

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT FIVE TO SIX YEARS

While reading this information, please keep in mind that all children are unique. While the sequence of development is practically the same for all children (for example, most children learn to crawl before they learn to walk), each child's rate of development is different. There is a wide variation in normal development. Some children reach developmental milestones earlier than others. Some reach them later than others. Rarely does a delay in reaching a developmental milestone mean that there is a problem. In most cases, delays turn out to be normal. Remember that premature infants generally reach developmental milestones later than other infants of the same birth age. Parents with any questions or concerns about their children's development should contact their children's health care provider.

Highlights in Physical Development

Children's abilities in the area of self-help expand during the period from five to six years of age. By five, most children can dress themselves with no supervision. Between the ages of five and six, most children learn to brush their teeth, to tie their shoes, and to take care of most of their personal grooming without assistance. At this age, most children are also able to feed themselves without spilling food. Most

can handle a fork and spoon well, and some children this age may be able to use a knife to cut soft food and to spread butter onto a piece of bread.

Right-or-left-handedness is usually well established by the time most children reach six years of age. During the period from five to six years, most children learn to print recognizable numbers, letters, and words, including their own names. It is normal for children this age to make some letters backwards. By six years of age, most children can draw recognizable squares and rectangles. By six, children are becoming increasingly better at printing numbers, letters, and words.

By five years of age, most children can skip, hop on one foot, and jump forward and backward quite well. By six, most children can skip with alternating feet and can turn somersaults.

Highlights in Cognitive/ Language Development

Between the ages of five and six years, most children are still very curious. Many children will be curious about things such as birth, marriage, and death, and they may ask questions about these topics. They will continue to ask "how" and "why" questions, and they will ask the meanings of words. In turn, most will be able to define familiar words. Children this age really enjoy

being read to. As language skills increase, most children will begin to understand concepts like "opposite," "first," "middle," "last," "same," and "different." Many children know their full names, addresses, telephone numbers, and ages by six years of age.

Most children are able to speak fluently by five to six years of age. Most children will usually use correct grammar, but may mispronounce words with "s" or "th" sounds. By six years of age, most children will have a vocabulary of about 2,200 words. Most children will also be able to spell some simple words like "dog," "cat," and "hat" by six years of age.

Highlights in Social/Emotional Development

Children between five and six years of age begin to show awareness of the feelings of other people. As this awareness develops, children get along better with other children and in play groups. At this age, many children also begin to understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Many children between five and six years of age enjoy doing things to please their parents and other adults. They are in the process of learning how to share leadership, ideas, materials, and friends. This is the time most children

learn the social skills of giving, receiving, sharing, and playing fairly.

Pretend play is still an important part of most children's lives at this age. Children this age may still have trouble separating reality from fantasy, and many will still be confused by fairy tales.

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