

Toddler and Preschool Characteristics

A Two-year-old . . .

- learns best when all five senses are used.
- likes to feel, pound, pat, and manipulate objects.
- has a short attention span.
- listens to a short story, conversation, or song.
- learns by doing and hearing something over and over.
- enjoys holding the Bible and turning pages.
- is beginning to realize that Jesus is a special person.



A Three-year-old . . .

- has a vivid imagination.
- is imitative.
- asks many questions. The first word in each sentence seems to be *why*, *how*, or *what*.
- has to be told the same thing repeatedly.
- learns through senses.
- is active and seldom still.
- can identify some Bible stories and people.
- understands that God made people, animals, and other things in the world.

A four-year-old . . .

- is a bundle of energy who needs freedom to move.
- tests her world through explosive behavior.
- needs freedom to experiment yet consistent guidance.
- finds security in the very limits she defies.
- is interested in many areas. Her actions, thoughts, and needs are unpredictable because her interests change often.
- is curious; questions begin with *how* or *what*.
- has a strong desire to learn.
- expresses herself well verbally.
- delights in new words, name calling, and silly sentences.
- likes to retell stories in her own words.
- enjoys games that allow her to find verses.

A five-year-old . . .

- is calm, secure, and eager to please.
- relishes adult approval and attention.
- asks “why” questions and grasps ideas quickly.
- prints his name with pride, but may encounter problems when using scissors.
- enjoys planning projects before attempting them.
- participates in group play, but may sometimes prefer one friend.
- begins to ask questions about God.
- expresses love for God and Jesus.



TODDLER - AGES 2 and 3

A child's basic attitude toward life, other people and God develops during the first five years. This is a time for them to develop positive attitudes toward God, his Word and his church. Their first impression of God is formed from the attitudes and actions of the adults in their lives.

2-year-old Characteristics

Cannot think abstractly
Need simple and concrete samples
Often feel small and vulnerable
Have a fear of separation from parents
Are curious about everything
Are physically active
Have limited motor skills
Are developing large motor skills
Have a 200-word vocabulary
Understand more words than they can use
Play NEAR others



3-year-old Characteristics

Cannot think abstractly
Need simple and concrete examples
Like to be helpful
Watch and imitate adults
Can have sensible conversations
Can sit a little longer
Have limited coloring/gluing skills
Follow simple directions
Have a 1,500-word vocabulary
Know some Bible words
Play WITH others

PRESCHOOL - AGES 4 and 5

You are stepping in to assist parents and the church in nurturing these active 4- and 5-year-olds. You can open up a new world of learning for them by providing a predictable, well-structured and caring atmosphere. Wiggly preschoolers are not too young to develop the skill of quiet listening. As you prepare to tell the Bible story each week, lead your children in simple routines to prepare them to hear the Word of God. Understanding their characteristics and needs, you can teach preschoolers effectively.

What they are like:

Attention span lasts five to ten minutes
Play with others
Literal thinkers
Curious
Active
Imitative
Do not generalize
Limited understanding of numbers, time and space
Growing in independence
Talkative
Developing small muscle control
Expanding vocabulary
Tire easily
Want to please
Formulate ideas through concrete experiences

What they need:

Opportunity to change activity often
Social interaction, group games
Concrete Bible stories, no abstract concepts
Imaginative activities
Plenty of opportunities to move around
Setting that encourages learning by doing
Opportunities to learn by specific actions
References to what numbers mean or to geography too abstract
Freedom within limits — routine and structure
Opportunities to practice cutting, pasting, drawing and coloring
Opportunities to learn through language
Periods of rest
Tasks to perform
Encouragement; reasonable praise
To learn about God in terms of what he does rather than who he is