



Child Care Resources Inc.

tip sheet

Ideas and information about child development and early education for parents, professionals and the community-at-large.

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Access this and other tip sheets through the CCRI FaxBack Line: **(704) 335-9421**

child care search

Resource & referral service

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The Basic Characteristics of:

Infants

The Work of Infants is Developing Basic Trust

- Depend on adults to care for them
- Have physical and emotional needs intertwined
- Are born with unique personalities
- Display individual temperaments (active, cuddly, distant, curious)
- Develop attachments to parents and caregivers
- Like to watch other children
- Use all five senses to learn about their world: seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling
- Are fascinated with their most interesting play thing - a caring adult
- Communicate with their bodies, their actions, and their sounds
- Explore first their bodies, and then their world, as they stretch, sit up, crawl, and walk
- Love the traditional games of babyhood which promote coordination and development of attention (Patty Cake, This Little Piggy, Peek-a Boo)
- Practice new physical skills - grasping, reaching, picking up, pushing, etc.
- Begin to practice separating as they crawl away

Toddlers

The Work of Toddlers (18 - 36 month olds) is Developing Autonomy

- Are “into everything”
- Discover two-legged locomotion
- Are giddy with their new movement ability, and the independence it brings
- Are learning to do things for themselves
- Play not just to see how things feel, but to figure out what can be done with them
- Work at becoming independent
- Are stubborn about ME, MINE, and MY
- Are in love with the word NO (because that is the way they practice making decisions all by themselves)
- Become easily frustrated
- Love to build up, knock down, put in, and take out
- Begin pretend play
- Imitate what they see
- Get easily excited
- Are learning to use language to express feelings and ideas
- Have a short attention span
- Are very active

Preschoolers

The Work of Preschoolers (3-5 year olds) is Developing Initiative

- Integrate all the growth of earlier years
- Initiate a lot of conversations, inventions, explorations
- Ask “why” a lot
- Are aware of a wide range of feelings, and ways to express them
- Enjoy dramatic and make believe play
- Love to play with words and language - “A cactus is like a fork with thorns on it”
- Are curious and inventive
- Repeat new skills until they are mastered
- Learn through active play
- Are masters of running, jumping, and climbing
- Are developing increasing control over small and large motor skills
- Achieve the height of wild, imaginative fantasy play
- Can be bossy and critical (4-5’s)

School-Agers

The Work of School-Agers (5-12 year olds) is Developing Industry

- Are moving towards independence from adults
- Don’t want, but still need, supervision
- Enjoy practicing and perfecting their skills
- Become obsessed with rules and fairness
- Have lots of energy for running and climbing
- Begin to think abstractly
- Can take another’s point of view into account
- Enjoy group games, putting on plays, and other complex projects
- Can come up with creative solutions to many of their own disputes
- Enjoy collecting things
- May feel very self-conscious about their bodies
- Care a great deal about what their peers think, like, and do
- Like time to be alone
- Engage in daydreaming

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