- Can cut, draw, trace with accuracy and precision.
- Uses blocks, beads, puzzle pieces to complete appropriate tasks.
- Copies triangle.
- Colours neatly.
- Draws person with body and several body parts in the right place.
- Prints some letters.
- Dresses and undresses without assistance.
- If asked able to use a fork, spoon and (sometimes) a table knife.
- Develops hand preference at five-and-a-half years.

Language and Social Communication

- Produces most consonant sounds but “r” and “th” may not be established.
- Some words may be hard to understand in connected speech but clearer if repeated.
- Some long words with difficult sound combinations may show errors. E.g. “pasgetti” instead of spaghetti.
- Two-channelled attention should be well established across a variety of situations.
- Many children can remember a sequence of five digits.
- Understands more complex questions such as “why?” and “what is going to happen?”.
- Understands cause and effect sentences eg “if x then y”.
- Uses sentences of around eight to 10 words on average.
- Uses words such as “because” and “to” to join phrases e.g. “I am going to Joe’s house later to play on his trampoline”.
- Beginning to use irregular verb forms and plurals eg “ran”, “mice”.
- Uses narrative skills to tell a story or event but may be disjointed or lack key information.
- Tells simple jokes.
- Has vocabulary of 3,000 to 5,000 words.
- Knows left and right.
- Uses comparatives and superlatives eg “louder”, “sharpest”.
- Uses some conditional concept words eg “should”, “might”.
- More aware of language – points out words with more than one meaning and discusses connections between words.
- Some awareness of non-literal language – sometimes questions or comments when they hear a new “saying”.
- Is developing ability to see another person’s point of view
- Able to cooperate with others for extended period of play
- Understands and can tell jokes with simple word-play
- Understands and remembers longer instructions. E.g. “find your maths book, write the date and today’s topic.” Able to provide an example of a work with more than one meaning eg match, wave.
- Able to explain a non-literal meaning eg “Pull your socks up”
- Able to identify the first sound in a word eg “cat begins with “c” Can break short words into single sounds eg c-a-t “cat”.

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Age six to seven (Year two)

Movement

By this age children should have acquired most of their developmental milestones for movement.

- Basic motor skills acquired – improvement in speed and skills of tasks should be observed
- Able to use ball skills whilst running at speed and changing direction
- Accuracy with aim and throwing whilst on the move
- Able to co-ordinate bat and ball activities
- Skills can be incorporated into team games.
- Able to copy a diamond or rectangle
- Able to tie a bow or do shoe laces. Mastering a tie usually takes a few more years
- Emotionally confident and independent of adult

Children are not expected to be consistent with hand dominance until eight years.

Language and Social Communication

As for children aged five to six (Year 1), plus:

- Uses adult-like grammar and word order in their oral language.
- Has learned the “rules” of conversational etiquette (e.g. “Excuse me”).
- Can start and sustain conversations over multiple turns (five or more) with two or more partners.
- Produces stories that centre around a theme and contain a logical chain of events.
- Tries to explain with clearer language when they recognise that the listener is not understanding.
- Follows spoken and unspoken rules about communication and behaviour in school, including when to talk, when not to talk and how to speak to adults versus peers.
- Uses language to learn about the world (eg “Why can I hear my voice when I put my hands over my ears?”).
- Can re-tell a short story that they have just heard.
- Can change sounds in words to make new words eg “Pat-Bat”.

Age eight to 11 (Key stage two)

Movement

Milestones are achieved.

Language and Social Communication

- Has most speech sounds and sound combinations including “th” and “r” unless errors are related to dialect.
- Certain sounds may be produced in a slightly unusual way giving a different quality to the child’s speech, e.g. a lisp, although this will not affect intelligibility.
- Multisyllabic words may contain the occasional mistake e.g. Catpillar for caterpillar.
- Many children can remember a sequence of six to seven digits.
- Understands questions requiring inference or prediction e.g. “How do we know he is feeling sad?” or “What could he have done?”.
- Able to listen to and understand a story without pictures if the vocabulary is familiar.
- Can use regular and irregular verb tenses and plurals eg regular: walked, dogs and irregular: fell, feet.
- Uses higher-level connectives like “although”, eg “I had a good birthday although some of my friends couldn’t come to my party”.
- Can tell a sequence of events coherently with beginning, middle and end and in logical order.
- Acquires some technical vocabulary related to interests or school subjects.
- Has increasing knowledge of abstract concept words eg heavy: stone is heavy compared to feather but not when compared to a car.
- Can define words and understands words have multiple meanings.
- Is developing good awareness of a range of non-literal language e.g. idioms, metaphors and sarcasm e.g. “Piece of cake” = easy.
- Understands a range of types of jokes and humour including those that rely on word meaning ambiguity.
- Varies the “code” of communication appropriately eg uses different structure, vocabulary and pronunciation when talking to friends compared to talking to teacher.
- Has deeper understanding of how non-verbal cues change the intention and meaning of what is said e.g. Able to interpret if someone says I am fine and they have a sad face and head is hanging down.

Into the teenage years (Key stages three and four)

Movement

Milestones are achieved.

Language and Social Communication

- Speech can seem to deteriorate in clarity and become more mumbled.
- Boys' voices deepen.
- Understands jokes and riddles based on ambiguity which is embedded in the structure of sentences rather than in individual words.
- Able to extract key information from extended amounts of verbal information.
- Knowledge of grammatical rules reaches adult level.
- Develops knowledge of how intonation/voice changes the meaning of what is said.
- Able to vary structure of language for different verbal and written purposes.
- Average vocabulary by end of this stage is around 10,000 words.
- Able to give abstract, dictionary-like definitions of words.
- Can take part in very quick verbal exchanges, picking up on humour and banter and responding quickly to the changing direction of conversation.
- Uses language to maintain social bonds – more “just talking” with peers than at younger ages.
- Persuasive and argumentative skills reach near-adult level.