

# Starting Out

You are your child's first and most important teacher. During your daily routines, your child is learning as he talks, plays, cuddles, and interacts with you.

For optimal growth, your child's basic needs must be met. He needs your love and attention, consistent responses to his needs, a safe environment, and many supervised opportunities to play and explore his world. He will develop at his own rate, depending on his abilities interests, and experiences; however, your involvement is critical in helping him reach his full potential.

This booklet contains information that is important to your child's brain growth and learning potential. The checklists describe skills your four year old child should have and be able to do by his fifth birthday and should not be applied to children younger than four years of age.

Following each checklist are tips and suggestions you can use to support your child's development.

If you have concerns about your child's success in kindergarten, call FDLRS Child Find at (727)793-2723 for additional assistance. FDLRS Child Find is Florida's early intervention system that offers programs and services to eligible children from birth to 21 years. Getting help early puts your child on the right track to learn and develop the skills he needs.

This is one in a series of five resource booklets on child development. The series also includes booklets on infant, one year old, two year old, and three year old development.

Each booklet begins with sections on Brain Development and Safety followed by Domains of Development that align with the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards. The Resources page provides community and Internet resources to help meet the needs of families and young children.

BOOKLET SECTIONS	DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT
Brain Development	
Safety	
Physical Development	Physical Development
Learning Styles	Approaches to Learning
Social & Emotional	Social and Emotional Development
Listening & Talking	Language and Communication
Reading & Writing	Language and Communication
Thinking & Reasoning	Cognitive Development and General Knowledge
Resources	

## Introduction

# Brain Development

#### Your child was born with 100 billion brain cells.

Your child's brain cells must be stimulated before the learning pathways that will be used throughout his life can develop. You can help stimulate your child's brain and contribute to his positive brain growth by providing developmentally appropriate experiences, proper nutrition, a safe environment, and routine doctor visits.

#### Your child's brain will react to positive and negative experiences.

Simple activities like cuddling, laughing, talking, and singing will stimulate your child's brain to release the hormones necessary for brain growth. Brain research has confirmed that prolonged exposure to stress can negatively affect the way your child learns and relates to others. Whether positive or negative, the effects of early life experiences will last a lifetime.

#### Learning pathways are strengthened through playful repetition, not drilling.

Learning pathways in your child's brain are formed by new experiences and strengthened through frequent repetition of those experiences. Avoid repetition for the purpose of drilling facts. Instead, take advantage of your child's natural curiosity by repeating fun activities and experiences frequently. This will strengthen learning pathways and help him become the best he can be. It is important to remember that a learning pathway can disappear if not used regularly.

#### Loving interactions with parents and other caregivers will stimulate brain development.

Your child needs sensitive, responsive, and consistent care to form secure attachments, the foundation for behavior and learning. When you respond to your child with patience and compassion, you are meeting his emotional needs.

### The importance of your role as a parent cannot be underestimated!

## Brain Development Tips

#### Your child's brain will develop best when you:

- talk to him often, ask questions, and show an interest in what he is doing and experiencing.
- offer a variety of healthy foods and water throughout the day.
- name, count, and describe objects.
- read to him every day.
- sing songs, play rhyming games, and listen to different kinds of music every day.
- respond to his feelings and provide words he can use to express his emotions.
- provide opportunities for him to play with problem solving toys and puzzles.
- stay calm and happy, avoiding stress and traumatic experiences.
- limit the amount of time he spends watching television and using computer games. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly advises no more than two hours of educational, nonviolent programs daily.

"It's not if your child is learning; it's what your child is learning that's important."

"The bottom line on brain research? Love your children. Talk to them. Read to them."

~ Rob Reiner

## Brain Development

# Safety

#### Your child's safety is best supported when you:

- watch him closely and never leave him home alone or unattended in a car.
- use a car seat or booster seat that is properly installed and buckle your seat belt, too.
   Your local fire department can check for proper car seat installation.
- choose toys that are unbreakable, washable, and non-toxic.



- remove hazards to childproof the inside and outside of your home (keep safety caps on medicines, cover electrical outlets, turn pan handles toward the inside of the stove, and keep cleaning products, medicines, toxic plants, adult tools, sharp objects, and hot liquids out of sight and out of reach).
- store 911, Poison Control, and other emergency numbers in your mobile phone contacts and in an easily accessible place at home (such as posted on the refrigerator).
- install a working smoke alarm inside bedrooms, outside sleeping areas, and on every level of your home. Test the alarms
  monthly and replace batteries at least once a year.
- check your ABC rated fire extinguisher monthly to make sure it is charged and readily accessible.
- dress him in flame retardant sleepwear and comfortable clothing.
- ensure the air in your home is safe to breathe (ban tobacco smoke and properly vent appliances, engines, fireplaces, and charcoal grills to the outdoors to prevent a buildup of carbon monoxide).
- lock doors leading to the outdoors and other dangerous areas.
- fence pools using self-closing gates and keep the gates locked.
- adjust the water heater temperature to 115°F or less to prevent burns.
- never leave him unattended near water (bathtub, swimming pool, or wading pool). Supervise him closely and remember that children can drown in less than 3 inches of water.
- enroll him in formal swim lessons when he is emotionally and physically ready.
- teach him simple safety rules and help him understand the importance of avoiding common dangers, such as hot
  appliances and moving cars.
- make sure he holds your hand while crossing the street or walking through parking areas.
- alert him to the dangers of strangers, drugs, and guns.
- keep all guns out of your house or store locked, unloaded, and uncocked guns in an out of reach, locked container. Store
  ammunition separately.
- attend a first aid and Pediatric CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) training. (See Resources.)





# Physical Development

### Does your child ....

...run, jump, climb, hop, skip, and gallop with increasing confidence?

- ... run around obstacles and stop quickly?
- ... use pedals to ride a tricycle or riding toy and skillfully navigate turns?
- ... throw, catch, and kick a ball with accuracy?
- ... cut simple shapes with scissors?
- ...sort and handle small objects, such as tiny beads, sea shells, or toys?
- ...hold a pencil, crayon, or marker in a pincer grasp (between thumb and forefinger)?
- ... use a pen or marker to write some recognizable letters or shapes?
- ... put together a 40-piece puzzle?
- ... put on his shoes and dress himself with little assistance?
- ...pour water or juice into a cup with little spilling?
- ... choose to eat a variety of healthy foods in adequate amounts?
- ...wash his hands before eating and after toileting?
- ... cover his nose and mouth when he sneezes or coughs?
- ...have a set routine for eating, sleeping, bathing, and brushing/flossing his teeth?

## Physical Development Tips

### Your child's physical development skills are best supported when you:

- allow time for him to dress himself as he learns how to button, zip, and buckle his own clothing.
- take him to a park to play on climbers, slides, and swings.
- provide daily opportunities for him to run, climb, play ball, and ride tricycles.
- provide daily opportunities for him to color and draw with pencils, crayons, markers, or chalk.
- allow him to use scissors to practice cutting on a line or cutting out magazine pictures.
- allow him to use clothespins, a hole-punch, play dough, and scissors to strengthen his hand muscles.
- provide opportunities for him to use both hands to twist off plastic jar lids and bottle caps.
- make sure he has regular medical and dental checkups, up-to-date immunizations, and prompt medical attention when needed.
- encourage and model healthy eating habits and limit unhealthy, processed food items.
- establish a set bedtime and remind him to get rest.
- limit television/computer use and encourage physical play. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly advises no more than two hours of educational, nonviolent programs daily.

# Physical Development

To support your child's success in school, promote healthy habits and provide daily opportunities for him to develop physical skills.



# \_earning Styles

Does your child	YES	NOT YET
demonstrate curiosity by asking questions to get more information?		
explore and experiment with new materials to see how they work and what they can do?		
eagerly participate in new activities?		
stay on task for an increasing length of time?		
continue to work on a self-selected activity, even if it is difficult?		
use trial-and-error to solve problems?		
pretend to be a mommy, daddy, baby, community worker, or pet and use props, such as dress up clothes, purses, kitchen accessories, play phone, or toys to support his play?		
talk about what he is doing or what he needs to do to accomplish a task? (Example: "I'll be the vet. You bring your dog to my office, so I can give him a checkup.")		
use appropriate grammar rules, such as correct tense ("I went to the park yesterday"),		
plurals (feet instead of foots), and pronouns (my, mine, his, or her)?		
use manner words, such as please, thank you, and excuse me?		

### Learning Styles Tips

### Your child's unique learning style is best supported when you:

- set the tone that learning is good, fun, and important.
- provide a variety of new materials and experiences to encourage his curiosity.
- encourage him to try new tasks and acknowledge his efforts without criticism.
- ask open-ended questions (What would happen if...?) to encourage a deeper understanding.
- encourage him to ask for help if his inability to solve a problem leaves him frustrated.
- model problem solving by thinking out loud as you complete a task.
- encourage him to draw his own pictures rather than providing coloring books or work books for him to copy.
- provide plenty of time for him to play so he can develop problem solving skills and increase his attention span.
- encourage him to solve problems step-by-step by asking, "What would you do first? Then what?"
- include him when you plan activities, special events, or family outings.
- encourage him to talk about recent activities and events.

The beautiful thing about learning is that nobody can take it away from you. ~ B.B. King

Learning Styles

# Social & Emotional Development

Does your child	YES	NOT YET
use words to solve problems instead of hitting when he's angry or frustrated?		
recognize when others are upset and try to provide comfort or help?		
show affection for adults with words or hugs and accept affection in return?		
take care of his personal needs, such as dressing, toileting, and picking up toys?		
use toys and materials purposefully, safely, and respectfully?		
willingly take turns and share with others?		
have friends and play cooperatively with other children?		
follow through appropriately when you give him directions?		
understand and follow simple rules without reminders?		
speak up and offer assistance when he sees an injustice, such as mistreatment or bullying?		

### Social & Emotional Development Tips

### Your child's social and emotional development is best supported when you:

- show you love him with frequent words, hugs, and smiles.
- have realistic, developmentally appropriate expectations for him and understand his limits.
- provide loving guidance ("I love you, but I don't like hitting!").
- realize that setting limits is a loving way to teach him how to control his behavior.
- provide positive guidance to let him know what is acceptable. (Say, "Use your walking feet" instead of "Don't run.")
- enforce rules consistently, even when it's easier to look the other way. (A child who is not allowed to walk around with a
  cup of juice one day should not be allowed to do it the next day).
- reinforce appropriate behavior by praising and encouraging him when he does something right ("I like the way you
  waited for your turn!").
- set a good example by treating him and others with respect.
- teach him to use words to solve problems, such as by saying, "I don't like it when you take my toys. Next time ask me if you can have a turn."
- provide opportunities for him to be with other children, such as at a playground, park, playgroup, or library story time, so he can learn how to take turns, compromise, and show kindness.
- help him make friends and teach him how to be a friend.
- encourage him to take care of his personal routines, such as eating, brushing his teeth, toileting, bathing, choosing clothing to wear, and dressing.
- allow him to be responsible for small household chores, such as making his bed, setting the table, picking up toys, emptying trash, taking care of pets, or helping in the yard.



## Social & Emotional Development

The prime purpose of
being four is to enjoy
being four –
of secondary
importance is to
prepare for being five.
~ Jim Trelease

..............................

# Listening & Talking

### Does your child ....

- ...follow through when you give him two or three step directions? (Example: Take your shoes off, put them in the closet, and go get the broom.)
- ... use descriptive words, such as "My puppy is small. He is white with black spots"?
- ... understand and follow directions?
- ...show an understanding of new words by using them correctly?
- ...sing and recite nursery rhymes making appropriate motions, such as making a climbing motion while singing "The eensy weensy spider climbed up the water spout"?
- ... participate in conversations, taking turns talking and not interrupting?
- ... use complete sentences that include two or more separate ideas, such as "I like chocolate ice cream the best, but sometimes I get vanilla with hot fudge sauce"?
- ... speak clearly enough for others to understand him?
- ...talk about everyday experiences and activities?
- ...ask questions using complete sentences?
- ... respond to questions using complete sentences?
- ...name the parts of familiar objects and describe what they are used for (Example: "The pot has a handle. Mommy uses it to cook my dinner")?
- ... use appropriate grammar rules, such as correct tense ("I went to the park yesterday"), plurals (feet instead of foots), and pronouns (my, mine, his, or her)?
- ... use manner words, such as please, thank you, and excuse me?

## Listening & Talking Tips

### Your child's talking and listening skills are best supported when you:

- come down to his eye level to let him know what he says is interesting and important.
- ask open-ended questions, such as: "What do you think?" or "How would you feel?"
- encourage him to tell you about the stories you have read together.
- introduce new words and their meanings as you read books and engage in activities.
- play rhyming games, such as finding words that rhyme or guessing the rhyming word in a verse.
- listen intently to his conversations and encourage other family members to do the same.
- provide opportunities for him to deliver a message from home to school.
- model appropriate manner words, such as please, thank you, and excuse me.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are critical to your child's success in school and life. Support his language development by talking with him and listening carefully as he shares ideas and experiences.



## Listening & Talking

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NOT YET

YES

# Reading

Does	your	child	
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- ...show an interest in reading by choosing his own books, listening attentively to stories, and pretending to read?
- ...hold books gently and carefully?
- ... begin at the front of the book and turn the pages one at a time from right to left?
- ... recite nursery rhymes and retell stories from memory?
- ...identify some words on street signs, restaurant signs, store signs, or food packages?
- ...ask what a note, letter, or sign says?
- ... identify the letters in his name?
- ...name most uppercase and lowercase letters?
- ...name items that begin with a particular letter, such as "D is for dog or B is for ball"?
- ...identify some letter sounds, such as "The letter 'M' says 'mmmm'"?

YES	NOT YET

## Reading Tips

### **BEFORE reading a story:**

- o Introduce the book and discuss the cover, title, author and illustrator.
- Look at the pictures to discover what the story is about.
- o Discuss special or new words and talk about familiar people, places, and things in the story.

### **DURING the story:**

- o Allow time for your child to look at and talk about the pictures.
- o Talk with your child about the characters and story events.
- o Ask questions: What is happening? What will happen next? Would you do that?

### **AFTER the story:**

- o Reread the story and encourage your child to turn the pages and share comments or questions.
- o Ask your child to retell the story to you.
- o Compare the story to your child's experiences: Can you do that? Did that ever happen to you?

### Your child's reading skills are best supported when you:

- provide a variety of reading materials, such as books, magazines, newspapers, and recipes.
- provide a place for his books and teach him how to handle books carefully.
- provide a comfortable and quiet reading area.

Reading to your child is the single most important activity you can do to help your child learn to read.

- obtain a library card in his name and visit the library regularly so he can select his own books.
- read his favorite books over and over again.
- show how much you value reading by talking to him about the books and articles you are reading.
- sound out familiar words as you read stories.
- point out or ask him to find specific letters in print or on restaurant/store signs, street signs, or food packages.
- play rhyming games, such as matching rhyming objects or finding the rhyming words in a poem.
- play letter sound games, such as naming objects, places, or names that start with a specific sound.



# Writing

Does your child	YES	NOT YET
have his own pencils, crayons, markers, and paper?		
share experiences with you by drawing or writing about the experience?		
ask you to write words, such as asking you to write "My dog, Sam" on his drawing?		
write pretend words with letters or letter-like shapes and then "read" the "words" to you?		
ask you to draw shapes, numbers, letters, or words so he can copy them?		
practice writing his name?		
write some recognizable letters?		
use wood, plastic or magnet letters to write familiar words or names?		
write pretend stories, notes, letters, or recipes using pictures and letter-like shapes?		

## Writing Tips

### Your child's writing skills are best supported when you:

- provide pencils, crayons, markers, paper, envelopes, and stickers and encourage him to write.
- accept and praise his attempts at writing even if it is scribbles, pictures, or alphabet soup.
- encourage him to write pretend shopping lists, notes, signs, or stories.
- support him as he reads his writings to you, focusing on the message and purpose of his writings rather than his spelling or correct letter formation.
- encourage him to dictate stories for you to write and read to him later.
- talk about what you are writing.
- point to each word as you read to help him understand the connection between spoken words and written words.

Your child needs encouragement and support as he goes through the various stages of writing development, from scribbling to pretend writing to writing real letters.

display his writing efforts.



Writing

# Thinking & Reasoning

### Does your child....

count one to ten objects by pointing to each object and saying the correct number?	
.recognize and correctly identify written numerals 0-9?	
add and subtract numbers up to four?	Ľ
identify, copy, and create simple patterns, such as red car, blue car, red car, blue car?	Ľ
match and sort items by color, size, and shape?	
recognize and name shapes including circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles?	
understand and use positional words, such as in, on, under, beside, and behind?	
use measuring tools, such as measuring cups, spoons, rulers, and scales?	
observe and investigate the characteristics of living plants, animals, and insects?	
identify his five senses (sight, taste, touch, hearing, and smell)?	
recognize and understand the responsibilities of workers in your community?	
move accurately to the beat of music and respond to changes in tempo (speed)?	

## Teach your child how to think, so he can face future challenges with

confidence.

YES

NOT YET

### Thinking & Reasoning Tips

### Your child's thinking and reasoning skills are best supported when you:

- create opportunities for him to count household objects, such as plates and forks for the table.
- point out and identify written numerals in the environment.
- encourage him to participate in counting songs, poems, and simple games, such as "Ten in the Bed" or "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe".
- encourage him to string cereal (Fruit Loops) in a repeated pattern, such as red, green, red, green.
- play games using positional words, such as "Simon Says put your thumbs under your chin." "Clap your hands over your head."
- encourage him to pour, measure, stir, and spread during simple cooking experiences.
- provide tools he can use to observe and learn, such as a magnifier, magnet, ruler, or funnel.
- provide opportunities for him to explore physical changes by melting ice cubes, making gelatin, or mixing paint colors.
- provide opportunities for him to observe and investigate living plants, animals, and insects.
- provide developmentally appropriate toys that require thinking, such as puzzles, blocks, or sorting toys.
- play games that teach number and direction skills, such as Candy Land or Chutes and Ladders.



## Thinking & Reasoning

## Resources

## Community Resources

Medical Emergencies	911
Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
SafeKids (childproof home, car seats, water safety, injury prevention)	1-800-756-7233
Pinellas County Health Department (low cost physicals, immunizations)	(727)824-6900
Community Health Centers of Pinellas (referrals, prescriptions)	(727)821-6701
Florida Kid Care (health insurance)	1-888-540-5431
American Red Cross (infant/child first aid & CPR classes)	(727)446-2358
US Consumer Product Safety Hotline (unsafe or recalled products)	1-800-638-2772
Car Seat Education and Safety	Call local fire department
Community Resources (clothing, emergency shelter, counseling, parent support)	2-1-1
WIC Florida (food for women, infants, and children)	1-800-342-3556
Public Library Information	(727)441-8408
Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect	1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)

## Child Care Resources

Child Care Resource & Referral (locate child care centers and homes)	2-1-1 or (727)210-4211
Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)	(727)400-4411
School Readiness Child Care Wait List / Eligibility Requirements	(727)400-4411
Pinellas County Child Care Licensing (history of compliance/complaints)	(727)507-4857

## Child Development Resources

The Early Learning Coalition (ELC) Warm Line	(727)545-7536
Early Steps (birth to 36 months)	(727)767-4403
Early Steps Parent Support	(727)767-6705
FDLRS Child Find (birth to 21 years)	(727)793-2723
Parenting and Child Guidance	(Helpline) 211
Project Challenge (concerns about my child's behavior in child care)	(727)547-4212

VPK and Kindergarten Resources Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) education program is FREE for all children who live in Florida. Your child must be 4 years old on or before September 1st of the year he starts VPK.

VPK Information...... www.vpkpinellas.net or call (727) 400-4411 Kindergarten Enrollment...... www.pcsb.org or call: (727) 588-6210

## Internet Parenting Resources

www.elcpinellas.net	www.familyeducation.com	www.rif.org
www.jwbpinellas.org	www.parenthood.com	www.allkids.org
www.childcarepinellas.org	www.zerotothree.org	www.healthystartpinellas.org
www.kidsgrowth.com	www.parenting.com	www.211tampabay.org
www.pclb.org	www.pcsb.org	www.pbs.org/parents





## Resources

### The Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Inc. is pleased to present you with A Child Development Checklist and Tips Booklet

This booklet was originally funded by the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County and developed by the Pinellas Early Childhood Collaborative. It was written by early childhood professionals in your community.

> series includes booklets Ones Twos Threes Fours

Email info@elcpinellas.net to obtain other booklets in the series or see your local child care provider.



