

motor development

Between 3-4 years, most children:

- Jump with both feet at the same time;
- Run and kick balls;
- Push and steer large riding toys;
- Put on and remove simple clothing;
- Turn pages in books one at a time;
- Can string beads, fit together duplos;
- Can build towers that are 7-10 blocks high;
- Can take short walks without tiring;
- Start to stay dry at night.

To support these developing skills, at Gretchen's House we do things like:

- Play with parachutes, hula hoops, and big balls in guided activities and free play;
- Ride trikes and scooters outdoors;
- Use wheelbarrows and wagons to move things around outside;
- Take neighborhood walks;
- Have blocks and accessories available for building at all times;
- Have challenging climbers, swings, and lofts;
- Build tents and forts with crates, blankets, boxes, and logs;
- Garden, weather permitting;
- Encourage children to dress and undress themselves;
- Actively promote **toilet learning**.

guidance

At Gretchen's House we:

- Discuss expectations for behavior with children *before* challenging situations;
- Use **natural consequences**: those which are clearly related to the inappropriate behavior. For example, if a child throws toys, they will lose the toys for a while;
- Encourage children to talk to each other about their needs and wishes;
- Recruit children to suggest solutions to disputes;
- Separate children who are disruptive or inappropriate;
- Have swift and firm responses to physical expression of frustration: **time away** and/or loss of privileges;
- Play in small groups to reduce waiting time and increase individual attention.

Easy ways to make a 3 year old feel powerful:

- Give them regular chores: scraping the dishes, wiping the tables, etc.;
- Let them choose which **foods** and how much they eat;
- Respect their need for privacy;
- Encourage **toilet learning** at the first signs of readiness;
- Write down what they say and read it back to them;
- Let them choose which clothes to wear;
- Encourage them to wipe their own noses;
- Let them serve themselves.

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Active Learning at Gretchen's House



**your
3-4 year old
child:**

**-playmate-
-builder-
-try-er-**

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cognitive development

Between 3-4 years, most children:

- Can match simple colors, sizes, shapes and textures;
- Are beginning to understand “how many” and “two” (called *one-to-one correspondence*);
- Have stopped most oral exploration of objects in favor of using other senses;
- Are beginning to understand cause and effect: “if you throw the toys, we will put them away.”
- Ask many questions.

To support these developing skills, at Gretchen’s House we do things like:

- Have circle time activities where children participate in stories and songs and can practice basic skills;
- Encourage problem-solving skills by asking children questions about what they see and do;
- Have hands-on science and math activities to encourage exploration: magnets, magnifying glasses, color paddles, counting bears and sorting trays, cooking projects;
- Use “if, then” scenarios to help children predict and anticipate events;
- Use **curriculum webs** to follow and extend children’s activity interests.

language development

Between 3-4 years, most children:

- Use three-word sentences or longer;
- Can describe their own feelings;
- Follow two-step directions;
- Can remember and discuss things that happened in the past;
- Begin to use plurals of words;
- Over-regulate language, forming rules and applying them rigidly, “ I goed pot-ty;”
- Can memorize simple nursery rhymes;
- Use *I, me* or *my* to refer to themselves;
- Narrate their own actions at play.

To support these developing skills, at Gretchen’s House we do things like:

- Have daily circle time to practice turn taking and participate in storytelling;
- Begin “show and tell,” to give children a chance to speak to a group and practice describing things or events;
- Use modeling to demonstrate proper grammar rather than focusing on children’s errors;
- Ask children to describe their artwork or tell us stories and transcribe their words for them;
- Label objects in the room so children understand that words are symbols that represent real things;
- Use **gender-neutral language**.

social-emotional development

Between 3-4 years, most children:

- Begin to focus more on their peers than on adults;
- Begin to **play cooperatively**;
- Begin to show **empathy** for others;
- Understand **ownership** and can **share** toys and space with support;
- Resist change;
- Have a sense of humor and enjoy silly behavior;
- Strive for more independence;
- Are able to clean up most of their messes and take care of their belongings.

To support these developing skills, at Gretchen’s House we do things like:

- Provide children with labeled spaces to store their belongings, and make them responsible for taking care of them;
- Encourage children to figure out solutions to sharing, etc. disputes on their own. Say: “How can you make sure everyone gets a turn?”
- Play alongside children rather than supervising them so we are available if problems arise;
- Give warnings for transitions and interruptions;
- Reduce waiting time and include children in preparation and clean-up;
- Use cooking activities to practice turn-taking and following directions.