

# What 4-year-old children learn to do by the age of 5

Compiled by Pam Versfeld December 2020

Everyday experience provides typically developing 4-year-old children with the experience needed to build on the fundamental movement abilities that they acquired in the first three years. Children with movement difficulties (joint hypermobility, low muscle tone, autism, developmental coordination disorder and an highly sensitive temperament) often need extra training to achieve the same level of skill.

Here is a list of many of the different movement abilities children master between the ages of 3 and 5 years. It is important to remember that even typically developing young children develop at different rates, with some children being more proficient at a younger age.

**The Skills for Action website provides details of development, assessment and training of these abilities.**  
See <https://skillsforaction.com/preschool/4-year-abilities>

Running	Can do	Needs work	Not yet
Run at a steady pace at least 20-30 meters, displaying a good pumping action of the arms, and not getting unduly tired or out of breath.			
Run and jump over a low hurdle without stopping.			
Run and stop, or change direction, suddenly without falling.			
Run on slightly uneven ground			
Run a zig-zag path around obstacles			
Run down a gentle incline without falling			

Jumping	Can do	Needs work	Not yet
Jump forwards, taking off from two feet and landing on two feet, over a distance of 30-40cm (standing broad jump).			
Jump forwards taking off from two feet and landing on two feet, without stopping between jumps, completing 5 jumps.			
Jump sideways completing 5 jumps.			
Hop forwards, completing 5 hops by age 5.			
Left leg			
Right leg			
Jump over a single low obstacle of increasing height and width as child grows older.			
Jump down from a low step 20-30 cm high.			
Run and jump over series of low hurdles without slowing down.			
Complete 5 star jumps coordinating the arms and the legs by age 5			

<b>Walking and stepping</b>	<b>Can do</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Not yet</b>
Walk a distance of 1-2 km without complaining or getting unduly tired. May need prompting to keep going.			
Walk 10-20m up a hill without getting unduly tired.			
Walk out of doors across uneven ground without falling.			
Walk and step over a low obstacle.			
Walk and step down from a low step such as a curb.			
Walk across a room avoiding obstacles and not bumping into furniture or door frames			
Walk through a narrow gap by turning the body sideways.			
Walk carrying a potato on a spoon for at least 5 meters.			
Walk carrying a tray supporting a beaker of water at least 5 meters.			
Walk carrying a large box in front of the chest for 5 meters.			

<b>Leg strength, agility and coordination tasks</b>	<b>Can do</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Not yet</b>
Stand on one leg for 5 seconds. Left leg			
Right leg			
Stand heel-to-toe for 5 seconds. Left leg in front			
Right leg in front			
Gallop with left or right leg leading for 5m.			
Skip forwards 5m: step and hop with alternate legs.			
Stand up from a step (15-20 cm high) and sit down with good control 10 times in succession.			
Walk across a 10cm wide plank without stepping off.			
Walk across a series of 5 raised steps or bricks, placed in a row with a gap of 10-15 cm between steps.			
Step over a series of 20-30 cm high "hurdles" without knocking them over.			

Catching, throwing, kicking	Can do	Needs work	Not yet
Step to catch a ball rolled a little way to the side of the child.			
Catch a soccer sized ball between the hands in front of the body 7-8 times out of 10.			
Catch a carefully thrown beanbag in front of the body at waist height, 7-8 times out of 10, by age 5.			
Bounce and catch a soccer sized ball 5 times in succession.			
Throw a soccer sized ball from above the head towards a large target positioned 3-4 meters ahead.			
Throw a soccer ball with two hands (sidearm throw) towards a large target placed 2-3 meters ahead.			
Roll a soccer sized ball to knock over a target at a distance of 2-3m.			
Bounce a soccer sized ball to a partner .			
Throw a beanbag underarm onto a 40cm square mat placed at a distance of 3m.			
Step and kick a static soccer ball straight forwards between "goal posts" placed 3m ahead.			