

# Ages and stages: Three to five years

Between three and five, children are better at recognising and expressing their emotions – for example pride, guilt or embarrassment. They're sharing and cooperating more, but there can still be clashes.

## Three to four years

At this age, kids like to laugh and play silly games and enjoy pretend play. They like to practice skills like climbing, throwing, drawing, and helping you around the house. They'll ask lots of questions and tell stories, some with a mix of real and unreal. Although they feel secure with rules and routines, they'll still test them.

### Parent tip

"Your time and attention are better for your kids than treats like lollies."



### You can:

- Use lots of phrases beginning with "let's" and "how about we".
- Avoid power struggles by distracting them if they get stuck on 'no'.
- Be flexible on things that aren't so important.
- Try bargaining – "as soon as you pick up your toys we can go to the park."
- Have calm down times when there's been trouble. Choose a quiet place to talk about their behaviour and what will happen if it continues.
- Ask them for their ideas – make sure you both agree, then follow through.

## Four to five years

You'll probably see your child starting to play more cooperatively with other children. Friendships become more important, although there will still be some arguments.

They may have lots of energy and enjoy trying new challenges. They will still be testing boundaries and could try to get your attention by using silly talk or behaviour.

### Brain Box

Playing games uses lots of different parts of the brain. Avoid meltdowns by making games simple and not focused on winning.

### You can:

- Keep giving them lots of affection and attention.
- Be clear about what you expect from them.
- Encourage them to try lots of different things.
- Give them little jobs to do so they can feel important and responsible.
- Praise their efforts when they try hard.
- Stay calm and loving when you have to discipline them.
- Support and encourage them to work out their own solutions to problems.

