

Active Parenting: first five years



Birth-1: the Baby



Baby depends on you for survival; they need food, clothing, shelter, and everything else to be safe and healthy. A baby needs love and nurturing to thrive; hug, kiss, smile, sweet talk, sing, and read to your baby. They love gentle movement like walking, rocking, and dancing, especially if you sing or hum too. A crying baby is trying to tell you that they need something, so you need to figure out what they need. Babies that receive more attention cry less over time.



Age 1: the Explorer



Your child is learning to walk and wants to explore; if you get down on the floor and see your home as your child does, what can they reach? You need to make a safe place where they can play and never leave your child alone; it is not safe. If your child is not within your sight or hearing, check on them often. Children are curious so give them safe toys to play with; things that are too big to fit in their mouths. You can begin to make rules, but don't be surprised when they forget to follow them all the time. Your child may also try to act in a hurtful way; don't get angry or yell. Instead, look them in the eye and say in a firm voice, "No biting!".



Age 2: the Boss



This is when your child will learn the word "no", but it could mean: "I don't feel good," "I need a nap," or "I need some attention." Listen and learn about why your child is saying "no". A two-year old is still exploring, so make sure that they are never left alone, especially outside where they could run off. When playing with others, it is good to remember that two-year olds do not know how to share and you should try to have a toy for each child. This is also the age when your child *MIGHT* be ready to potty train. Do not force your child or punish them when potty training; instead, encourage and teach them.



Age 3: the Pal



This is the age when your child learns how to be a friend. They need to play with others to help them learn how to share and get along. Watch to see when they get hungry, tired, or bored as this can affect their mood. Read books with your child and let them make up a story from the pictures. At this age, your child will get angry if they are unable to do something, so find things for them that they are able to do.



Age 4: the Adventurer



At this age, your child is ready to become a risk taker and is learning how to take care of themselves. Let them do things for you and for themselves and encourage them, even when they make mistakes. When you set rules, first tell them what they can do, followed by what they may not do, so they know what is OK for them to do. Keep them busy with interesting things to do and give them two choices. Remember your four-year old still needs love and attention, so give plenty of hugs when playing together, watching TV, or when reading together.

