

# Growth and development of a 3-year-old child

## 3-vuotiaan lapset ja kehitys (englanti)



A 3-year-old is skilled in many areas and understands a lot. The child experiences strong emotions and learns by asking questions and doing things independently. Although the child sees themselves as big and capable, they still need plenty of closeness, comfort, and care.

The child is curious and interested in many different things. They relate naturally to their own body and explore it as part of their development.

### **Eating and new tastes**

Daily routines increase a child's sense of security. A regular eating schedule and a varied diet support the child's healthy growth and development. Shared family mealtimes help to support the child's eating habits. The child follows the example of other family members. Parents decide what and when the family eats. The child can decide how much to eat.

The child may sometimes be picky and selective with food. Encourage the child to taste a variety of flavors.



Regular routines increase the child's sense of security.

Shared mealtimes support the development of the child's eating habits. The child follows the example of other family members.

Encourage the child to taste different kinds of foods.

## Physical activity and rest

Daily outdoor time and physical activity are important for a child's health and well-being. Physical activities and being outside also help the child sleep better.

A child should be active for a total of three hours every day. Physical activity means active play, for example, in the yard or at the playground. Forest trips and obstacle courses in the living room are also examples of ways a child can move.

It is important for a child to get enough sleep and rest. When a child sleeps enough, learning new things is easier and the child is in a good mood. The need for sleep varies from child to child. Usually, a 3-year-old needs about 10–13 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period. Some 3-year-olds still take naps during the day. Too long naps may make it harder to fall asleep in the evening. A rest time is important, even if the child no longer takes daytime naps.

Familiar and regular bedtime routines help the child calm down and fall asleep. It is good to practice falling asleep independently with the child. Some children need a parent's support to fall asleep.



## **Screen time**

Preschool children should have no more than one hour of screen time per day. Too much screen time can cause restlessness, irritability, and difficulties to concentrate. It can also disturb the child's sleep.

Familiarize yourself with videos and games that are appropriate for the child's age. Help the child find other activities and games to do as well.

## **The child's independence**

A 3-year-old is learning to dress and undress. Sometimes dressing is difficult, or the child is not interested. Practice these skills together with the child. Remember to praise the child and encourage the child's independence. Most children at this age can use the potty or toilet. Many 3-year-olds still need a diaper at night.



## Speech development and social skills

A 3-year-old already speaks in sentences. Their speech is quite clear and understandable, although some sounds may still be missing. The child can inflect words correctly. When a child is exposed to multiple languages, speech development may be slower. It is important for parents to speak their native language to the child. This makes it easier for the child to learn other languages as well.

A 3-year-old often enjoys playing with other children. It is good for the child to practice the social skills and rules of playing together with other children.



## **Strong will and growing independence**

A 3-year-old is learning to be more independent. The child may strongly resist rules set by parents. Failing at something can make the child angry or upset. A 3-year-old can understand simple explanations. When the child gets angry, it is important for the parent to stay calm and consistent. Children need clear rules. Rules help children feel safe.

It is important to tell the child that all feelings are allowed. You can name the feelings together with the child. It is important for the child to learn that it is not okay to hurt others or break things, even when angry. Parents can help the child calm down. The child should not be left alone. It's important for a parent to show the child that they are trying to understand them.



Children need clear rules. Rules help children feel safe.

Name the feelings together with the child.



**Euroopan unionin  
osarahoittama**

## **Niitty 2 Project 2023–2026**

Working together with immigrant  
families for a better everyday life

More information about the project:

<https://projects.tuni.fi/niitty2/>

Family Info Material Portal:  
[tuni.fi/perheinfo](https://tuni.fi/perheinfo)

### **Sources and further information:**

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