

# FOUR YEAR OLDS

The information presented here about the ages and stages of children is only a guide. Physically, emotionally, and intellectually, each child grows and develops at his own rate. Some youngsters may be early bloomers. That is, they may have reached a stage of emotional or physical development beyond their chronological years. Understanding the characteristics of an age can be helpful to adults who work with or care for children. But if adults are to foster optimal growth and development in children, they also must remain sensitive and responsive to children as individuals.

## Emotional and Social

- \* Enters an expansive age. Grows outward emotionally, develops more self-confidence. At times, may seem almost too self-assured; may brag, refuse to follow directions.
- \* Is enthusiastic, willing to try and learn new things. Enjoys new activities and experiences.
- \* Shows some courtesy to others. If taught to do so, will say "please" and "thank you". Capable of taking turns in play. Will benefit from playing simple board games if rules are consistent.
- \* Develops increasing interest in other children; chooses certain ones as friends. Enjoys small groups.
- \* Is interested in where babies come from, the navel, genitals. May play "doctor" with friends.
- \* Can play outdoors without much supervision. Will obey simple rules: "Don't go out of the yard."
- \* Is increasingly capable of caring for self. Should dress self. Can wash hands and face and brush teeth with minimal supervision. Capable of doing simple household chores.

## Language

- \* Talks constantly. Speaking vocabulary may grow from 1,500 words at 4 years to about 2,000 or more by 5 years.
- \* Sometimes speaks so frankly to adults that he unintentionally sounds rude.
- \* Wants to tell secrets and private family matters. Sometimes fabricates "secrets".
- \* Enjoys using naughty words for their shock value. It's best not to over punish for this.
- \* Asks "how" and "why" questions constantly and listens closely to the answers.
- \* Tells elaborate stories, which are sometimes full of violence and death.

## Mental and Creative

- \* Counts to 10 by age of 4 - - probably to 30 by 5 years old.
- \* Begins to consider implications of own actions and natural consequences of his behavior.
- \* Views the world and other people more realistically.
- \* Can match related pictures - - brush to comb, ball to bat.
- \* Around 4 1/2, can correctly distinguish between coins.
- \* Begins to understand seasons and seasonal activities. Anticipates major holidays and birthdays.
- \* Understands size relationships between self and other objects, thus eliminating fears such as being sucked down the drain or toilet.
- \* Attempts to tell time by position of clock's hands.
- \* Pretends by emulating family roles at first, such as mother or father, and later, community roles such as carpenter or astronaut. Enjoys imaginative play both with other children and by himself.

## Muscle Control

- \* Learns to gallop - - skipping with one foot while taking walking steps with the other.
- \* Can carry a cup of water without spilling it.
- \* Draws a human as a crude stick figure or with head, eyes and legs only. Will add details such as hair and fingers by 5 years. Enjoys using crayons and markers.
- \* Cuts fairly well along a line with scissors. Can fold paper horizontally, vertically and diagonally.
- \* Throws a small ball with increasing skill; catches it in hands, throws with elbows bent.
- \* Can print name if taught how. Can print much of alphabet fairly well.
- \* Four-year-olds are mistake-prone.

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