

Three Year Old Child Developmental Milestones

Hello and welcome!

This is the summary of results that my own personal research has found about the developmental milestones that three year old children go through.

A developmental milestone is an age-related time when the child's brain is growing. At its first onset, the child tends to become difficult. In through the preschool years, they may be rude, lie, blame others, whine or become aggressive. After the age-related phase, however, they become calm again and have some remarkable new skills. This is a summary of the milestones for age three:

Three Year Old Developmental Milestones		
No.	Age	Milestone
1	3.0.0	Speculation and Mental Sorting
2	3.0.2	Recollection
3	3.1.0	Role Playing
4A/B	3.1.1	Unconventional/Persistent Application of Principles
5	3.2.2	Intentional Imaging
6	3.3.3	Strategic Thinking
7	3.4.0	Specific Thought
8A/B/C	3.4.2	Integrates Sets of Knowledge/Highly Inquisitive
9A	3.6.2	Deductive Reasoning Across Time
9B	3.7.0	Enormous, Realistic 3-D Imagination
10A/B/C	3.7.3	Segmented Knowledge, Themes, Precision
11	3.9.2	Two Alternatives
12	3.10.2	Persistent Focus on One Idea with Many Variables
13	3.11.0	Pushes Bounds

The pre-sale for *Misbehavior is Growth: 3 Year Olds* is now available! The book should be available by December 1, 2020. The book has expanded descriptions, conflict resolution ideas, and activity ideas to nurture the new growth. Where to find these summaries and where to find *Misbehavior is Growth: Three Year Olds* is available at www.theobservantmom.com.

Thank you for your interest in children's mental development! Print this out, put in a binder, and please share with family and friends!

Amber Domoradzki ("The Observant Mom")

Three Year Old Milestone 1—Speculation and Mental Sorting

Starts: 2.11.3

Most Intense: Grows in intensity over a few days

Ends: 3.0.0

Irritable Period Summary

- Wants to be picked up or carried often, but usually only for a brief amount of time
- Refuses to do chores they previously did, such as put their cup on the sink
- Irritable
- Might be very forceful in getting something they want, such as a particular toy, “No, [person’s name]! I want the blue one.”
- Confusion: might grab you, pull you, get confused, and walk in circles
- May have nightmares at night
- Doesn’t want to go to bed
- High fear of abandonment if primary caregiver leaves unexpectedly

Most Intense

- Wants to be held occasionally, irritable, demanding of your time

New Abilities Summary

- They make better educated guesses about what is going on and sort things into mental sequences.

Makes Educated Guesses (Speculation)

- At previous ages, they could draw conclusions from limited proof such as understanding that Dad is home when the garage door opens. Now they make yet more conclusions and educated guesses about what is going on.
- When they see clouds, they might say, “A storm is coming!” Or if Daddy just walked in, they say, “I can smell Daddy!” Or if you are about to see some swans at a park, they say, “Oh, we could feed them!” Or they might see a cake and say it’s a “party,” as opposed to a mere cake. These all make a next step in the mental guess of what is going on.
- With just a little bit of information about something, they can draw a conclusion. So, if they see a hat with a skull and crossbones, they might put it on and say “Arr.” Because they’re a pirate.
- They solve jigsaw puzzles with more reasoning (with an educated guess) instead of trial and error. They actively look for, say, the piece with the funnel to go on top of the train they just put together
- Evaluates what size block fits into a slot, based on their visual acumen, and less on trial and error
- They anticipate better how others might feel, “I’m so excited for him!” “I am so scared for him!”
- Interested in where things “disappear” to, such as where the sun goes at nighttime, where the sun goes as you drive around in the van, or where the garbage goes after it is picked up
- Notices similarities about patterns of things not in sight. “Dad saving me from drowning is just like [from a story] the truck that saved the other truck in the mud.”
- May love mystery stories such as “The Great Pie Robbery” by Richard Scarry. A mystery is a book in which you have to think about “who done it,” i.e., an educated guess
- Can better read or identify the last letter in a word. Before, they may have confused say “mat” and “map.” Now they differentiate them. Or perhaps, completely on their own, while you are sounding

out words with them, they identify the “g” in “frog.” (Please DO NOT compare your child’s reading skills to this list. Some children just prefer to read at later ages.)

- Can follow along with instructions in picture format with some assist. You might lay out LEGOS on the instruction that comes with them, and they can then assemble them by themselves
- If they hear funny sounds, like ice shifting in the freezer, they really want to know what is going on
- May want to make the room dark. Perhaps so they can hear the sounds, etc., and make guesses about what is going on.
- In that they grow in making educative (intuitive) guesses and their hearing/smell grows, it’s as if their instincts and intuition themselves are growing

Pretending and Joking

- In their twos, if they were dressed up as a character, they thought they were that character. Now they understand now that if they are dressed up as a character, they are not the character but simply dressed up.
- They similarly playfully admit they are “just joking” now. Mostly they understand that it’s they who or pretending or joking, not as much that others are.
- Interesting note about their perspective: if you put two stuffed animals facing each other and ask if A can see B and then turn them such that they are NOT facing each other and ask if A can see B, they are apt to get the answers wrong. They don’t quite understand yet that something has to be facing something to see it. This comes a few milestones from now.

Mental Sorting

- May love to put printed or moveable numbers or letters in numerical or alphabetical order
- Sorts loose items into logical patterns, such as in rows of one color and then another, e.g., sorts Magnet toys or Connect 4 discs in patterns
- Notices patterns in clouds
- May want to create something beautiful or functional, like flowers arranged in a vase or a tunnel as they play with trains
- Understands social hierarchies and relationships (moms, dads, grandparents, uncles, etc.)
- Identifies relationships among people, e.g., one character loves a particular dog and another loves a different animal
- Sorts items based on an abstract principle, such as all race cars go on one side and cars that are not race cars (tow trucks, etc.) go in another. This is a more abstract principle than sorting by say, trucks and cars.
- They can recall past things and do some mental or mathematical sorting with it. For instance, they can remember they saw something with a pattern of white, white, red, and white and then count that there were thus four things. It’s that they can do it from memory that’s impressive.
- This is indeed “recollection” and bleeds into the next milestone, “Recollection.” Perhaps this ability to sort things mentally helps them with such recollection.
- They can recall the significance of numbers and do things mentally with it, such as recognizing that “8 is greater than 5,” of which they can reliably answer correctly (if math at this age is their thing, which it might not be).
- Accurately recreates something from “real life” that they saw while out and remembered. For instance, puts on a lengthier, more detailed play based on a movie or a party they were at, constructs a familiar place out of train tracks/wood blocks (maybe a very specific tunnel), or draw a crude

drawing of a real place (maybe a house or restaurant). It is of things you do routinely or made a big impression on them.

- Can follow patterns to make things and can make up their own free style patterns. Can put two loose triangles together to make a square
- Spontaneous and strong interest in adding objects

Applies Social Principles at the Appropriate Time

- Applies fair rules to govern relationships, e.g., lets their sibling take turns with them. What one course of action going forward is right?
- Initiates ideal behavior, such as cleaning something that is dirty without being asked to.
- Or, on their own, they say “Bye, friends!” when leaving somewhere, as they recognize the social principle, specifically in a situation where they previously did not do this.
- They MIGHT put their own shoes on or change their own clothes in the morning. Or they might demand you do it.
- May learn how to use social principles to their advantage, such as by lying
- More consistently reasonable about *in-the-moment* things. For instance, they see they are in the way of something that you need and move out of the way.
- Or they take a bath because they recognize they are dirty.
- Being persuaded by logic like this right now pertains only to one step forward, such that there aren’t any competing ways of doing things. They will not agree to break their bedtime routine, for instance.

Longer Attention Span

- Noticeably longer attention span, stays with something for an hour or longer
- Much longer imaginative and creative play (several hours)

Dramatic Increase in Gross Motor and Other Skills

- Better gross motor skill, especially with their legs and feet e.g., better at kicking a soccer ball or run noticeably faster
- Better at combining gross motor and fine motor skills, such as hitting a ball with a small club or brush
- Notices smells more, might express displeasure about the smells
- Notices sounds more and may love to sing and dance

Three Year Old Milestone 2—Recollection

Starts: 3.0.1

Most Intense: 3.0.2 until 3.0.3

Ends: 3.0.3, give or take a few days

Irritable Period Summary

Bossy, Demanding, Whiny

- Depends on the temperament of the child and how they channel their creativity and energy. They may be mellow—or they may be whiny, bossy, or demanding of your time.
- Wants their own way
- Grumpy at certain parts of the day but not others, e.g., morning or night
- Mad if you take something from them, such as your own phone
- They want to be the one to do things and for as long as they want. They might want to give you more and more vitamins, when you only want one. They do not yet have a reliable sense of “stop.”
- Incredibly pick/bossy about how things should be done: who can get them milk at all, then who is allowed to put the lid on, etc.
- May be highly sensitive when someone does something rather minor to them, say hits them with a balloon
- Their bossiness, if they are bossy, is more about in-the-moment things and directed inwards—over things that affect them—and wanting them to go a certain way.
- In the next milestones, their bossiness becomes directed more outwards—much more about making sure people follow the “rules.”

Doesn't Handle Disappointment Well

- As it gets more intense, they want things done/resolved immediately (“now!”). These meltdowns can be resolved easily if you can guess what they want—but that is sometimes difficult
- You might play a game with them and have no control over what happens next. For instance, on a tablet, a type of something comes up to be counted and they specifically want to see one thing, say peppermints, but something else keeps coming up. They are distraught they can't control this. They might look wildly confused about it (though, in fairness, tablets are artificial and wildly confusing to children designed for a slower moving, more reliable world)
- However, similarly, doesn't handle the disappointment well if, say, a doctor's appointment is cancelled.
- Or they get really upset if you throw away old food in front of them.
- I believe this inability to handle disappointment is because they can make educated guesses about what is going to happen, such that they fully anticipate something like a doctor's appointment. But they don't have flexibility yet in handling it if it doesn't happen. This new awareness comes soon.

Most Intense

- They don't handle disappointment well and this may result in meltdowns. They may look like they are in utter disbelief of what is going on. Or they might just demand your time quite a bit.

New Abilities Summary

- Recollection: they can remember things that happened in the past day with better detail and about the meaning and nuances of what happened.

- Imagine their perceptual awareness as if they are watching a live play. In the toddler years, up until about now, they can understand everything about the stage of the play, the background. They noticed things across time that were persistent: their routines, people, events that happened from a long time ago that continue to burn in their mind. Now they see the actors on that stage, which move around more fluidly. With a bit of prodding at this one, they can remember details and nuance of what happened back to about one day.

Strong Recollection

- A better recollection, specifically to about one day in the past
- When asked what their happy part of the day was, they will now answer with something that did happen that day. Before their answer was always the same: something that happened two months ago, e.g., they were sad on a train ride once. However, the answer they now give is usually about something you *just* talked about
- Very perceptive at not just recalling what happened in the past day but also of the emotions and meaning of things that happened, e.g., who was grumpy and why in the past, remembers exact conversations. But, again, they usually only recall this if you were *just* talking about it
- Perceptive about the quirky things that define other's personalities, e.g., distinctive things their mom or dad says, such as how their dad says “fuck*n hell” (whoops!)
- If you present a relatively new story to them, they can understand it and retell it, over and over, pretty well
- More capable of finding [x] in another room. Please find the red toy, bring me back four blocks, etc. They can remember their task longer as they go do it.
- Interested in finding out if something is true or not, e.g., someone says the baby is sleeping—is he really? In the last milestones they thought about where things “disappeared” to. Now they are going and finding out.
- Able to recall some dreams such as “I dreamed about pepperoni pizza.”
- Might let out what they are thinking about. After they mutter and mutter, clearly working something out, they might burst out, “STEAMING DINOSAURS!” And laugh uproariously. Because steaming dinosaurs are funny.
- Has clear thoughts in their head as they think about or work through something, which they do for longer periods of time. You might ask them about what they are thinking about. The answers are fun.
- When talking about mental ideas, they insist that these ideas be linked. For instance, if your sad part was falling off of a bike that day, your happy part must have been riding the bike. They might get upset if you say anything that doesn't link things like this, as if it's not even a possibility

Three Year Old Milestone 3—Role Playing and Flexible Planning

Starts: 3.1.0, or a few days shy

Most Intense: Varies among children, lasting about a week sometime between 3.1.0 and 3.1.2

Ends: 3.1.2

Irritable Period Summary

Rules Enforcer

- They are still bossy and rude, but their bossiness and rudeness develops more into making sure everyone follows the “rules.”
- Rude to others, e.g., tells them to “Get out” or “Go away.”
- Might chase children away from places they aren’t supposed to be, such as mom’s bed.
- Orders other kids not to fight

Irritable, Demanding, Clingy

- Possessive of stuff
- Whiny
- Bossy
- Doesn't want to leave primary caregiver (fear of abandonment)
- May become scared of any other adult that is not the primary caregiver
- Falls asleep at weird times of the day
- May wake up at night upset
- Blames another child for something the other child didn’t do. Say the three year old built a tall tower and got it too tall and fell over. They blame another child for this.
- Might start chewing or smacking their lips, rocking hard on a non-rocking chair, or other activities suggesting they are anxious.
- Parents seem to see this on and off for about two months in the early threes. It should dissipate eventually

A Sense That Things Float Around, Don’t Stop, or Magically Happen

- Think they can magically bring large things to themselves, such as an entire room in the house
- They are sincerely worried that things keep going forever, such as the van will run into something on the side of the road or someone running towards them will never stop.
- Given their worry about things going forever, they may, as such, get overwhelmed in a situation where things move a lot, such as older kids playing basketball in a gym
- Sees things that aren’t there as they make up stories in their mind, like there are sharks in the floor or dogs on the ceiling
- Puts their hands on their eyes as if they are scared to see what they are seeing
- The stories they make up in their mind, as they just sit and think, are longer

Most Intense

- Possessive, rude, wants a particular caregiver. This one in addition is marked more by wanting others to follow the rules: stop fighting, get off mommy’s bed

New Abilities Summary

- Role playing: they deliberately choose various “roles” to play, e.g., pretend to be a bear, a particular character, etc.
- They can be involved in short-term planning, such as making a grocery list

Role Playing

- In the last milestones, they showed they really understand the deeper significance of characters, e.g., a particular car isn’t just a car—it’s a race car—or someone is someone else’s mother, and these things matter. Now it’s as if they want to try on these roles for themselves.
- They are much more *deliberate* in which one role they pick. Whereas before in their mid-twos, they pretended to be whomever was fun and right in front of them
- May say they are a particular character from a favorite story and carry on in elaborate imaginative play as that character
- May pretend they are a particular animal and starts to walk like that animal, e.g., a frog or bear
- May use their personal charm to get their way, e.g., may act like a cute puppy
- May walk around like they are “the man”
- Might tell you that you are “cute”
- May want to play around with their physical looks or outfits, e.g., may want to cut their hair to look like their brother. They are likely to want to dress up as the person they admire the most
- May love puppet shows

Short-Term Flexible Planning

- They are starting to notice how things keep moving better. They are noticing how things can keep going and which direction they can take. They can “pivot” in their thinking.
- Can be involved in simple planning such as putting items on a grocery list. Or they ask you to put something on the grocery list, as they know you are going. You’re out of milk, after all.
- They might read a beginner book of about 4 pages with a few words on each page. This is only if language is their thing at this age.
- Orders you to follow the rules, e.g. stop at a Stop sign. They sincerely seem to think that things go to total anarchy unless they insert themselves to follow such rules. Truly it shows how wild imaginations spur fear, an emotional driver, to try out their new skills.
- Very polite. May ask permission before doing anything (the opposite of rude)
- They might put on an impromptu play of something that just happened. You ask them to go to bed. They have two figurines, one wants to go to bed and the other doesn’t. The one who doesn’t want to go to bed valiantly knocks over the one who does.
- They can be persuaded by the logic of something now, even if it defies a normal routine. This was unheard of before. For instance, they may indeed usually have their diaper changed at night. But it’s not dirty. So, we don’t have to change it. Specifically, this is that they can be persuaded to do something else *despite* the normal routine.
- Better able to understand the idea of “one more fun thing” and then we are doing something. But at this one, it needs to be specific. Like “dump the dirt from the toy dump truck one more time and then we are leaving.” It cannot be left open ended; they won’t pick a “fun thing.”
- Can understand, “If you clean your room, you’ll get a lollipop.”

- That they can actually plan different courses of actions and defy normal routines sets them up greatly for the next milestone in which they become highly unconventional in how principles and procedures can be applied, trying their hand at inventive new solutions—and how.
- In this one, they realize plans can go one of a few ways, based on the relevant information of the situation. They can make some short-term plans. That they are willing to “change directions,” to pivot, marks this milestone.
- That they apply their own, new solution to a particular situation, on their own with no help, and can take a step back and evaluate their own solutions is the next milestone

Three Year Old Milestone 4A—Unconventional Application of Principles

Starts: Hits like a Mack Truck at somewhere between 3.1.2 and 3.1.4, though it builds before this

Most Intense: The beginning is intense and throughout. Very noticeable change in their head shapes over the course of the milestone may help you see when and why they are irritable, confused, or pushy.

Ends: 7 days after it starts

Irritable Period Summary

- This hits like a Mack Truck somewhere between just shy of 3.1.2 and 3.1.4. They might become distraught, wildly confused, defiant, or insert themselves unexpectedly into something. Before this, they might be very snuggly, fall asleep more often, or other mild behaviors
- A very noticeable change in head shape at the beginning. This is a major milestone.
- These milestones over the next few weeks come rapidly and are hard to pin down. I include pictures of head shape to show how undeniably rapidly brain growth is happening. Perhaps the pictures will help you identify the new brain growth better in your child.

Tries Unconventional Ways of Doing Things

- This one is very much marked by a child that does things in unconventional ways and absolutely insists on doing things in this new, unconventional way.
- Does things in a new way on purpose. They may do something like insist on putting on their own pants, but they do it purposely wrong by putting both legs in one pant leg. They see if they can walk like this
- Has a meltdown as they try to do something the right way but can't, such as wash their feet, but they have difficulty putting soap on their feet, which is harder to do than put soap on their hands
- May insert themselves in an attempt to help, but it might not go well. They might push their sibling in their carseat off of a table—which can be terrible. They sincerely thought they were helping get her into the van.

Hates When Others Do Things Unfamiliar to Them

- Very upset when a previously established rule they knew to be true is broken, such as you take longer than normal to start going after stopping at a Stop sign.
- Upset if someone does something in a way that is unfamiliar to them, such as cleans a toilet bowl differently than they saw it done before
- Asks "Why?" a lot, especially when people or characters behave in an odd way

Belligerent—Until They're Not

- Very defiant in obeying requests. But when they decide to be cooperative, after being defiant, they are fully cooperative. It's as if it needs to be done on their timeline. You may as well pad some extra time to get out the door.
- Demanding that you do things in a particular way, e.g., come upstairs right now or hold something in a particular hand

Conflicts and Sensitivity

- Shows intentional spite. They may get angry that someone hurt them, pause to think, then purposely act out by throwing something of the other child's

- Gives deliberate, playful insults to others, e.g., the baby is “Poopies.” They laugh a bit nervously at themselves, because they know this might be wrong (the very first subtle sign that they feel authentic, self-initiated guilt)
- Cries in a way that it seems like the world isn’t fair to them. They are, after all, trying out highly unconventional ways of doing things. The world doesn’t quite get them yet.
- May be very sensitive and easily have meltdowns
- Might take a serious spill after tripping. They sincerely seem confused.

Dreams

- Very intense dreams where they laugh a lot or act out something (like flying)
- Dreams where they seem to recite entire movies or TV shows in their sleep

Most Intense

- Does unexpected and unconventional things; may cry in a way that they feel the world is unfair to them; tries to do things they can’t quite do but they still persist at them; confused and upset when people do something the “wrong” way; demands you come to them

New Abilities Summary

- Marked by a strong insistence to do things in unconventional ways
- It is also marked by a greater self-awareness: they realize they are cute, they apologize more for their own behavior
- A better merging of fantasy play to the current reality of what is going on

Unconventional and Flexible Application of Principles

- Tries out unconventional things for the sake of it.
- This reveals your child’s personality greatly. What boundary are they pushing?
- Are asking to “fly” in the air in a way such that you are stunned by how much danger they are willing to take on?
- Are they trying to wash their hands AND feet, because they are very clean and organized?
- Are they trying to help get their siblings out the door because they are so very responsible over other people?
- Take a picture of whatever it is, no matter how troublesome it is. This is a coming of three year old age thing.
- Might get around the rules. If you say, “no pushing,” they kick. It’s a little bit funny.
- Can do routines out of order or backwards
- Can count backwards; not because they, for instance, memorized the countdown before a space rocket launch, but because they can count forwards, and now they can count backwards

Deliberate and Responsible in How They Handle Situations

- Better at conflict resolution in which something happens and instead of getting immediately mad, they compose themselves and put together a reasonable way to handle something.
- For instance, they state their feelings in a diplomatic way, “Mommy, I’m sad you destroyed my creation.” (You thought they were done!)
- Or they confront their aggressive sibling by saying, politely, “No hitting!”
- Or maybe after an intense conflict, they say afterwards, “Don’t hit me. And sorry I yelled!”
- Generously helps others and shares their food.

Less Rote in Situations and Follows Instructions More Independently

- Less rote and more involved in social interactions, e.g., may say “thank you for noticing” after you tell them “good job,” which is not something that they’ve ever said before or that they’ve been exposed to (that you know of)
- They might love that they know to say “cheese!” when a camera is aimed at them. They could say cheese before; it’s that they enjoy knowing that they know to do it now.
- They love to be part of certain rituals, such as saying “cheers!” before drinking or giving good night kisses
- Loves to make decisions about how to act, such as knowing which bathroom to pick (Men or Women). A truly important decision indeed.
- Much more confident in executing routines, such as “Put your backpack in the bin and come join the class” and they do without any help
- May understand more complex road signs and what they mean, e.g., curvy roads ahead

Evaluates Their Own Solutions

- Evaluates if a solution that they come up with is good or bad. For instance, if a solution they thought up to prevent their younger sibling from getting out of an area worked or not
- Announces they have a “great idea!” of how to solve things, e.g., they get you scissors to help open a package you were fighting with

Fantasy and Imaginative Play Applies to Current Situation Better

- This likely blends from the last milestone and into the next one, but they become more “practical” in their fantasy play. In the last one, their fantasy play became much more deliberate, but it was still just for fun. They pretended to be a bear just because it was fun. Now, it’s more applicable to what is going on in the current situation, yet still quite cheeky.
- For instance, they pretend to put magic binoculars on to show you they found a missing toy
- If you hand them a Hubble Telescope and a globe, they might know it takes pictures of the earth and pretend to do this
- They might sing songs constantly, as if they are the background music in a movie, setting the mood about what’s going on. When it rains, they sing “Rain, rain, go away.” As they are cleaning, they might start singing like they are the mice in Cinderella helping her clean, “We can do it!” When they drop their dad off at work, they may even tailor the song, e.g., “Daddy finger, daddy finger, where are you? *At work, at work*, how do you do?”

Object Constancy of Character and Self

- Much greater self-awareness. They show they are aware they are cute, for instance.
- They may understand more nuances about the moral of a story. They can understand that although people accuse her of being bad, Cinderella is not bad.
- Might still be picking their lips or asking you to rub their head. It’s as if they are amazed they actually exist and (have lips, a head, whatever it is they are rubbing)

Three Year Old Milestone 5—Intentional Imaging

Starts: ~8 days from start of 4B, which is around 3.2.2 or 3.2.3

Most Intense: Several throughout. At the beginning and again a week or two into it is notable. The latter is marked by nightmares at night or seeing bad guys in their room

Ends: 3.3.0 or just shy of it

Irritable Period Summary

Sleep Disturbances and Nightmares

- May fall asleep during the day at random times
- Fear of bad guys or monsters at night. May wonder if monsters are in their closet.
- May have nightmares of something they saw and think it's there in their room, such as they saw a bad guy kidnap a child in a movie.
- Please avoid scary movies at this one (and before). They have or are soon to have a very vivid, persistent memory. They easily “see the unseen” and remember these scary images.
- Screaming at night or waking up distraught
- Or just waking up if you cosleep and are there to immediately comfort them
- Can describe the dreams they had vividly
- Stalls at bedtime (bedtime may be up to 2 hours) or simply stays up late

Conflicts

- Conflicts with other children and now they are over what rule itself should apply, e.g., they insist that a toy should be “shared” while another sibling tells them “no taking”

Needs to See Things:

- Doesn't like when they can't see something, such as they are in the car and something is blocking their view
- May be overwhelmed by something overly fantastical, such as a person dressed up as a character

Defiant

- This really depends on the child's temperament
- Sad for seeming no reason, rude demands, whiny, clingy, won't eat
- May be defiant over many things such as getting in the bath, putting shoes on, or going to bed.
- Fickle about food, asks for food then doesn't eat it; doesn't eat, only drinks

“Lies”

- Purposely gives the wrong answer or thing, e.g., asks you what of two options you want and gives you the opposite of what you asked for
- Likes to tell “lies” about what happens in a story, making up new plots for the fun of it, such as Te Fiti (in *Moana*) turns into Elsa (as opposed to Te Ka).

Lost in Their Thoughts

- Stares into space for a noticeably long time
- Wants to linger on something and watch it intently: maybe something at a store, a large water fountain, or how milk swirls on a lid of a cup

Most Intense

- Possible major conflicts but this time over what rule itself should apply. Or maybe they just sleep a lot. However, this one is definitively marked by nightmares.

New Abilities Summary

- Intentional Imaging: They can point to nothing at all and say it's something
- I believe this intentional imaging, an ability to imagine what is not there, aids in many other skills. This includes short term memory, making up new plot twists to stories, and identifying mismatches between theory and reality. Hence, I centered the milestone around it.
- Their short-term memory, in which they remember new information presented on the spot and on their own, gets longer, to about one day

Intentional Imaging: Conjures Up Images of Things When Nothing is There

- Intentional Imaging: they can point to nothing at all and say it's something.
- In the plays they make up, they imagine things that aren't there. Before, if they imagined a "rockslide," something acted as the rocks, such as blocks. Now they can point to nothing and say it is a "rockslide."
- Makes up stories about things that are not visible, such as they hand you nothing and says it's a particular character

Persistent Observation

- They notice what is going on around them in a persistent way
- They "eavesdrop" constantly now. They understand what others are talking about and contribute.
- Asks what others are thinking about or reading about
- They remember what was said and use it later as well
- You might say "lets teach [the child] to use their tricycle tomorrow." They overhear this, and, later, when they see the tricycle, they get it.
- Or you talk about how two children need to stop fighting. They insert themselves to get them to stop.
- Or you talk about how cute their baby brother is and they mimic said baby brother, to get the attention for being cute.
- They might point to a building on a map that you frequent often, say a community pool, and say the address. And they're right.
- Wants to linger and watch things, such as a water fountain—as they size up everything about how it works
- May want to watch something simple with great interest, such as liquid swirling around on the lid of a cup

Notices Richer Details of the Present

- They notice yet more complex details of what is around them
- Narrates everything that his happening while they read a book, watch a show, or walk through a store: "Oooh, look, a chair!" "A desk! "A bed!" This is happening, that is happening!
- They notice what other people do. They might notice "Mommy is BEAUTIFUL!" when you put on a dress.
- They may notice women's "boobies."
- Greater ability to know their way around. When at a new restaurant, if they go to the bathroom twice, they might know how to get back to the table by the second time. This greatly grows in the next milestones.

- A more persistent memory. They may do “Five little monkeys jumping on a bed; one fell off and bumped his head,” which then leads to 4 monkeys, etc., but they start at 19. It isn’t that they can tailor the song or sing it; it’s that they stick with 19, all the way down to 0 that is impressive.
- Loves to talk about their favorite story from start to end, noting nuanced details.
- Follows along with a story better. Might fill in the details as you read it or act out part of it.
- Loves to put on plays of known favorite stories, filling in many details.
- May endlessly make up new plays, with new endings from the standard ones they have been told
- May make up a character, such as a silly, wayward chicken, and persist at it, as they walk crazily all around, bokking, making everyone laugh
- May act out the characters in their plays with incredible detail, such as collapsing, “and then the Prince fell into DESPAIR.”
- You might use this as a tactic when they are in meltdown mode or you need their cooperation. Offer to tell their favorite story from start to end. This is a great reading comprehension builder.
- More impressive drawings. As they notice more, it gets put into their work
- May, as such, spontaneously write letters
- Becomes pleasant and cooperative

Evaluates Current Life Situations as Compared to the Abstract, Notices Mismatches

- They are constantly thinking, looking, and evaluating now. They take what is being said (the abstract discussion) and see how it is applied to the real-life situation. If something is mismatched between discussion and reality, they notice.
- That they can “see” things when they aren’t there (intentional imaging) may be why they can identify mismatches and mistakes easier. They can mentally hold on to the “right” way of doing things and simultaneously compare it to the current reality
- They will, on their own, not just understand but identify mistakes clearly, and ones that can be highly nuanced.
- If you say, “Your bedroom is right next to the bathroom,” they might get big, astonished eyes and ask, “Mommy, what did you just DO!?” This is because their *sibling’s* bedroom is closer to the bathroom. This is thus the one “right next to” the bathroom. You just made a *mistake*.
- They grow in appreciation of mismatches in the abstract and reality, such as they know when someone is “just joking.” They better understand when others, not just themselves, are “just pretending.”
- They have greater self-awareness. If they are ordering others to be quiet, they realize maybe they should be quiet, too.
- Acutely aware if a family member or favorite toy is missing. They have great emotion wrapped up in the missing person, e.g., sad their “sweet Monkey” is not with them.
- May come up with insightful life observations like, “Mommy, Daddy, and my brother make me happy when I am sad.”

Picks which Rule Should Apply to the Current Situation

- More arguments about what very rule—what abstract idea—should apply in what situation. No taking? Share? Take turns?
- Can understand the idea of “I will only do this for you if you do this,”
- For instance, “I’m not getting you a new banana until you throw the peel of the old banana away.” They can weigh which course of action they want: throw the banana peel away or not.

- Or, similarly: they can help make pancakes, but only if they wash their hands. Either choice is OK.
- May be particular about rules, e.g., “Give me a hug but just a small hug, ok?”
- Or instead of telling you to “shut up,” they tell you, “Be quiet for a little bit.”
- They evaluate good courses of action handily. So, if you try to convince them that monsters or bad guys can’t get to them because the door is locked or whatever, they readily argue with you. Of course a bad guy can ram right through the door.

Holds onto New Information Across Time

- They grow in how long they can hold onto new information, without any prompting
- They can hold onto abstract ideas, imagination, principles, and information and its relevance across about one day’s time.
- They might notice that it was raining yesterday and now it is not. It is entirely on their own that they notice it.
- Loves the idea of getting better (a progression across time): maybe that weights make them strong or that their dad does things at work that “makes people better.”
- This milestone has many little intense periods over it. It’s as if their persistency in applying principles over time and in complexity expands throughout the milestone with each intense period.

An Interest in the “Unseen”

- Keeps asking “where did something go?” even though they can plainly see it, such as something on a board game you are playing. Perhaps because they want to linger and look at it longer
- Upset they can’t see a person in a car driving in front of you, if you are following someone in a car. They recognize it is a logistical problem though: you are in the way of their sight.
- May like to hide from you or behind you. You can’t see me, mom!
- This suggests they might now understand that to see something, another person’s eyes have to be looking in a certain direction.

Three Year Old Milestone 6A—Interested in Moving or Bringing Objects Together

Starts: ~18 days from 5. Around 3.3.0 or 3.3.1

Most Intense: At the beginning for a week, until 3.3.1 or 3.3.2

Ends: A few days after the intense period

Irritable Period Summary

Meltdowns Over Which Direction To Go

- Major meltdowns about where they want to go, such as wanting to go to a cookie store when you say no
- Grabs you to come see the stuff they are doing a lot
- May want you to be right next to them all day.
- You were supposed to sit THERE not here. You were supposed to push the train BACKWARDS not forwards.
- You might be able to tell this one is about to start when they start thinking about how to magically move things out of the way, such as the cars in the traffic in front of you need to magically “boom away” so your car can move again.

Bossy/Sensitive

- Orders others to be quiet, stop talking, or go away
- Very sensitive and may cry easily over something small, e.g., over a book dropping on the floor or stepping on a toy.
- Or they just get sad; it depends on the child.

Sleep

- Falls asleep at weird times in the day

Most Intense

- It gets bad at the beginning and gets increasingly worse until a week in, at 3.3.1 or 3.3.2, depending on when it started.
- During this time, they might frustratingly stall at bedtime for hours, become defiant about doing things (e.g., getting a bath or brushing their teeth), have major meltdowns perhaps about where they want to go while out, may boss you around quite a bit, demand you be by them often, or might cry or get sad easily, such as if they simply stepped on a toy.

New Abilities Summary

Brings Things Closer to or Further Away From Them

- Separating when new abilities in these milestones that come one after the other is difficult. But this one in particular seems marked by an incredible awareness of how things are related in spatial relation to each other and how you can get them closer to or further away from each other across any theoretical 2-D line. They might:
- Demand your whole family go to the cookie store. In looking at the behavioral patterns, I don't think this is so much because they want the cookie. I think it's because they want to figure out how to make that happen. How do you move all these people over to this fun place? Do you walk? Does the cookie store come to you? Do you bend spacetime?

- They are especially interested in bringing things close together, such as two trains on train tracks. The trains are likely to crash into each other.
- Or they keep making the track longer and longer and longer, like the only thing they care about is making it as long as possible
- May like to put Unifix cubes in a really, really long line, using 100 cubes or more
- They physically bring YOU to them a lot.
- May love to bring two figurines together for a kiss. I was shocked to learn that both of my boys did this at exactly 1,197 days from their official due date.
- May take an unusual interest in giving “introductions” when two people who were separated for a while come back together
- If you say you are going to “beat the storm home,” they notice who won the “race”: you or the storm?
- A big imagination about things that are far away but could be closer. They might pretend to steer a boat and they crashed it into a shore
- Although I think it shows up in the last milestone, in this milestone they definitely know that to see something, a character’s eyes have to be looking at it. They might have their stuffed animal look through toy binoculars. Or they might line up characters in a play to watch other characters do something, e.g. some characters watch a couple dancing or kissing.
- This heightened concern over how to move objects together or further apart, is, I think, a foundational skill for the next milestone, in which they develop strategic (and navigational) thinking. In the next milestone they might, for instance, walk all around a building trying to figure out the best way to get somewhere. Hence, I grouped these milestones 6A and 6B together.

Projects Things Across a Continuum of Time

- They’ve been growing in what they notice across time. Now they notice it with much richer, more reliable detail and about things that span a greater length of time, to about a few days.
- Shows they have strong knowledge of what happened that day and what will happen in the future.
- For instance, they say a prayer in which they remember everything that happened that day and ask for help with future events
- Notices things that changed from a few days ago, such as a bathtub has been drained that you were previously playing boats in
- Makes educated guesses about what will happen next in a story, e.g., “And now the characters are going to go home,”—as they were just out on an adventure
- They might understand a principle that happens over a longer period of time, such as “Your body will heal it,” about a cut or bruise they just got. Or, “Eating too many cookies will give you a big belly.” However, their understanding of the technical details of how this works may be wonky.
- May, as such, anticipate a future event like Santa coming better
- Works longer at creating something, such as making a structure out of some kind of toy match the box it came with

Bigger, More Powerful Wild Imaginations

- In the past milestones, the child became wildly imaginative. In the very early threes, they saw things that don’t even seem to be there, such as a dog on the ceiling or sharks in the rug.
- Then they saw what isn’t even there (Intentional Imaging). They imagined a “rockslide” when there is nothing there at all to represent one.

- In *this* milestone now, the wild imaginations are still there—and they are big—but the child grows in what they think they can do.
- They see the cars ahead of you on the road and think you can move them by pushing them all out of the way. Or they think someone can “boom hurricanes away!”
- Their imaginations are still a bit unrealistic (they think they can pick up entire cars) but they are growing very confident and feel they are very powerful in what can be done. It’s still magical, however. They don’t put themselves in the position of moving the cars. The cars just boom away. There is heroism here—an ability to enact positive change—but not a sense of self. This is next.

Growing Physical Attributes

More nimble, e.g., does somersaults quickly

Three Year Old Milestone 6B—Strategic Thinking

Starts: ~13-16 days from 6A. Between 3.3.2 and 3.3.4

Most Intense: It is intense for 4 or 5 days after it starts

Ends: A week later

Irritable Period Summary

- **Note:** Different children express themselves differently. Some are very verbal, some want greater connection. Firstborns are likely to be “easier” simply because they have less to compete with

“Misbehavior” Related to Making Choices

- A delayed reaction (up to 20 seconds) in how to respond to being hurt before they start screaming. It is as if they are contemplating how to respond, suggesting they have greater control and choice in responding
- Purposely goes the wrong way when walking around, such choices interest them intensely now
- Mentally zones out

Confusion Over What They Caused or Can Cause to Happen

- Confusion over what they do and do not have control.
- For instance, they might say they are sorry for things they did not cause. Such as if a baby is crying they say “I’m sorry! I’m SORRY!”
- Some children (I suspect more often empaths, people who directly feel other people’s pain) may show guilt, remorse, or shame quickly, such as pouting and bowing their head in shame after being yelled at or confronted by someone for doing something wrong, even if you are very gentle in doing this
- Feels slighted easily and may have resultant meltdown

Wants Their Own Way

- May scream, cry, whine, or otherwise *persist intensely* when they don’t get their own way
- For instance, they scream if they can’t have something, such as a phone or their primary caregiver’s attention but can’t have it (say because you are talking to a doctor)
- Hits and gets aggressive when upset with others. May especially pick on younger siblings
- Might evoke some kind of adorable character, such as a cute puppy or pity to get help.
- Or they pretend to be mute or soft-spoken to get you to help them
- Might want your attention all day long, bringing you over to them to see what they are doing

Most Intense

- Very demanding or has many meltdowns for about 4 or 5 days. It greatly dissipates after the most intense period listed but irritable behavior is still noticeably seen until the end on and off.

New Abilities Summary

- They don’t just pick the right tool for the job at this one, which they did in the late twos. They now pick a *strategy*.
- They are still a bit like a rat in a maze in these early-three milestones, though one growing in its own independence and intelligence. In the previous milestones, they really started to fuse abstract knowledge to real life situations, but it was usually only one singular thing that got fused, e.g., if they are asking someone to be quiet, perhaps they should be quiet now.

- Now they can pick from several different strategies as to how to solve a problem as related as how to move around or what is about to happen next.
- They also have remarkable situational awareness at this one, and in particular over things that routinely happen. Their sense of patterns over time is growing.

Situational Awareness: Heightened Awareness of What Everyone Has Been, is Doing and What's About to Happen Next

- They've been growing in what they remember, from a day ago, then several days ago. Now they persistently notice patterns over about one week's time.
- Very aware of weekly rituals that the family does, say you go to a particular restaurant every week. They happily delight in the knowledge that this is what's going on.
- They may cautiously make sure you actually go to said place that you go to weekly. "Oh! You DID make it to [the restaurant]." Good job, Mom or Dad. You know what's up, too.
- They might get bossy about going to the right place that they now undeniably know is where you are going. If they see the place you are going to from the highway, they might order you to stop the vehicle right then and there, while on the highway. Afterall, you're basically there. (Becoming specific about moving in a 3-D space is Milestone 7.)
- Announces "how much fun!" they have with other children and enthusiastically exclaims, "I love you so much!"
- Understands what happened a few days ago really well. They can recall events of the past entirely on their own.
- For instance, when you ask what their happiest part of the day was, they might say something not discussed between the two of you yet. They remembered an event from the day before, maybe you went to the store together or some other odd event. It's that they remember it entirely on their own that is impressive.

Can Make On-the-Spot Strategic Decisions Better

- You may have gone somewhere for the first time ever and they understand the layout of the place, what goes on there, etc., even though they just encountered all of it for the first time.
- They may want to optimize what the best way to get around in this new place or make sure they thoroughly understand where everything is. They may literally take your hand and start wandering all over to try to do this
- They may understand what is going on at this new place better, "Yeah, let's go back to that thing we saw when we first walked in!"
- Can accept advice about on-the-spot strategic decisions, such as "Walking this way is better than another way to get somewhere."
- Figures out complicates tools on the spot. Sticks with it until they do, such as figuring out what to do at an exhibit at a traveling science show or how to operate an arcade game
- They might verbalize this strategic thinking, like walking around saying, "What if? WHAT if ...?"
- They no longer have a huge meltdown if you are far away from them. They may put their new strategic thinking to use. "I need to figure out how to get powers to get mommy to me!" It's fantastical, but they are in the driver's seat.
- Love to make up nonsense words or type out nonsense words. Who says letters in words have to follow prescribed, standard order!?! They are in the driver's seat now and words do what they want.

- They understand the bigger situation better now, but their understanding of their role in it is murky. They are overconfident in what they can do, which causes them to be both over ambitious and hard on themselves.
- They might think they reach up and grab the ceiling fan (they are over ambitious). Or they might apologize for things they have no control over, such as a baby crying, even though no one is blaming for them for it whatsoever nor did they do anything to cause it (they feel shame). They are very much in the “driver’s seat” in this one, but they are off in what they think they can do.

Solves Future Problems

- Much more methodical in solving a problem, e.g., tries to figure out what is the next [whatever] in a series
- Their deductive reasoning is such that they can guess the next [whatever] in a series is, based on the current data set. So, if three chairs are assigned for a certain three children, then the fourth one remaining must be for the fourth child.
- Takes their time to make a choice, as if they want to make sure it is an intelligent and educated choice, such as going into deep thought as they think about what to order for dinner
- Says they want to “solve” something
- Understands tasks can be put off until later. They, as such, may purposely procrastinate now.
- Greater interest in and ability to put steps in a process in order, such as washing something first and then drying it
- Very interested in what might happen next in science experiments, such as what colors mixed together will make what other color

Three Year Old Milestone 7—Specific Thought

Starts: ~8-14 days from the start of 6B. Between 3.3.3 and 3.4.2

Most Intense: Very intense for the first 3 days at the beginning

Ends: On and off demanding behavior lasts for about 10 days

Irritable Period Summary

Nightmares and Physical Changes

- The first part of this milestone is very difficult
- The first part may see an intense period revolving around nightmares at night and a fantastical awareness that large object can fit into small ones (when they can't)
- They might be up on and off throughout the night
- Their nightmares may be of something like a dinosaur took one of their siblings and they need to find them. Truly they are “heroic” now—you don't get more heroic than saving your brother from a dinosaur!
- Their head shape changes. It may look outright painful for them
- More prone to illness or may have a runny nose with no other symptoms

Unexplainable Meltdowns, Paralyzed

- Or the first part of this milestone might be recognized because they become paralyzed to act or explain themselves
- Might have a meltdown even though it seems like they have everything they could ever want
- May become paralyzed. They might cry that a door is not opened and won't open it, even though they can open a door
- May be frustrated they can't do something which they have never been taught to do, like read
- In looking through the behavioral patterns, I think these unexplainable meltdowns may be related to their heightened awareness of how spatial objects relate to one another. Their fork is at a 10-degree angle to their plate, instead of a 30-degree angle, and this just utterly paralyzes them. Same deal with the door.

Demanding

- After the initial difficult period, they might:
- Demand you throughout the day, to see what they are doing
- Or have a reliable meltdown at least once per day

Fears

- Given their fantastical awareness of 3-D objects, in which they think things can magically shrink, they might have irrational fears, such as that they or a large toy will go down a bathtub drain
- Fear of “monsters chasing them”
- With their heightened awareness of how far away things are, they may have an unusually heightened fear of cars hitting them when in parking lots

Most Intense

- Sudden meltdown over seemingly nothing, paralyzed to act, frustration when they can't do something, nightmares, or may just be really demanding of your time.

New Ability Summary

Fantastical 3-D Spatial Awareness

- At the beginning, there is a sudden perception that large things can fit into small spaces
- For instance, they might think a large stuffed animal can fit into a teeny tiny toy train.
- This new perceptual awareness becomes scary when they, for instance, think they can go down a bathtub drain.
- They might show this in other ways. If you say they are “sharp,” they might think you are saying they are a knife. Objects can magically change into other objects in their mind right now.
- They might adorably put ear plugs in and think YOU now can’t hear THEM when it is in fact they who can’t hear you. This suggest their understanding of “people need to be looking in one direction” or “someone talks and the other listens” is still a bit off. Maybe they think it’s a two-way street? They often get things backwards in the threes like this. Perhaps they are still a bit “enmeshed.”

Specific About Spatial and Other Awareness

- Very specific in categorizing things, e.g., octopus have EIGHT legs and crabs have SIX
- Very specific in labeling what they are doing, e.g., “I’m on the SIXTH step!”
- Insistent on getting a specific type of something, such as a particular character from a vitamin jar
- Describes things in very stark terms, e.g., “That bird is DEAD.”
- Loves to sort and group things: how many of THIS are there and how many of THAT?
- May be really good at something like leveling flour with a dull knife in a dry measuring cup
- They get specific about time on a more macro scale: they understand something was X days or Y weeks ago.
- They might become curious about how things work or how things move in a larger 3-D space. For instance, where do fish go to the potty? They are surrounded by water. How does that work? You can’t go potty IN the water. Such an interesting thing to think about when you are learning to “swim” in 3-D space.

Mentally Holds Onto Patterns

- They make categorizations in their mind, hold onto them mentally, and use them to help them navigate and make decisions.
- From my notes about my second, “She was [in another room] and yelled over to me about a book we were reading, ‘Look at the next page! See how two of the trolls are sleeping!’ She counts and groups *everything*. And then she remembers this grouping to make decisions.”
- They indeed use their mental patterns to help them. They may have sized something up as having two of this or that and they use it later when describing something to you or asking you to get something.
- This is the first sign of the “periscope” that they develop. It categorizes data and uses it to navigate.
- They might no longer need pictures in books when reading; they might sit far away from you and just listen. You can attempt some chapter books now. Their ability to persistently notice what is going on, conjure up images, categorize what is said and follow along in their mind has greatly grown in the last milestones.

Builds Creative Mental Patterns

- Can build more creative and exact patterns, such as putting colors in rainbow order
- May make up a creative pattern. They might make up a poem of their own that rhymes, based on something they just saw, such as “Pigs were on the hill and they fell, fell, fell!”

- May very deliberately and specifically build a flower arrangement, “The FIRST flower is going to be. The SECOND flower is going to be.”
- Very good at adding, e.g., five toes on one foot and the other make TEN!!!
- They can make up a brand new play about something on the spot and they execute it now more like they are the director rather than in the moment. They think it up, then execute it
- Might purposely come up with jokes to entertain their sibling
- This ability to build mental patterns and handle many mental variables, especially as combined with the desire to be the best/race, is what will grow in the next milestones.

Practical Ability to Bridge Space Between Objects

- In the last milestones, they became much more aware of the distance between objects. They had a gross misunderstanding of how to get things to them (the first wild mental awareness) or what can fit in what (the second wild mental awareness). Now, they get (slightly) more realistic about this.
- It’s almost as if nature gives them an overabundance of a skill that they then learn to refine. In this case, they learn that they can bridge things across space, but at first they are wildly off about it: a large stuffed animal can fit into a toy train. Now they see the actual shades of this.
- They might build a “hose” to bring water “close” to a “fire”
- They might become interested in string. They use it to build “bridges” between things
- They might handily figure out to get stools or chairs to get themselves higher to reach things
- They become mindful, even fearful of their safety when walking around in a parking lot. This is ultimately a positive development. They make sure to keep a safe distance from moving cars.
- Banging things together of course may be fun
- You of course are their favorite object. They might physically bring you to them or move your head to see them.
- This understanding of practically bridging distance also starts their love of racing. They want to be the first to the van, the first to get their seatbelt buckled, etc.

On-the-Spot Problem Solving Continues to Grow

- Can negotiate with you to solve a short-term problem
- You might want them to get out of the van, but they feel unsafe. So they offer to wait in another (specific) part of the van while you get their sibling out
- They persist at finding a very specific thing, such as “F” on a keyboard or anything else at their current ability level
- More socially independent, may make friends spontaneously with children they don’t know

Three Year Old Milestone 8A—Integrates Sets of Knowledge

Starts: ~14-15 days from 7. Starts somewhere between 3.4.1 and 3.4.3.

Note: If children have been hitting the milestones later, there is a possibility they will go through 8A and 8B at the same time. Be sure to read 8B as well at this age range, as it can start at the same time as 8A.

Most Intense: 4 to 8 days into it can be really, really intense.

Ends: Just after the intense period.

Irritable Period Summary

Demanding of You

- Gets mad at you a lot. Maybe because you can't reach up and get an airplane for them.
- Gets mad when you walk away.
- *Demands* your attention, to do things with them or watch them do things
- Wants their lovey (a blanket or stuffed animal used for comfort)
- Does not want to separate from their primary caregiver, such as if you leave them with a babysitter or walk away

Wild Imaginations

- They still think they or their favorite stuffed animals can magically shrink into tiny places or that you can reach up and grab an airplane for them
- Might still be overly worried that cars will hit them

Most Intense

- An intense, possibly constant need to be near you, in which you do exactly what they say or sit exactly where they want. You may very well get to your wit's end.

New Abilities Summary

- In the last one, they were grouping what they know into categories and using it to make decisions. Now they compare such sets of knowledge to each other.
- This one is marked by comparing and integrating sets of knowledge. Coinciding with this is a large propensity to compare themselves to other children. It slides into the next milestone (8B) in which they don't just compare themselves to things but *insert* themselves into the things and activities they notice.

Compares Knowledge

- Notices patterns of behavior on their own. For instance, "Mommy, bats sleep too!" if they see it on TV or at an exhibit. Humans sleep. And bats sleep. Neat.
- Connects the relationship between two things that they learned. If they see a flamingo video on your phone, they might call up an app on their tablet to show you another flamingo video. It's not just that they made the connection, but that they'll go get the resource to compare the two things.
- Another example: They may learn to read a word such as "pig" then find another book with "pig" in it
- Or they make a craft and realize, after they made it, that it looks like their favorite toy. They then hide said craft. It is probably near said toy.
- They might like the task of inspecting things, such as seeing if the eggs in a carton are cracked or not. There is the standard—the ideal egg—compared to the reality, the carton of eggs in front of them. It is a comparison.

- Drawings become more realistic, such as drawing a “dragon’s teeth” or a rocket. Perhaps they are more interested in making the pictorial representation match the real life (or visionary) example
- Loves “science experiments” where you mix things, make things explode, or cut things
- Loves comparing outcomes, such as racing two toy cars down a track
- That they compare entire sets of knowledge is a great bridge between previous and future milestones. Before, they were learning how to get around in 3-D spaces. Now they are comparing entire 3-D spaces to each other. In a few months, they will realize they don’t have to do everything in a rinse, wash, repeat way within the spaces they’ve learned to move around in. That they notice different patterns of things likely stirs this “outside the box” thinking.

Integrates Knowledge

- Makes up logical rules that unite two sets of knowledge such as “Red is 1, Orange is 2, Yellow is 3” as they assign the colors of the rainbow a number, thus integrating together the ideas of numerical and rainbow order together
- Makes up logical rules to govern relationships but which are inaccurate, such as “1 + 0 makes 10.”
- They might start to get very “meta” about the knowledge they are integrating. For instance, they notice “water is wet!” And this is funny to them, because the very definition of “wet” is “something with liquid,” which, for nearly every wet thing, means water.
- They come up with creative ideas by mashing two different ideas/things together. They might get a toy cash register they happen to have to be a “bank” as you play a separate game, such as Monopoly Jr.
- Or they might make up other games where they mix and match ideas/objects, such as playing hide and seek with a set of toy animals
- Or you teach them how to play Go Fish and they make up a new game where something other than cards are matched together, say the color of blocks. As such, they have made a totally new game.
- Or they come up with a brand-new smoothie, such as a “Chocolate Smoothie.” It’s brilliant, really.
- Puts two separate skills together into a more masterful skill, such as applying their knowledge of functional reading and the mechanics of reading together. They know the bathroom sign says “Women” and they sound out each letter, verifying for themselves that it says “Women.”
- They might put together knowledge of how to draw small shapes to draw a bigger picture.
- Or they use small parts to build something bigger, such as bubbles in a bathtub to make a “dog.”
- Or they use the parts from a science kit to build something bigger, such as a “boat.” That small parts make the whole will also grow in the next milestones.
- I suspect that this interest in taking small things and building with them is when the toys they play with become smaller, such as how young children very famously play with the bigger “Mega Bloks,” and then at older ages prefer smaller LEGO bricks.

Compares Themselves to Others

- They now get into “racing” big time. They might race two cars or race other children to your car or van
- How they compare themselves to other children may take various forms. They may be competitive with others, become a cheerleader, or happily curl up to learn something from an older child. But they are very interested in how other children are and where they are in relation.
- Says they are someone than they are, such as they are Jesse the cowgirl from Toy Story—when they have boots on
- Might repeat words that others say

- If they hadn't been previously, may start to bring dolls or stuffed animal around with them
- They might make their stuffed animals do things they do. For instance, a large stuffed monkey sits at a table and has breakfast
- As they start to compare sets of knowledge and themselves to others, they start to *insert* themselves in more things, which is where 8A starts to bleed into 8B. They might start doing things they didn't before, like opening window blinds or playing games that their older siblings are playing. This grows greatly in the next milestone—in potentially destructive ways!

Deductive Reasoning

- Basic deductive reasoning but about things immediately seen and which require a few mental gymnastics, such as “Let's not get the big one.” “Oh, OK, then we are getting the small one.”
- Or they conclude that if a person has a window down they might have wanted fresh air. They have more data sets to compare to and draw conclusions at this one.

Three Year Old Milestone 8B — Highly Curious and Evaluative

Starts: This one starts around 3.4.2 - 3.4.4 no matter how the milestones have been operating for children so far. Some children seem to go through 8A and 8B at the same time.

Most Intense: The intense period of this is highly noticeable and no longer offset from previous milestones. It assuredly shows up just shy of 3.5.1 and lasts a few days

Ends: Between 3.5.2 and 3.5.3

Irritable Period Summary

Bossy, Controlling, Aggressive

- May whine and whine when they don't get something they want instantly, even after reassurances and consoling. This is worse in some children than others and can be very, very trying.
- Upset when they really want control over something but don't have it, such as who gets to turn the lights on or off in a room, how a movie should end, or which box of waffles you get out to make waffles
- Very bossy and aggressive towards other children but if you press harder you might see it's because they are concerned for the safety of the other child (more likely of empaths)
- Or might get aggressive towards you at times, if you don't do what they want. You might get actively punched for the first time ever.
- Or they kick things and throw things (probably more likely of boys). Playfully wrestling with them helps.
- Might push back on you. For instance, when you playfully "mess" with them, which they previously liked, they now stop you rather forcefully (by nearly punching you) to get you to stop.
- Or you might get unexpectedly punched in the eye (when you were lying down) when they don't get their own way.

"Rearranges" Things

- Might throw all of their toys over a balcony
- Might rearrange all the stuffed animals in their bed

Defiant

- Refuses to put their own shoes or clothes on, demands you do it
- Or wants some amount of cuddle/connection time before putting their clothes/shoes on
- Defiant to get in the bathtub
- Decision paralysis. They want a very particular TV show or movie but won't pick which one

"Irrational" Imaginations

- Still has irrational ideas and fears of what might happen to them, such as they might go down the drain of the bathtub or that other people can turn into things spontaneously, e.g. their brother will turn into a "bad guy."
- These fears may make them scared to do things like go down the stairs or get into the bathtub.
- First sense of "forever." They think edicts are forever. If you ask them not to go on the stairs, say because you are cleaning them, they might later burst into tears. They want to go upstairs, but they think they never can do that again.

Physical Accidents

- In the intense period, you can somewhat expect some big accident where they fall or slip on something. It's as if their desire to try out their new skill overrides their footing and causes problems. They might fall off stairs or kick out stools from under them, accidentally.
- Highly repetitive. They might keep doing the thing that previously hurt them over and over. Or they keep asking the same question, despite it being answered.

Physical Changes

- Coinciding with this increase in insertion and aggression is likely growth of their feet, hands, muscles, and lung power. Also: they can really, really wail now.
- They may spit a lot or become very drooly
- Has a larger need for sleep, might seem very tired yet won't sleep
- May stay up late, talking to themselves in bed

Most Intense

- Ear splitting screams, intense whining, a constant need to be near you, or aggression. This one is INTENSE.
- A loss of their footing as in a way to take a major spill is almost assured—and for them to *not* really learn from it.

New Abilities Summary

Curious About Others

- May ask questions about others like “What do zombies eat?”
- Can take a noticeably greater interest in art, especially of children
- Very realistic in pretend play, such as reenacting how a mommy is pregnant then births a baby by putting the baby in her shirt then “delivering” it
- More realistic about fears: might know they won't go down the bathroom drain but think some of their smaller toys will (when they won't)
- This shows that other people (and objects) are becoming more “real” to them. Others have their own good and bad points, etc. Objects, as well, have their own identity (their baby brother won't go down the bathtub drain).
- They can be a sincere burst of sunshine in through these ages. They might stomp around in boots, lavishing in the attention of others. They might gush about being able to be friends with someone. They might be so happy you gave them lunch and you are eating together.

Inserts Themselves into Situations More

- They throw themselves into situations more.
- They'll play the game their older siblings are playing.
- May “attack hug” other children more
- Strongly interested in animals, such as pigeons in the park, likely to chase them
- May love to help out with younger children
- May encourage you to teach their sibling “all the things”
- Bonds with children they just met quicker
- Likes to hide things and make you find them

Highly Evaluative of Others

- Very interested in and evaluates others or things on a deeper, almost moral level. So-and-so is their best friend (or is *not* their best friend), mommy is a great cook, their house is “amazing,” their sibling is doing something ALL WRONG.

- May admonish you when you forget to say thank you or you're welcome
- They might taunt you: "Mommy, taller than you!" "Mommy, stronger than you!"

Sensitivity to Rejection

- Their first sense of taking something deeply personal shows up here. They might ask you to do something and you say, "Not now." The tone of your voice suggests you are irritated, and they run away, "I asked mommy to play a game! And she doesn't want to be with me!"
- This heightened sensitivity to rejection grows greatly in the next milestone

Other Oddities

- If you ask them what their sad part of the day is, they might trip themselves. And then say their sad part was tripping themselves. THEY control it.

First Sense of Extended Time

- The first age (I have found) at which they might remember something from long ago, such as picking up grandma at the airport last holiday or something you did at a restaurant two months ago. Their long-term memory is growing.

Three Year Old Milestone 8C—Personal Reflection

Starts: Between 3.5.3 and 3.5.4

Most Intense: At the beginning

Ends: 3.6.0

Irritable Period Summary

- Mostly more demanding of your time

Destructive

- Becomes a “mini tornado”: might take movies out of their cases, throw toys (or their socks) off a high place, unrolls rolls of toilet paper, opens the mini-blinds, take heads off their dolls, or opens all of the cabinet doors. (Prepare your house and heart for this! It can be maddening—or cute—just depends on the situation.)
- May gather things and put them right in your face

Still Has Heightened Fear

- Still has irrational ideas and fears of what might happen to them, although it’s getting more refined. They recognize they won’t go down the bathtub drain, but think small toys will (when they won’t). They are a bit more precise about what the actual threat is. Although this might make *actual* threats all the scarier.
- This continues to make them fearful of things like new, scary stair sets
- Alternatively, a more thrill-seeking child might purposely go towards the danger, such as waiting last minute to jump away from a bike coming at them.

First Sense of Shame About Something They *Did Do*

- The very first recognition of authentic shame appears (if they are at all prone to shame). They realize they *DID* do something harmful. They might quietly whisper to you that they did something so you can help them fix it.

New Abilities Summary

- This one shows mostly a strengthening of the skills in 8B but with a few more. They throw themselves into the middle of more situations and figure things out on the spot well, as they did in 8B. But now they also take on more personal responsibility about how they handle themselves in the situations. They grow to be more cautious but also more responsible.

Strengthening Ability to Be in Middle of a Situation

- Their bigger feet, lung power, etc, makes their presence that much more known and their actions that much bolder. They have a hearty laugh now and a gigantic wail.
- They easily and sturdily persist in trying new activities, perhaps learning how to use a swing, how to make it twist then releasing themselves, or how to get up a playground apparatus that requires some diligent, focused climbing
- Very much understand what other children are doing and may ask to do exactly that. For instance, you are doing an activity that requires you to be with a child every X hours, as you make a sun dial, and they stay with it.
- They may pick up on how you say things, even if you try to “code” it. They know that “p-a-r-k” means the park.
- A highly social child might “work it” in social situations. They gush about how they and another have the same color clothes on, chat them up, etc.

Fine Motor Skills + 3-D Spatial Relation = Manipulates Objects Handily

- They handily manipulate puzzle pieces. It's no thing for them that a puzzle piece is upside down. They understand that and put it the right way.
- They may already be operating a remote and turning on the TV.

Gathering

- There is a strong desire to gather things in through these milestones.
- They may demand you come play in the toy room. You then have lots of toys put right in your face.
- They may want to get things for you. They want to be the one to get baby wipes for the baby.
- They continue to integrate and compare. They might see a character with goggles on and go get their own. But now they really ham it up big time.

More Personal Reflection and Responsibility

- They start to become much more mindful of their surroundings and actions. If they see you are sleeping, they might say "Oh. mommy is sleeping," and leave the bedroom as quietly as they can.
- Likely to want to watch you do something first, such as color, rather than do it themselves
- They transfer risk. Instead of looking over a high place, they might ask a stuffed animal to first.
- May try to repeat words but exactly right. For dolphin, they try "DO-FIN" "DAH-FIN" "DOLL. FIN."

Very Helpful, Even Protective, of Others, Especially Younger Children

- They might take a big interest in helping other, younger children. They might come up with a clever solution to do this, like, "Everyone calm down! Mommy will be here to help us by teaching us a lesson!"
- Or they love to get diapers, etc., for their younger sibling
- Teaches others (e.g., grandma) what they know
- May be very protective of younger siblings

Shame, Social Perceptiveness, Relation to Others

- The realization of shame, specifically as tied to their actions, starts to show up in subtle form now. If they broke something of another child's, they might whisper it to you, so you can handle it quietly.
- Or they might become overwhelmed with sadness over something that happened to you. They might be sad you had to stay at the hospital. Their new sense of "forever" probably negatively impacts this.
- May be more painfully aware when they are socially left out. For instance, at a dancing class if they are asked to pair up with a friend, and they are the odd one out.
- But gushes with enthusiasm when they do make a friend. "Oh! I get to see you again!"

Three Year Old Milestone 9A—Deductive Reasoning Across Time

Starts: 3.6.1

Most Intense: Lasts for 4 (or more) days around 3.6.2 +/- a few days

Ends: 3.6.3

Irritable Period Summary

- Starts off mild: wants to be by you. Builds to:

Possessive

- Very possessive. Another child can go get any toy whatsoever and they are mad the other child has it and not them
- Wants to be right by you
- Bossy / leads you around
- Orders you to sit and watch them play, for activity after activity

High Propensity for Shame

- This one shows a high propensity for shame. Children will differ. Some internalize and some externalize. A child who internalizes is more likely to show shame. A child who externalizes is more likely to show aggression. As always, each child is different.
- In the last one, they realized they really were/can be responsible for a situation going poorly, and, thus, developed the potential for shame. This shows up in a big way now.
- Very upset to the point of screaming when they are made aware that they hurt someone
- They might fall to the ground in frustration when they realized they caused something bad to happen, such as they are the ones who moved the remote yesterday, which is why it is lost today
- Very upset when something doesn't go the right way. For instance, if they fall off a chair, you forget to get them something, or another child escapes outside on accident
- May be highly protective of loved ones, very fearful for siblings for example
- Very upset when they can't be the one to help someone

More Aggressive

- Might rearrange BIG things now, like the garbage can, fitted sheets on the bed, small lamps, vases, large toys, etc.
- Might take things from siblings
- Might throw things
- Might tell people they aren't doing things right
- May playfully hit and kick adults

Fear of Abandonment

- Screams or has a meltdown when they can't have their primary caregiver or if loved one/primary caregiver moves away suddenly

“Irrational” Fears Persist Day After Day

- Has a persistent semi-rational fear such as that there is a snake in the house or tigers are chasing them, which they worry about day after day (i.e. across time)

Sleep Issues

- Sleep disruptions: might unexpectedly fall asleep in the middle of the day

- Or gets up at night

Sweet Moments

- Weaved in through irritable behavior are some really sweet moments!
- Likes to be physically close to their primary caregiver often, perhaps laying on them or on their lap
- Wants primary caregiver at bedtime
- More likely to bring their lovey or blanket around the house with them

Most Intense

- The exact behaviors depend on the child, but they are indeed intense during the intense period. Perhaps big meltdowns, highly possessive, very bossy, destructive, takes toys, throws, etc.

New Abilities Summary

Deductive Reasoning as ACROSS TIME

- Very good deductive reasoning as now applied across time (past and future). They may see a puddle and conclude “It rained yesterday” (which would have happened previously). Or “The garbage can is gone so the garbage man must have come.”
- This comes in handy when you, say, tell them that you are currently out of milk, and much later they happily offer, on their own, remembering that you are out of milk, “Can I have juice then?”
- Compares sets of ideas now, in a challenging way. Dad might say “Diesel [the gas] dropped in price,” and they challenge him, “No, Diesel [from Thomas the Train] dropped jobi logs!”
- Or they admonish their dad that he said “bad words.” What were they? He said, “No doughnuts.”
- Very good at remembering things from the past, such as how to play games or facts of what happened in the past
- They can think into the future, such as thinking about what they want from Santa
- Understands upcoming events with more reliability and precision. A holiday is on X day; Grandma is coming on Saturday; they go to childcare every Thursday
- Or they might think about math problems mentally and across a continuum of time. They might know they have 4 of something and you are about to buy 2 more, and they say, “Oh, I’ll have 6!”
- All of a sudden remembers things from several months ago, e.g., they used to have a stuffed animal but now it is lost or remembers a nightmare from a while ago. This does potentially show up in a previous milestone. I’m listing it again as you might now see it now.

Clearly Has a Creative Plan in Mind and Executes It

- They have something in their mind that they want to make a reality. They now gather up everything needed to make that happen
- They might order you to sit, as they go and get some LEGOES to act out a play they thought up. In the play, you and they sit together while they make “coffee” out of the LEGOES, complete with kitchen, etc., and you drink coffee together. It’s that they had the new, creative idea, gathered up everything, and had you do it, that is impressive. Also, your favorite thing to do, which they can observe anyway, is drink coffee.
- May be really good at completing jobs as are on a list of things to do.
- Completely committed to doing something like decorating a Christmas tree
- They might keep asking to buy a toy. Or if you ask what they want as a present, they might want something for their creative play, which they clearly have a plan for. They might want a new hill or two for their train tracks. They definitely have something in mind for them.
- May save up their own money to buy a toy they want

Mentally Precise

- It's as if they can hold on to ideas in their mind with more clarity and with a sturdier ability to get ideas right or to know what is actually real
- Can better recognize that $1 + 0$ —the written equation—is equal to 1, not 10
- They might know the clock is at a certain number,
- Good at knowing what is real or fake (such as fake toy eggs are fake). The nature of objects is more crystallized in their mind.
- Likes to read now (beginning books) or at least pretend to
- They start to design things. Their crafts might start to take on a distinct design, like making a new star shape or adding a stripe or two—instead of randomness or everything is all one color or the same shape they've always made
- Or they design pillows all around them to make a “throne”

Gets More Technically Proficient

- Very receptive to learning the proper way to handle things, such as how to hold a DVD properly or how to throw a frisbee (use this to your advantage!)
- Very good at doing something like picking out a movie, opening the Blu Ray player, putting the movie in, and operating a few buttons on the remote and television
- Might pull up a stool and make toast—all on their own
- Likely wants to put on their own seatbelt.
- Better use of their hands, e.g., better able to catch a ball

Fluid, Flexible, and Proactive:

- This is similar to having a creative plan and executing it, but it's that they are handily responsive to their immediate environment.
- They start to say new words, such as “kangaroo,” on the spot, easily. They might start copying what everyone says
- They are very fluid in social situations. They meet someone new and they immediately give enthusiastic introductions of who is who to the other person.
- Or someone accidentally loses their shoe and they promptly go pick it up for them. They didn't want the other person to lose it, after all.
- If you are crying, they might wordlessly come up to you and wipe your tears
- Might ask to be the one to give their sister her lemonade that day
- They might dramatically carry in the heavy grocery bags to the kitchen and announce they are a “Big strong man!!”

Physical Changes

- Hands and feet might get bigger

Three Year Old Milestone 9B—Enormous, Realistic 3-D Imagination

Starts: 3.7.0 or just shy of it

Most Intense: From roughly 3.7.0 until 3.7.1, possibly shifting in the start/end date by a few days

Ends: Somewhere between 3.7.1 and 3.7.2

Irritable Period Summary

Possessive

- Highly possessive of toys. If a toy is out and just happens to be “theirs,” no one is allowed to even touch it.
- Possessive of primary caregiver, “My mommy!”

Bossy

- May cry easily or easily have meltdowns
- There’s no not accommodating them immediately at this one. If they want to go to the potty, you’re going to the potty. If they want a toy in the van, you’re getting the toy in the van.
- There might be a very particular process in how things are done now. They stand at the van door. You count to three. You open the door with the automated controls. They pretend they opened the door. And they get in the van.

Stubbornly Independent

- They might refuse to do something they are usually very agreeable about (like taking a bath). They are stubborn and upset, but not terribly communicative as to why. They just shut down.
- They want to be the one to do nearly everything
- Hard on themselves if they can’t get something to work right
- You might have trouble convincing them they can’t touch a hot pan.
- They might want something outright impossible, such as you have to sit at the end of a bench while simultaneously next to both them and their sibling

Sleep and Physical Issues

- May have nightmares
- May have a slight fever

New Abilities Summary

- This is marked by an impressive ability to imagine a very large 3-D space, such as outer space.
- This shows up in their imaginations as they imagine what to do in a larger space, such as how to fix a road to improve traffic.
- They seem to get the “bigger picture” too and across time, as they become more reliably cooperative for longer periods of time (about a half a day)

Can Imagine an Enormous 3-D Space

- Can create a vivid realistic 3-D picture in their mind, e.g., can understand the idea of outer space or earth
- They may love books about space and rockets
- They might create new stories with this 3-D awareness, such as they hear someone needs to go to outer space, so they urgently offer to make a “rocket” out of wood blocks

Likes to Hear Stories in which a Vivid 3-D Scene is Created

- They may like to hear highly imaginative stories (creating a 3-D picture with words) as a way of learning, such as a story about how a plane takes off, with many details (This depends on their personality. A highly “rational” and pattern seeking child will listen to the details of an airplane taking off)
- Or they might beg you to tell the story of how they were born, down to the detail
- Depending on their personality, they may want to be involved in everything and they have a very specific process to do it. They have to open the refrigerator door, you get the milk, you pour it, they smell the milk, you put the milk back, and they close the refrigerator door. And it’s always like this without deviation. They control this large-ish space (This insistence on the same thing over and over is more likely of highly “present” children, who tend to be S on the Myers Briggs, as opposed to N, which is pattern seeking)
- A renewed interest in building 3-D shapes out of various objects, such as magnet shapes or wooden blocks
- They might create elaborate scenes with their blocks or LEGOS. The two of you, represented by something such as a LEGO, are trapped in a fence.

Big, Realistic Imaginations

- Highly imaginative about what they might like to do and in a big but fairly realistic way, e.g., build a new road somewhere to relieve traffic problems
- Their very first “imaginary friends” may appear, although they are unlikely to be “friends” now. “Workers” might help them build a road. Or they invite their toy cars to come with them to the playground. What they imagine now is likely to be similar to the imaginary friends they eventually develop in their mid-4s.
- You are more likely to find out about these imaginary people if you probe them with questions. “You need to build a road?” “Will you need to move the buildings over there?” “Will you need an excavator?” “Will anyone help you?”

A Very Fluid, Robust Personality

- They easily and very rapidly respond to in-the-moment situations now and with full, fluid personality. You might get a “no way!” from them now—after saying something totally mundane.
- Or they admonish you, whispering, “Be quiet! Be as quiet as a mouse!”
- Or they see the Pixar movie *Cars* for the first time in a while and cheekily run around, throwing their butt out exclaiming, “Kachow!”
- Or they put on sunglasses and ask their baby sister, “Baby, do you see how awesome I am?”
- Or they might get adorably bossy. They might tell another to “Calm down!” This is said like “Chill, dude!”
- Aware of what they do, e.g., “I lay down on bed to calm down and not be an angry brother”

Accommodating of Others

- Very accommodating of you. If they are too heavy to carry, they understand, and let you just hold their hand instead.
- If you don’t like when they sit on you, they might brush your hair, knowing it sweetens you up as to let them stay there
- They are perceptive and inquisitive. If you are staring into space, they might ask, “Mommy, what’s wrong?”
- Thinks about the feelings of others

- Perhaps with how “inquisitive” they were of others in the previous milestone gave them some clues of how to handle/negotiate those others

Focused and Committed

- They might take note of how very careful they are being in coloring and they might surprise you with how long they stick with it
- Whereas before they were cautious to color, now they are highly focused in their coloring (or gluing, cutting, etc.)
- I was stunned to find out in my journals that all three of my children did this at about the same age in development. It was at 1,316 days from due date for the girl and exactly 1,318 days from the due date for the boys. They colored with impressive verve. This is, again, following a period when they were timid to color.
- They easily string pony beads on shoestring (to make “garland”)
- They broom the floor, the walls, and the ceiling
- Everything is “I do it!”

Follows Requests for a Longer Amount of Time

- They obey requests better and in a more long-term way. You might ask them to play in a particular room, and they do.
- They are willing to be by themselves longer and may even actively leave the room you are in, for another one, for a good long while
- Or you ask them “no hitting,” and they actually don’t, for the rest of the afternoon or evening.

Other

- Very interested in specific smells, such as of milk or human sweat

Three Year Old Milestone 10A—Segmented Knowledge

Starts: 3.7.2 +/- a few days

Most Intense: From 3.7.3 or shy of it until 3.7.4

Ends: 3.8.0

Irritable Period Summary

Wants You Near

- At the beginning, wants you by them often
- Gets very upset if you leave
- Wants you near them at bed, might physically grab you so you don't leave
- Jumps on others and lays on others

Sensitive

- Highly sensitive when they have been hurt or perceive they were wronged (more likely of empaths)
- Cranky

Playfully Destructive

- An unusually high interest in scissors, strings, etc.
- If you get out stuff to make an activity, they are likely to be more interested in the stuff to make the activity, e.g., the scissors and paper, and ask for them and use them
- Your entire kitchen might—might—get covered in string (or tape, etc.)

Confused, Choosy, Can't Make up Their Mind, Contradictory

- They are rapidly growing in how much knowledge they can retain and the details of this. This can cause problems, as described immediately after this. Some children, however, are naturally gifted at processing large amounts of data and may handle this well.
- Changes their mind constantly as to how they want to do something, such as where they want to sit to put their shoes on, roaming the house, trying to find the perfect spot—the stairs, no; the top of the stairs, no; etc.
- Says someone took their “something,” but you have no idea what they are talking about. They are on a mission to find, say, a “bridge,” but you have no idea what they are looking for. And you are otherwise with them 24/7.
- Or they might get super choosy about something and you have no idea what they want. They might want a “waffle,” and you offer everything you can think of, but nothing satisfies them. As it turns out, they wanted their sibling's waffle.
- Similar to the last milestone, they may want something contradictory. They want a TV show on and then get mad when you do turn it on. I believe some nuance of what they want is hard for them to communicate, such as, “Put it on but skip the introduction” or something similar.
- Or they become totally hysterical when something about the nuance of the way something should go doesn't go that way. For instance, they love to watch a particular video before bed (of, say, a song). One night you hit “Skip ad” instead of letting them hit the button—and they become distraught
- A more analytical child might be sly at this one. They might want to head butt their sibling. But “no hitting” is a rule. So, they ask you if “no crashing” is a rule or not. Because this is totally different than “no hitting.” They are choosy and even a bit contradictory, but they are methodical about it.

New Abilities Summary

Encyclopedic, Detailed Knowledge

- They have a lot of knowledge now and they are very specific and nuanced about it.
- Develops an impressive memorization of facts, such as what a certain animal eats or the names of the planets
- Loves to answer questions to test their knowledge and understand the world, such as “Are trees living or not living?”
- May ask you questions like, “Mom, did you know ... ?”
- May become interested in all of the technical details of something, such as how some simple machines work
- Their vocabulary grows and so does their sentence complexity. It has more detail. Instead of saying, “Sit by me,” they might say, “Sit *right next to* me.”
- Very technically accurate, even if contradictory, such as “You just hit your brother.” “No, I hit his TOE,” or any other similar example
- That they start to break up all of life and their knowledge base, of which is really large now, into segmented, detailed chunks is this milestone. That they can integrate these segmented chunks into an integrated theme is the next milestone, 10B, Thematic Thinking.

Absorbs and Applies New Knowledge Quickly

- Very handily remembers information told to them, day after day. They are an utter vacuum for knowledge.
- Understands new, advanced words immediately and uses them accurately such as “aquarium,” “Riverwalk,” or “blister.” Before they simply repeated the word back. Now, it is highly reliable that they will understand any new word taught on the spot, say it, and start to use it.
- Highly interested in reading words. They might call the words “interesting,” declare they are reading a “treasure map” (an important thing indeed), or otherwise just want to read. I believe it makes them feel big and important to read
- After reading a book with activity ideas, they immediately want to go try them out
- They can apply a lesson to themselves that they hear in a story, on TV, or that is told to them, such as “You can be a big helper in your family.”
- If they are reading, you might read a sentence to them, and they read it back, but they make sure they get every. single. word. right.
- Can learn new sight words quickly
- They can apply what they know to real world situations handily. They might exclaim, “The sky is awake! So I’m awake!” upon waking up, which is from the movie Disney’s *Frozen*
- If you tell them about a surprise party for someone, sometime after this, they may innocently and happily go tell the person
- They might ask you, “How is it going, Mom?” What’s up, Mom? Right this second. Let’s chat.

Breaks Traditional Routines

- If you do something day after day, they now challenge if it has to keep going that same way
- They might all of a sudden refuse to take their bath at 7:30 at night, which they’ve done since they were 6 months old.

- They may do something thoughtfully different than usual. For instance, they may set the table every day for the family, but they realize now that they might do it differently based on the circumstance. Is dad at work today? Because if not, they won't set a plate for him.
- They might want a different breakfast than normal. They normally have X but now they want Y—probably something they saw someone else have.
- It is interesting how *jealousy* plays a role in child development. It causes them to try different things
- They might playfully refuse to do something the family does every week. Nope. They are not going to the restaurant like you do every Thursday. They are staying home tonight. Mom.

If/Then Logic

- More advanced if/then logic as applied to real life, e.g., indeed set a breakfast plate out for dad if he's home but not if he's not home
- Can infer conclusions from observed facts, such as a garbage can is on the driveway, but dad already put yours away. So, this one on the driveway must be a neighbor's garbage.
- Asks intelligent questions based on observed facts with some logical conclusions, such as "Does the sun use electricity since it's so bright?"
- They can play "20 questions" now. This is different than "I Spy." In "I Spy," you are looking for something that is around you, say the answer is someone's shoes. In "20 Questions," something is in someone's mind, totally made up. Maybe it's Jupiter, a black hole, or a whale in the ocean. You ask a series of questions, "Is it living or not living?" "Does it require electricity to move?" Based on the answer, you ask a new question. They can understand this kind of game now, where there is something imagined that you are guessing and ask questions in an if/then way to get you to the answer
- They have a higher level understanding of the nature of how things operate, such as conflicts. They describe the process itself that went down. So, if they get into an altercation with someone, they might say, "I'm sorry I made you angry, but we worked together to find a solution." They have an "if/then" overview of how it went down.
- This ability to apply if/then logic and break established routines may be why they are so fickle in the irritable period, trying one thing, then changing their mind, over and over.

Gets Their Hands on Things

- They love to do things with their hands, maybe send marbles down a Marble Run, cut paper, paint with water colors, stamp shapes into aluminum foil, "saw" things like separating wood blocks with a toy saw, cut fruit, hold and swing a hammer while helping an adult, put bracelets on their wrist, etc.
- Shows mastery over a skill using their hands. They may write letters nicely, put on makeup with impressive ability, or operate the remote better
- Plays with string to tie things up and other materials to make "bridges."
- Interested in simple machines and how things move (both boys and girls may show this.)

Three Year Old Milestone 10B—Thematic Thinking

Starts: 3.8.1 or 3.8.2

Most Intense: 4-6 days in

Ends: About 10 days in, between 3.8.3 and 3.8.4

Irritable Period Summary

- Starts out with a child who may be demanding of you, falls asleep during the day, or has nightmares

Confused / Can't Communicate

- They want very exact things. They don't just want to watch a particular TV show; they want to watch a particular episode of that TV show. Often, they have trouble communicating this.
- They all of a sudden don't say words right. For instance, they might say "blue" or "boop" as they try to say "Blippi"
- May be in a confused "do loop," especially at bed. You need to read a book and the light needs to be on, but they also need to go to sleep and the light needs off, but then they want to read the book, and the light needs to be on, etc.
- They might run around in circles many times per day, as if it brings great comfort to them. I wonder if more flat-footed children are more prone to this, as they seem to like to have firm sensations on their feet.

Possessive of Projects, Controlling, Possibly Aggressive

- Possessive of something they are working on
- Hates when someone breaks something that they built
- May unexpectedly cut something or destroy something
- May hit their sibling
- Wants more control especially in situations where they don't have it, such as if they are strapped in a car seat and they want you to do something a certain way and they can't make it happen
- May be very upset over the slightest of inconveniences, such as if you don't get food quick enough or if food on their plate falls on the floor

Sleep Issues

- Refuses to go to bed, stalls at bedtime, likes to stay up late
- Might get back up out of bed and insist on working on a new skill such as coloring
- Or continues to talk after going to bed
- May fall asleep during the day
- Might tell you there are dinosaurs, snakes, or other in their bed at night

Fear of Abandonment

- High fear of abandonment, may even tell you they think you might give them away at a donation store or had a nightmare as such
- They might assure their stuffed animals that "we would never leave you in the van."
- Very caring and loving to stuffed or real animals, wanting to take care of and protect them, perhaps tucking them into bed at night with their own special blanket, a baby wash cloth
- They are so fearful of abandonment at this one that I recommend making it a point to lovingly tell them you would never leave them behind, etc.

- Continues to want you to do many things for them, e.g., put their shoes on

Imaginary Threats

- Imagines fake threats against them and has a story about them. “A light saber hit me and hurt me.” Or, “Hippopotamuses are chasing me!!!” Or, while in the car, “Robbers are at our house stealing our stuff right now.” Or, “A black hole will suck me in.” Or, if near some large rocks, “Bears are in the cave!”
- Warning: Scary movies may be too much during the irritable part of this milestone. I really don’t recommend scary movies at all when a child is three.

Most Intense

- A child who is possessive about their items (or mommy), demanding, or is very picky and particular about what they do.

New Abilities Summary

- This can be summed up as they understand that the parts make up the whole. They see many details of things and how it is integrated into a larger theme.

Themes: Understands Rich Details of What Makes up a Complicated Thing

- Draws real life things in stunning detail, maybe an entire roller coaster or a train with details about how it works
- May follow along with a complex documentary and recite it back to you after it’s done
- Can relate a book of a movie to the movie itself, such as a book of Wall-E to the movie Wall-E
- If you are going somewhere, say to see beehives, they might gather up everything related to bees in the house: a book on bees, toys that look like bees, etc.
- Easily follows along with a complicated game, such as football or checkers
- For a cheeky child, they might put on funny videos, and it seems like they do it to learn how to be funny
- Might tell you a very long elaborate story about anything at all, but in which there is an overall theme/plot with a beginning, middle, and end and many details: cherries need picked off of a tree, then washed, then packaged, then put on a truck, then delivered
- Recreates real objects as art, might make robust, specific shapes out of perl beads, such as concentric hexagons or arrange food on their dinner plate in an artistic way

Core Personality Integration

- Asks you to see their positive attributes and gives detailed reasons why they are good, “I put the dishes away, I am kind to my sister ...”
- Loves, loves, loves when you take notice of what they are doing
- They might delight in knowing why you just laughed, “Mommy, why did you just laugh?” “Because you made me laugh” “I made you laugh!?” “Yes, you cute thing.”
- Fully expects and imagines that others see their good qualities. As they listen to a baby babble, they announce, “The baby is telling me why they love me.”
- Tells you definitively what they are *not* good at, “I’m not strong, so-and-so is strong.”
- Gives reasons for why they love someone or may say “That’s why I love you.”
- Assigns jobs to people based on their talents, e.g., “Mom you can’t do that because you’re not good at. I’ll do it because I’m good at it.”
- Able to correctly identify whose “fault” something. Before, they said so, but often got it wrong

Plays the Cool Hero

- Might do many things with a pair of cool sunglasses on or a funky hat
- May love to fantasize they are a hero, such as a football player winning the game, reenacting all the moves they see on TV, putting on a jersey, and going to bed with their “winning” ball
- Does new, daring, heroic things, such as riding their tricycle up a big hill
- Interesting note: both of my sons had this cheerful “desire to be a hero” at exactly 1,358 days in development. My first wanted to pretend to be a football player. My younger son wanted to get up a hill on a tricycle. The exuberance and cheerfulness with which they did both of these things were identical.

Socially Perceptive

- Highly socially perceptive and takes social risks, e.g., says “WAH Wah wah” when a joke falls flat.
- Or they note when an adult behaved poorly, say the adult was short with a child. They cite exact reasons, e.g., “That boy had no choice,” as the adult was very abrupt and rude to the child.
- They might retell a scuff up between them and another child, over and over, going over all the details of what happened
- They continue to be aware of themselves and behavior, as if they are in awe of it, such as saying, “I’m so cold,” if they are cold. It’s not communication to you. They like taking notice of this.
- They might notice that “The Parthenon is in Aladdin (the movie).” They’re right.
- If someone says something, they go and verify. If someone says it’s raining, they go and check.
- They get jokes on a more intellectual level. At this age, their sister says something funny. They look over in acknowledgment that sis was funny.
- Totally in awe of a show like *Cirque du Soleil*
- They eavesdrop now in a way that shows they see the bigger picture. If they overhear someone on a phone call saying they would like some art from them, they might go start working on it.
- Or they overhear you talking about moving to a new house. They don’t like this at all.
- That they are so highly aware of others on a more intellectual level greatly engenders a certain banter and sets them up for the next milestones, in which they seek to find solutions that satisfy both them and others.

Moral Themes and Rules

- Can pick up on the moral theme of longer, more adult stories on their own, e.g., “Luke has to decide to be a good guy or bad guy.” About Star Wars.
- Can tell you the plot of the movie, e.g., “The bad guy tries to steal the robot that looks like a basketball.” About Star Wars.
- Understands the plot of a movie more readily as it progresses
- Begins to prefer movies with real people instead of cartoons
- They understand that something is going to the “next level,” such as they are training to become a Jedi and going to the “next level.” This pushing the bound of the possible is what will grow and defines late threes/early fours.
- A sense of justice itself. You might now get told that something is “so unfair!”
- They ask about what the rules are now, in order to faithfully follow them
- Understands the rules and expectations you have for them very clearly and exactly They know the three rules are no hitting, no throwing, and no taking. But “no tickling” was not a rule. So. All is good there, right? As they look you right in the eye as they do it.
- May enforce rules on other children

A Beginning Ability to Put Themselves in Another's Shoes

- A better understanding of someone else's perspective
- They might pretend their stuffed animal is playing a game, as they play for the stuffed animal
- Transfers social risks to their dolls or stuffed animals, e.g., "Doggy wants to lick you" or if you ask if you can kiss them, they say, "No, kiss doggy"
- May want to help their sibling learn how to do something, like go down the slide
- Coaches and consoles their stuffed animals as if they are real
- Keenly aware that someone else is dizzy, may try to make others dizzy
- Or asks you to try to send their favorite stuffed animal to the moon
- However, their sense of perspective is not refined. If you spin them and ask if they are moving or the room is moving, they say the room is moving
- They may also say, "Daddy wants to push me on the swing," when it's they who want daddy to push them on the swing.

More Precise Control of Their Hands

- More precise in how they hold, say, a pencil and how they draw
- Might like to trace over letters they see with a pencil
- Better mastery over something like zipping up a jacket, zipping up a wallet, or operating a remote (could do it before; they just get much better now.)
- They might like to count numbers by breaking them up across two hands. They hold two fingers up on each hand to make 4. They like doing it like this. They marvel at it.

Very Immersed in Projects and Social Play

- Initiates games with other children, such as Go Fish
- Can play independently of adults
- Extremely focused on things like coloring, drawing, and cutting

Three Year Old Milestone 10C—Intellectual Precision

Starts: About 3-5 days after 10B ends, around 3.9.0 or a few days shy of it

Most Intense: It is intense at the beginning then dissipates

Ends: It lasts about a week, so until around 3.9.1 or a few days shy of it

Irritable Period Summary

Extremely Possessive

- You will undoubtedly notice this one because of how VERY possessive they get
- In the previous one they were moderately possessive. Now they are extremely possessive
- Super possessive and may thus get rough with their siblings or friends if someone takes something that they think is theirs
- Can be expected to never share
- Aggressive, rude, or bossy, likely in setting their own boundaries

Sensitive / Focused

- Gets REALLY upset if you yell at them or think they are “bad”
- May start to hate loud noises distracting them
- May blame other children for something they did

Physical Changes

- May physically grow
- Boys’ voices might get slightly deeper

Most Intense

- Very upset if someone tries to take something they have or interrupts them when working. How they handle this highly depends on their personality. They might get aggressive, whiny, or just more demanding.
- You might see a physical growth spurt or hormonal changes, such as their voice changes slightly.

New Abilities Summary

- With as close together as 10B and 10C are, it’s hard to pinpoint differentiating abilities. It’s clear, however, that there are a few days where they become especially possessive, which is what I want to mark down in delineating 10C from 10B. If there is a difference, I think it may be related to their growing intellectual precision:

Intellectual Precision

- They’ve been holding onto an enormous amount of knowledge in the past milestones. They’ve chunked it up into details and put it back into a new theme. Now they throw this data around in a very precise way. I call this “Intellectual Precision.”
- They might see the nuances of time. They might say they are going to be back “in 5 minutes,” and they are approximately right. Or, “I just dropped something. It will take me a few seconds to get it.” Or a stain on the floor “will take about a half hour to dry.”
- Very precise in estimating price. Something is \$8. They have \$5. They should put the item back
- Might talk about what they would do if they had \$100. They would buy a house.
- They might be able to increment the day it is mentally. Yesterday was July 10. So today is July 11.
- They might notice things are a “close call!” You almost hit each other. That was a close call.

- They can better understand fast forwarding and rewinding a movie
- Takes an interest in measuring things and can measure things with a ruler
- If they are mathematically inclined, may write numbers bigger than 100
- They might pour cereal in up to the right place in the bowl, instead of letting it overflow and dump all over

Initiates Impressive Creative Projects, with More Details

- Initiates their own highly creative projects
- Initiates projects which are impressive, such as making a “light saber” out of a paper towel roll and green construction paper. Or anything else in which several types of materials are put together to make something creative.
- Or draws a map showing the downstairs of their house
- May become detailed in their drawings and thus a drawing machine: snow men, trees, race cars, spiders, a sun, a butterfly, Curious George holding a pig

In a More Forward Moving, Heroic Role, Consistently

- May have dreams at night where they heroically do something or accomplish something, such as riding a bike—a skill that they’ve been working on
- Takes pride in doing things to improve their wellbeing, such as brush their teeth well or eating healthy food

Socially Forward

- Much chattier with strangers
- Might yell at people they don’t even know who are breaking the rules, say teenagers walking in the middle of the road
- More willing to ask for help when they need it

Three Year Old Milestone 11—Two Alternatives

Starts: About two weeks from the start of 10C, so around 3.9.1 or 3.9.2

Most Intense: 3.9.2 until 3.9.3 can be especially intense, regardless of when it started

Ends: 3.10.0

Irritable Period Summary

Extremely Stubborn

- Extremely stubborn about how things should go.
- They might want a particular color of something: a red of something, not a blue
- You peeled the banana peel all wrong
- They might totally refuse to go do what the family is doing
- They are starting to become like a dog with a bone now. They know what they want, despite any distractions.
- They might agree to a solution to something, such as they turn the TV off. But then they realize what's actually going on, and change their mind mid-action and announce, "No! I want to watch a MOVIE!"
- In complete hysterics because they are certain you are going to get their dinner order wrong (before you are even at the restaurant)
- Very upset with things that are distracting, like loud noises when they are trying to watch something or someone who hits them accidentally
- They come up with solutions that satisfy both you and them now. YOU go to the pool. THEY are staying home.
- They can (moderately) appreciate another person's perspective now, as showed up in the last milestones. And based on last milestones they can also compare two sets of knowledge. And now they are quite stubborn. Hence these late-three milestones: they have very, very good solutions for all that (in their mind) satisfy everyone—one for you, one for them, and they are totally insistent on what they come up with
- Everything is "two" right now: this solution or that. True or not. Win or lose. Just or unjust.

Upset Over What Likely Seems Like Very Mundane, Small Things

- Their growing intellectual precision in the last milestone shows up in a big, often irritating way now. Their meltdowns will be over things that might seem totally mundane.
- For instance, their dad always says, "Look at this little heart!" before you watch a song together and he forgets to do it once. They are completely distraught.
- Or gets mad that you didn't use the word "SOMETIMES" when describing how something works, e.g., "The sun SOMETIMES shines" on their face.

Highly Competitive

- Meltdowns over what likely seems mundane, but which is likely over who is faster or better
- Upset after you ask someone to get you a piece of paper and their sibling got it first
- Or you are playing with balloons and they are upset their sibling's balloon is higher thus "winning"

Physically Grows

- Their arms and legs get longer

- When they run around now, they might crash into things, such as the walls. They don't know how strong they are yet.
- If you cosleep, you might get kicked and elbowed while they are sleeping

Sleep

- They smile in their sleep, as if they are having pleasant dreams

Most Intense

- Perhaps aggression or lots of crying. Very stubborn. This one can be super intense, depending on the child and their circumstances.

New Abilities Summary

- Can reliably mentally hold onto two ideas at once; can thus compare each or methodically test one or the other

Tests and Compares Ideas, Things, and Systems

- Gathers up all the supplies they need to do an "experiment." Then they set up the experiment; maybe one you've done with them previously
- Formally tests one idea as better or worse than another. They might build rockets out of paper and tests them "one by one" to see which can go higher
- There is methodology and thought to their experiments. If, say, balancing weights on a fulcrum, they might do it methodically, by taking out the heaviest objects first.
- Verbally says they are "testing" their ideas
- Loves science experiments, especially if two things are compared
- Compares themselves to everything and always wants to be the fastest or the best (as seen before but it's much more intense)

Can Reliably Hold onto to Two Ideas at Once

- They notice, without doing it but just looking at something, that something large will NOT fit into something small. This is significant because in the last milestones, they were wildly off about this.
- They understand North, South, West, East, even as you drive around. They might say, "We're going north, but if we turn around, we would be going south."
- It's as if they can persistently *hold onto* two separate ideas at the same time at this one. Whereas before, they could not. Any given idea or thing became totally wonky in their mind if their mind was focused elsewhere.
- Hence, also, why they are so painfully aware that someone is, say, faster than them at something

Develops Theories

- Develops theories involving two things, e.g., "Boys can rock climb, but girls can't."
- Or, "If we got into a car crash, we could try again."
- Before it was "One person can do something and another can't." Now it's "boys can and girls can't." They generalize now.
- They are also soon to show much stronger identification with their gender, in which they insist on doing things as proper to their gender.

Adopts Other's Personality

- They adorably adopt other's personality into their own.
- For instance, Blippi says, "That was so much fun learning about ___!" They might apply this to their current situation. "That was so much fun learning about building train tracks!"

- If they learn that someone else got a patent because of a “great idea” they had, they announce they are also a great thinker with great ideas.
- They might put on a play of one of their favorite books with full personality, adopting the character, such as playing the happy, go lucky pig from a Mo Willems Gerald & Piggie book
- Might insist on the same shirt day after day. It’s their style.
- They are safe and secure in their own personality but adorably taking on others. They hit all the right words, notes, and cues in how they act out the other’s character. They can banter back and forth in the moment, as well.

Three Year Old Milestone 12—Persistent Focus on One Idea with Many Variables

Starts: Subtly or not so subtly, but otherwise on and off irritable behavior starting between 3.10.1 and 3.10.2

Most Intense: Between shy of 3.10.2 and 3.10.3

Ends: Shortly after intense period

Irritable Period Summary

Remains Stubborn

- They still have two solutions: one for you and one for them. But they might have some more complex details to it. They insist you order food inside of a restaurant, not go through a drive-thru, while they play in the playground, and then leave. (In fairness, it would work.)
- Very bossy in a specific way. You might have to take turns when helping them get dressed
- They are upset you turned right instead of left. Because going left would have got them to where they wanted to go (a particular restaurant)
- Shows stronger identification with their biological sex in which they want to behave in ways in alignment with their sex, such as insisting on going in specifically the boy's or girl's bathroom
- Or insists on only singing the part in a song where the same sex person that they are sings
- Still utterly hates distractions. "Daddy! Too loud!"

Aggressive

- May be aggressive, hits their sibling
- May stab their sibling with a pencil
- May kick and cry as they are insisting on the (totally workable, in their eyes) solutions that they came up with
- Won't let you do an activity with another child, keeps harassing you to do what they want
- Might be "over" cuddling. They might give you the side eye when you ask to cuddle.

Whiny

- Can be very whiny
- Demands, while whining, to have very specific, nuanced things. It can be very grating.

Super Confident/Insistent on Which Way to Go—Which Can Cause Problems

- Becomes very comfortable with making decisions that have several variables, such as when to cross a road based on more factors, such as if the vehicle has a turning signal on or not. This may cause them to dart out into the road on their own unexpectedly, as they felt it was safe to cross.
- Or maybe they categorize things in their own way such as something is "the orange one" and another is "the gray one." You have no idea what the orange or gray one are, and they are whiny and distraught about asking about it.

Sleep Issues

- Might fall asleep easily during the day
- Might stay up late at night, practicing new skills

New Abilities Summary

- They have the ability to persistently hold onto to two ideas at once, as seen in the last one. Now they can keep ahold of one or more ideas in their mind while evaluating them against the larger picture, with many variables.
- At this one, they hold onto (at least) one idea highly persistently while evaluating the many variables that “surround” it. As such, they can play more complex board games, understand more complex themes about justice, and make decisions with more variables.

Holds onto One Idea Well as Other Ideas, Factors, and Variables “Surround” That Idea

- They persistently hold onto one idea or even sometimes a literal object and accept its constant nature as other things happen to or affect it.
- They understand that north is only a particular way. It’s not this way, this way, or that way. I list this here as it’s an illustrative example for this milestone. They just seem to more reliably understand that the reality around them is *sturdy*. It’s not at all wonky to them anymore. North is north.
- They might ask why someone in a story gets taken to jail. They remark, noting on their own, “But that character is not a bad guy.” They persistently hold onto the idea of the character of the person: he is good. This doesn’t change because guards are taking him to jail (just like north is north). Why is this bad stuff happening to him? This gives them a mental foundational base to understand justice, with some more authentic details.
-
- They might note that if a moving vehicle is near but doesn’t have their turning signal on to go the direction you are, you can still cross the road. They likely will want to make such decisions more.
- A very mechanically oriented child may put together something like a Marble Run, which is fairly complex to put together, by themselves. They do it faster than you can.
- May be more focused on games with some more complex logic, such as Connect 4
- They might want things to happen with them being the main star. Maybe they sit down with you and want a “teacher” to come teach them things. Or maybe they make up a play in which they were sad, but all the neighborhood kids come help them. They are the “one thing” while many things around them happen.
- You might see them intently look at something with one eye while the other eye is half closed. See this in the head shape pictures. They intently, even slyly, size something up, as they perhaps hold onto the object slightly away from them

Three Year Old Milestone 13—Pushes Bounds

Starts: 3.11.0 or shy of it

Most Intense: A couple flare ups throughout, each lasting only about a day. Their frequent head shape changes may alert you to upcoming irritable behavior, which tends to dissipate quickly

Ends: 3.11.3

Irritable Period Summary

- Falls asleep in the day easily

Aggressive

- They might get aggressive in getting their demands met
- They might punch things to get their way. They might punch the chair you are in to get you out.
- Or they might punch a box of food you offered, if it's not what they wanted

Communication Issues

- Communication problems, especially over things that move just outside of their immediate environment.
- They might say, crying and distraught, “Look at that one!” and you don't know what “that one” is. It turns out to be a bug that flew away
- Or they become whiny and distraught to rewind a movie to a particular part. They might be able to communicate this with the right word (or not), but they are irritated by the nature of the problem itself
- Whiny and upset if they see another child with candy and they can't have it
- They can be very whiny in their demands and it can be very grating

Highly Nuanced and Thus a Bit Rude

- They remain specific to the point of rudeness. If someone praises them for being a “responsible young man,” they yell back, “I'm not a man! I'm a boy!”
- Or they starkly and inappropriately call a person “fat.”

New Abilities Summary

- This one is marked by skills related to things that move from their body out, literally. Casting a fishing line or spraying a hose are examples.

Pushes the Bounds

- They notice things that extend across a distance that is beyond their physical reach, such as “our stairs go all the way to the ceiling!” Or they are totally mesmerized when you open the sunroof on a vehicle.
- They want stronger, more powerful tools to make things happen. They reach for their cup, which is out of reach, and wonder how they can get it. It is as if they are thinking, “wouldn't it be fun to get it by magic!?”
- If they are handed a mechanical pencil or something similar, they are guaranteed to extend the lead as far as it can go
- Very upset if a toy building structure isn't complete. Maybe you play a Jenga like game, where you build a wall. They very clearly notice that an initial brick is missing

- They might pick up on a new skill easily, especially one in which things move over a distance slightly beyond them, such as learning how to play ping pong, casting a fishing line, or spraying a hose.
- Or activities in which an object moves with them or others on it, such as pulling a wagon or riding a pony
- Their physical gestures might show how they “push the bounds.” They put their legs and arms out dramatically as they order someone to stop.
- Might chase their sibling around, wanting to hug them
- May rush to open a door for someone
- Might crash a birthday party they see while out (no, they weren’t invited)
- After someone playfully messes with them, they pop up, “YOU CAN’T CATCH ME!”

Intentionally Grows in the Skills They Have

- They do something strikingly independent, all on their own, without being asked to. They might take off their shoes on their own. Or anything else that they hadn’t previously been doing but now do.
- They happily announce that they can learn new skills. If they see a kickboard (used for swimming), they bubble, “I don’t know how to swim. But I can learn!”
- They may push themselves to go down a slide or climb a ladder they previously didn’t go on.
- Might try something new. They might use watercolor paints for a project that typically uses acrylic paint. In addition, they try out colors they’ve never used before, in ways they’ve never colored before.
- They might wander around and find things that need fixed and try to do just that—just because. Maybe a railing in your house is missing its cap or anything similar
- They surprise you with how long they can keep up with things now. They might walk the whole way on a nature trail or further than normal when at an amusement park.

Exuberant

- Very exuberant
- Throws their whole body into the things they act out. They may run in place while describing how they have to save someone.
- May want to do bigger physical things with more verve, such as swing on a swing. It’s the joy and exuberance with which they do it that is of note.
- May put face paint or marker all over their face. But you should see how proud they are!
- Loves to be flipped over and tickled

Just Plain Smarter

- They are just plain “smarter” in the way that we adults consider “smart.” They are more alert, faster, and seem to know what’s “up.”
- The skill here is not what’s important. The skills are what they are. It’s the speed in which they do it that is of note.
- If they are adding already, they might add to 10 with shocking speed
- They might find things in a “find it” book with amazing speed. Or finds things in nature with similar speed, such as birds or squirrels.
- They easily follow along with even adult-themed movies, noting what the characters are doing, etc.
- May cheekily play a role, such as bopping their head to music. Stays in character, both for the joy they derive from it and that it makes others laugh. But mostly the joy they derive from it.

- May be very cooperative in rules or requests, such as staying quiet at the library, going to the potty, etc.
- They really can be a delight in through this age

Runs a Longer but Still Short Gamut of [Many Things]

- They are pushing the bounds more outside of their own physical being, perceptually and physically, but the gamut they run is fairly short. Anything that gets too long gets scary and wonky
- They develop deeper emotions. They may become more seriously contemplative. They are in deep thought as they persist with their ideas. It looks almost as if they are frowning. See head shape pictures.
- They are soon to run a much fuller gamut of human emotion. They will have lower lows and higher highs and their humor will also run the full gamut, becoming serious, quiet, and dark as well as silly and charming to elicit laughs.
- Their “pushing the bounds” causes an errant view of how long things last. They seem to think that things last forever, when they don’t. So, if you are telling them “no more videos” at night, they might think this means “no more videos, ever.”
- This “pushing the bounds” grows in leaps and bounds at age four!

More Realistic

- They size up their environment with more realism
- If you can’t get them milk right away, they might conclude, “Mommy must not have heard me.”
- They might walk into a room and start evaluating it, “My brother isn’t here.” “We don’t own any pets.” Or as noted, they might note that they “don’t know how to swim (yet).”
- But this realism often coincides with a solution to pushing the current reality to something better. Their brother isn’t here—but they can pretend he is. They don’t know how to use a kickboard—but they can learn. We don’t own any pets—but this stuffed animal can be my pet.
- To push the bounds, they need to know what the boundaries are!

Sizes up the Bound Visually

- Towards the end of this milestone, they start to size up the “gamut” of what they see by visual perception alone
- They might look at a train pulling many cars and conclude, “that train has a heavy load”
- Or they might start to identify what is impossible
- Their stories may reflect this. A claw is about to get something but then—what!?!—stops. Why did you stop, claw? The claw only goes so far. There is more drama and suspense in their stories.
- They may really like when you draw something for them because “then I get to see it!” You bring something that could have been far away close to them
- Corresponding with this stage can be especially aggressive behavior, especially in boys

Likes to Hide in Small, Dark Places

- They might hide themselves in a “tent,” such as under a table. They like to hide here for some amount of time, maybe a half hour. They might rattle off what’s on their mind, perhaps running through all the math facts they know. All of my children did this around 1,448 days from the due date (just shy of 3.11.3)
- With as much as they like to push the bounds, realize what is going on outside of their space, and sense the many variables all around them, maybe they just need a break!