

Teaching Biblical Truth Developmentally Appropriately

Successful teaching involves conveying truth from teacher to student in a way that is understandable and memorable. A teacher needs to not just know the truth he wants to teach, but what his students are like in order to achieve this goal. Here are brief descriptions of what 2-5 year olds that may help you know how to best teach our children.

TWO YEAR OLDS

A Snapshot of Two Year Olds

- Full of life and curiosity
- Can be very stubborn and demanding
- Growing awareness of capabilities of their mind, body and language, but with only a fledgling skill level in the use of them

Speech and Communication Skills

- 2's may only start out with a fairly limited vocabulary and 2 word sentences but develop into 3-5 words sentences by the end of the year.
- Pronunciation may be difficult to understand by others not familiar with the child.
- Are able to understand most of the speech in your regular conversation, even with other adults by the end of the year

Play and Socialization

- Largely plays alongside other children, but not with them (this is called parallel play)
- Playing with others begins to develop by the end of the year
- Loves to imitate others' speech and actions
- Begins to engage in pretend play

Emotional/Intellectual Development

- Can have rapid, emotional swings from very happy to very sad
- Can be destructive and throw things when angry
- Has a hard time control his impulses
- Often tests limits and rules
- Many enjoy answering "no" when asked to do something, even when they mean "yes"
- Their perspective of the world is largely "me-centered"
- Starts to show consideration of the feelings and needs of others
- Can be very willful, yet still have a strong desire to please adults
- Frequent separation anxiety when parents leave
- May often act shy around new people
- Wants to try to do tasks by themselves

Fine Motor Skills

- Fine motor skills gradually develop. Learns to hold crayon and make basic strokes.
- Can make a low stack of blocks

Large Motor Skills and Other Physical Milestones

- Runs, jumps, begins to climb and may even be able to pedal a tricycle
- Enjoys rolling, throwing, and catching a large ball
- By 2 ½ years, many are ready to begin toilet training

Classroom Skills and Behavior

- Enjoys simple stories, action rhymes and songs over and over again. Tries to sing along.
- Extremely short attention span, especially for structured group activities
- Largely engages in individual activities rather than group activities
- Has a hard time sitting still for long periods
- Often plays with the same toy for more than a few minutes
- Enjoys pouring, sifting, sorting, moving things
- Does best with simple 1 step directions

THREE YEAR OLDS

A Snapshot of Three Year Olds

A year of growing confidence in use of body, language and socialization

Speech and Communication Skills

- Expanding vocabulary and sentences (up to 6-word sentences) though with grammar errors
- Speech becomes clear enough to be understood by many people
- Stuttering may develop in the child's language

Emotional/Intellectual Development

- Enjoys asking who, what, where, and especially why questions
- Many still enjoy testing limits and rules, particularly to see the adult's reaction.
- Separation anxiety largely gone
- Seeks the approval of adults
- Often enjoys helping
- Enjoys laughing and acting silly
- Often looks for and thrives under praise

Play and Socialization

- Is able to get along better with other children. Less "me-centered. Learning to cooperate, take turns and share (with promptings)
- Begins to notice typical roles of their gender and engages in pretend play using them.
- Plays with groups of other children her age, but still enjoys playing alongside other children (on his own)
- Pretend play become much more complex. Expands into stories. Can include imaginary friends.
- Moves between the world of real people/friends and pretend people/friends. May have a hard time differentiating between what is pretend and what is real. Even G rated movies can be scary because they seem so real.

Large Motor Skills and Other Physical Milestones

- Growing confidence in ability to use body. Walking, running, jumping, climbing come easily, with little thought
- Balancing on one foot or standing on tiptoes still difficult
- Can kick a ball
- Can use the toilet by himself

Fine Motor Skills

- Fine motor skills are developing. Can hold a crayon with confident grip. Older three's often are able to make simple drawings of shapes, animals and people with a few body parts. They can use child's scissors fairly well.
- Can dress self and feed self with spoon and fork
- Can put on shoes, put not tie them

Classroom Skills and Behavior

- Enjoys hearing familiar stories, doing familiar action rhymes and singing familiar songs. Will often ask for the same stories, action rhymes and songs again and again.
- Enjoys short books and stories
- Does best with activities/games in which everyone is busy at the same time, rather than waiting for their turn.
- Growing attention span for group activities, but still quite short.
- Enjoys moving and dancing to music. Can sing a simple song
- Enjoys simple puzzles, playing with play dough, matching games
- Enjoys acting like different animals (hop like a rabbit, slither like a snake, etc)
- Likes to count things
- Does best with simple, 1 step directions
- Loves follow the leader games
- Thrives under praise

FOUR YEAR OLDS

A Snapshot of Four/Five Year Olds

- Most are confident in their ability to use body, communicate and socialize with others
- They like to talk and make plans
- They are often excited and happy

Speech and Communication Skills

- Vocabulary is expanding rapidly to include a few thousand words.
- Sentences can be fairly complex.
- Speech gets quite clear, though the pronunciation of some letters may still not be completely correct. Many fewer grammatical errors. Asks many “how” and “where” questions. Can answer many “why” questions.
- Most talk with adults with greater ease and have learned to look them in the eyes when speaking.
- Often likes to talk and can carry on extended conversations with adults and others.

Emotional/Intellectual Development

- Asks “why” questions a lot!
- Boasting, lying, name-calling may begin
- Begins to understand danger and become fearful. Fears may center around loud noises, the dark, animals and strangers
- May begin to experience feelings of jealousy
- May be quite bossy
- Seeks adult approval
- May begin to misbehave to get attention
- Many 5's like to take risks
- Understands and respects rules. Wants others to respect them, too

Play and Socialization

- Regularly plays with other children. Best friends become very important.
- More in tune with the feelings and needs of others. May take them into consideration in their actions and words.
- Expects to share and take turns. Usually does so without adult help.
- Makes up games with simple rules to play with others.
- In group play, one child is usually the leader who organizes the other children and what they will play.
- May exclude other children from playing with the group.
- Their imagination and ability to engage in pretend play continues to expand, but they are more able to differentiate between pretend and real life.
- Likes collecting things

Large Motor Skills

- They are quick and confident with most body movements. They develop the ability to do somersaults and skip. 5's like to test their physical strength.
- Fine motor skills are more developed. Begins to tie shoes, dressing self and brushing teeth.
- Catches a ball, move up and around obstacles easily. 5's begin to be able to throw a ball overhead.

Fine Motor Skills

- Can draw simple patterns and shapes and print (some) letters. Enjoys painting with a paintbrush, cutting and pasting.
- Likes to count and sort objects.
- Can stack high towers of blocks
- Can use a spoon, knife and fork

Classroom Skills and Behavior

- Can begin to learn to raise hand to answer a question, rather than blurting out comments.
- Can understand and follow multistep rules.
- Growing ability to play games in which they must wait their turn.
- Enjoys mastering a skill, idea or story. Enjoy getting to share their ability/information with others.
- Still enjoys listening to familiar stories, doing familiar action rhymes and singing familiar songs repetitively.
- Enjoys dancing and moving to music. Often can sing fairly well.
- Expanding attention span for structured group activities
- Can organize objects from smallest to largest
- Can recognize and maybe write his own name
- Can recognize familiar words, like "Stop" on a stop sign. Some 5's begin to identify letters of the alphabet, sound out letters and do simple reading.
- Can follow multi-step directions
- Loves play-acting and role-playing
- Enjoys creating and telling their own stories
- Loves follow the leader games
- Can tackle more complex puzzles and games
- Likes to thread beads, form shapes out of play dough, including simple animals and people
- Likes to count.
- 5's can understand yesterday, today and tomorrow
- 5's like to plan and build more elaborate pictures, buildings, scenes
- Loves nonsense rhymes