

Hello and welcome!

The following are the summaries of childhood developmental stages that my work has found. These stages are the times when children “act out,” but on the other side is an astonishing burst of new ability. Their brain was going through an “upgrade.” My work documents both the irritating behavior and the new abilities. Included in this document are the milestones that are finalized. As of now, this is up to the age of 5, ending on a child’s 5th birthday.

Feel free to print these summaries out and have them laying around in your home. Maybe someone will pick them up and see them, such as to give you some more empathy and support? At my website, www.theobservantmom.com is an email subscription list. When you sign up, you get this file sent to you for free.

For conflict resolution as well as activity ideas at each milestone, please see my book series, *Misbehavior is Growth*. The idea behind *Misbehavior is Growth* is that it’s not misbehavior: it’s growth! See the behavior as a clue that something big is going on. Lean into the behavior with connection, presence, and mentorship.

Find the summaries for free at my website, www.theobservantmom.com, as well as where to buy *Misbehavior is Growth*.

Thank you for your interest in child mental development!

Sincerely,

Amber Domoradzki (“The Observant Mom”)



Toddler Milestone 1 – Language Comprehension

Starts: 18 months

Most Intense: 18 months, 1 week until 18 months, 3 weeks

Ends: 19 Months

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy

- Very clingy
- May be in your lap a lot
- May be with you in the bathroom

Wild, Exuberant, Meltdowns

- Can be wild and exuberant, running around a lot, smiling
- Or may put things right in your face/mouth
- Occasional meltdowns

Sleep Issues

- Sleep schedule becomes erratic, e.g., unreliable nap times

Most Intense

- Wants to be held all the time, many meltdowns

New Abilities Summary

Language Comprehension

- Explosion in language comprehension
- Might learn a new word or two per day
- Differentiates much more: cow versus horse; night versus day; etc.
- For children who are talking (and some don't even until age three or older), an increase in words spoken, about one new word per day
- Spoken words are better enunciated.
- Advanced language children (often girls) talk in complete sentences (three or four words). Please DO NOT compare your children negatively to this list. Look for the good in your child.

Symbols Represent Something

- Uses something other than an object to represent the object
- Might put their hand to their ear as a "phone"
- Might put long green Mega Bloks together and call it an "alligator"
- Might ask you to put sunscreen on their back by pretending to do it with a nearby object then signaling to put in on them
- At this one, the object resembles the symbol; a hand is a phone, green bricks are an alligator. At later milestones, they can use something quite unlike the symbol.
- Might understand the idea of counting and may be counting

Follows Verbal Request Better, Based on the Word Alone

- Understands and executes the function of an object based solely on a verbal clue, e.g., runs over to get a jacket after the word "jacket" is said

- Or goes to the blender after “smoothie” is said
- Can answer a question but answers it by pointing to something or getting it

More Respectful/Follows Some Requests Better

- Follows verbal requests better, e.g., “Please get your bottle”
- More respectful of others when asked to be, e.g., doesn’t step on their sibling after you ask them not to

Self-Awareness

- They are more self-aware now.
- Before, they could light up with joy, smile, be in awe of what is around them, etc. Now they are aware of that very joy.
- They might run around with a toy or food and it’s as if they notice the joy that it is to run around, specifically like that
- Or they might drape themselves in different fabrics, enjoying how the fabric makes them feel and look
- They might be a burst of sunshine, enthusiastically waving at strangers.
- They might have somewhat more deliberate behavior, such as looking at you with slightly more joyful, mischievous eyes.
- More awareness of and interest in body parts

Physical Skills

- Many fine motor skills such as doing puzzles or scribbling
- May copy what fine motor activities other children do, such as wrapping rubber bands on a Geoboard (a mathematical manipulative with a grid made of pegs that rubber bands can be stretched around)
- May like to “scoot” on a tricycle or scooter

Toddler Mini-Milestone 2A

Starts: Lasts for one or two days around 19 months 2 weeks

Irritable Period Summary

- Cranky
- Out of Sorts
- Wants to be near you
- Nap time changes, perhaps being tired later than usual for nap
- Slight fever on this day, with no other symptoms of flu
- Much more likely to become ill however

New Abilities Summary

- It is hard to ascertain what they think at this one, as it is so brief, they are so young, and the next one starts so soon after.
- But given the future milestones, it almost has to be a thought that they can arrange symbols in a way to their liking.
- In the next milestone (2B), they can, say, arrange parts to make Mr. Potato Head's face. They then go on to playfully manipulate those symbols in ways other than intended (3A). They then firmly understand that symbols can represent something but are not the thing (3B). Hence I propose that framework might be put in place here.
- Either way, I think this one is related to the next one, 2B, hence they are clustered together as Milestone 2A and 2B.

Toddler Milestone 2B – Patterns Symbols

Starts: One week before 20 months

Most Intense: 20 Months

Ends: Shortly after 20 Months

Irritable Period Summary

Major Sleep Issues

- Sleep problems: please expect naps won't be normal
- Might wake up in the night

Clingy and Cranky

- Extra crankiness
- Wants to be held and put down over and over
- Wants a lovey to go places with them

Most Intense

- One particular day is likely to be noticeable: Confused, stumbles when they walk, needs to be near you for an extended period of time, may be in and out of sleep all day, might have baby nightmares, wakes up from this state scared and confused, may have a mild fever for one day with no other symptoms of flu.

New Abilities Summary

- In Milestone 1, they better understand that a symbol represented something.
- Now they start to play around with “symbols.” They put objects into desired patterns and notice more patterns in the events around them.

Strings Objects Together

- Arranges disparate objects as to represent something real, e.g., Mr. Potato Head's face
- Might put together LEGO DUPLO toys
- May love Mega Bloks
- Arranges things to form a very basic pattern, such as in a line or a in a stack

Understands Symbols Match Objects (But Plays Around with It)

- Understands who owns what, such as this is mom's phone and should be with mom
- Purposely takes sibling's favorite animal, blanket, or other lovie (suggesting they know that lovie belongs to their sibling)
- When they scribble, they might say it means something now, such as “Mommy” or “Lightning McQueen.”
- Can verbally identify 1 or 2 colors

Strings Events Together

- Sees the particular events that make up a routine, how they relate and how they differ
- Understands the full routine of something well. They might help you make a cup of coffee in the morning and initiates (and may do) all steps correctly.
- Or may put their toys away on shelf
- The sequences they execute might have more steps, such as getting dog food out and putting it in the bowl.

- Understands and initiates daily routines. They might initiate turning a TV on if that's what you do in the mornings.
- Wants to do routines, for instance, wants to watch you make their bottle or cup of milk, not just have it handed to them
- May be upset if routines are missed, such as if you skip brushing their teeth one night
- Follows along with simple, dramatic stories, in which events change, such as *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Helen Oxenbury and Michael Rosen
- Loves songs with a twist, such as "Pop Goes the Weasel"
- May love Ring-Around-The-Rosie, where you all go in a circle and then fall down
- Might be able to do the actions to a song such as "Rock-a-Bye Bear"
- Note: to string events together like this requires an increase in memory

Matches a Simple Action to the Right Situation

- They can apply a simple action to the right situation.
- If milk spills, they might go get a paper towel.
- If they get on a bus, they might recognize that the bus driver says "Move on back," as from the song "Wheels on the Bus."
- They can answer a simple question. They can reply with "ya" and mean it now.
- Or they can pick what shoes they want
- Or they can point in the direction they want to go after being asked
- Says "uh oh" when someone is about to fall, as they recognize the danger
- Gets scared of certain noises, such as thunder, as they better understand the threat it may be to them
- May laugh at jokes
- Increase in words spoken, mostly nouns and verbs (i.e., an object as tied to an action)

Manipulates Simple Events

- Deliberately tries different solutions to achieve an end goal, such as making two magnets stick, buckling a seatbelt, or laying a blanket down to make a "bed" to lie down on
- Might show a sad face or cry with the intent of getting another person to do something for them

More Consistent in Fantasy Play

- Fantasy play is more consistent, e.g., consistently flies a toy airplane around as a toy airplane
- Consistently brings favorite animal, blanket, or lovie with them places (suggests a firmer understanding of the continuous nature of time)
- Sings parts of songs

Toddler Milestone 3A—Mischievous with Objects and Symbols

Starts: 20 months, 2 weeks

Most Intense: The week prior to 21 months up to 21 months

Ends: 21 months

Irritable Period Summary

First Part

- A noticeable head shape change, in which their forehead bulges forward, might alert you that this one is starting (around 20 months 2 weeks).
- It starts a bit mild and builds in intensity. Some might not notice it at the beginning (or they simply enjoy the activities the child is demanding, such as going on walks), depending on circumstances. Otherwise:

Demanding, Cranky, Jealous

- Cranky
- Wants to be in the same room with you, always
- Grabs you by the hand constantly and brings you places to do things with them
- Wants to sit in primary caregiver's lap or near primary caregiver often
- Jealous of other children
- Sleep issues: wakes early in the morning

Second Part

- There is yet another head shape change another week in (20 months 3 weeks). The second part shows more intense behavior.
- Spatially confused. For instance, they think they are on the floor when they are on the first stair of a staircase and fall down the step. Please be careful near pool stairs or at playgrounds.
- Totally out of sorts
- Can't make up their mind, for example of what they want for breakfast or perhaps can't communicate it to you
- Drools a lot, puts hand in mouth
- Takes blanket or lovey everywhere
- Absolutely won't forget when they leave something they want behind, e.g., their lovey
- Won't use plates/cups properly but wants to use them in different ways. They carry them to a non-dining area or do something playful with them.

Most Intense

- Insists on being VERY near you, like in the crook of your neck, can't communicate what they want or seems unable to make up their mind, wants to do everything in some specific way that they can't communicate effectively, sleep disruptions.

New Abilities Summary

Tries New Things

- Sees a challenge they think they can do, which they've never done before, and steps up and does it, on their own initiative.

- As an example, there is a very heavy object that you don't think they can pull and may even tell them as such—but they do.
- Very independent and insists on doing things on their own, like getting their own food
- Likes watering plants with a trickle of water from a hose

Uses Objects in a Way Other Than Intended

- They also play with objects in a “wrong” way purposefully.
- They may play with plates in a way other than eating on them, put *your* dress on, or insist on eating fruit while walking around in a store.
- They might like to wrap fabrics around themselves, such as clothes too big for them or big fluffy towels, as if wearing a cloak
- This play time may be needed to facilitate the next milestone, when they are capable of confident symbolic manipulation, in which they creatively use items for something other than their original intended use.

Toddler Milestone 3B—Symbols are Symbols

Starts: 21 Months 1 Week

Most Intense: 21 months 3 weeks until a few days after, then dissipates.

Ends: Between 22 months and 22 months 2 weeks

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy

- Mild at first, asks to be held a lot
- Might demand you do things with them, such as go on a walk
- Wants only their primary caregiver
- More intense meltdowns than before
- More willing to be away from you at times. But when they do get separation anxiety, it's intense.
- Wants a lovey or blanket to come with them everywhere

Demanding and Picky

- Demanding, such as what to watch on TV
- Picky, e.g., about what clothes to wear. Perhaps their newly formed symbolic thought makes them more acutely aware of what is on their shirts (sparkles, pictures, etc.)
- Or picky about how to eat food, e.g., wants to eat something straight out of the bag (take note of what you do and see if they are trying to mimic you)

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Stalls at nap and bedtime, demands story after story, song after song, etc.,
- Might skip naps
- There is a very noticeable change in head shape at 22 months.
- At close to 22 months, they might put things inside their cheek, such as their hand or grapes.

Most Intense

- Demanding, picky, may hit or throw, separation anxiety, sleep disturbances

New Abilities Summary

- Noticeably less clingy
- Less separation anxiety
- A very sunny period occurs around 22 months 2 weeks: they are filled with ecstatic joy and may play cute little cheeky games with you.

Confident Symbolic Manipulation

- They've been working with symbols for the past few milestones. It's that they are sturdy and confident now. Something is a symbol and is used to represent something. It's not the something.
- They might (intentionally) use an object to represent something else, such as a LEGO brick to represent a teacup.
- Understands that symbolic play is just that and is silly, may prefer real things
- They do more with symbols. They don't just find a green block if asked, they also count how many green blocks there are.

- They might be able to sort objects by both color and shape, such as a sorting toy in which the objects are different shapes and colors.
- Concrete to abstract matching games become possible, such as matching a Cinderella doll to a picture of Cinderella
- They might do this spontaneously, such as matching a stuffed animal they have to a real animal they see.
- This makes letter activities become possible, such as letter puzzles.
- Might thus understand abstract symbols, such as letters, better
- Might enjoy tracing shapes, such as circles, with a stencil
- Capable of learning many colors
- Counting might become refined
- Understands difference in gender

Pretend Play

- Pretend play, such as pretending to be a dinosaur, pretending to read
- Imaginative play based on real events, such as puts on a play with dolls based on what they've seen others do (perhaps tries to potty train a doll)

Conversational Flow and Back and Forth in How They Talk

- Simple conversational flow in how they speak
- Responsive to questions such as saying "I'll find it" after asking "Where is your pillow?"
- If you ask them what someone is doing, they may respond with what the person is actually doing. "What's mom doing?" "She's making eggs."
- They may do this nonverbally also by finding something, like their shoes, upon hearing that's what you are doing
- They might initiate a "back and forth" game with you. For instance, they hide behind a door, fully expecting you to come find them.
- More complete sentences such as "I kissed mommy." (Some see this in earlier milestones but you are likely to see an increase anyhow)

Increase in Practical Life and Fine Motor Skills

- Practical life activities explode: turning lights on and off, buckling seat belts, putting clothes on and such.
- They are just very aggressive and have fun with trying to do a lot more things.
- Figures out how to do something they want, such as turning a bin over to use as a step to get to a light switch (using objects other than as intended as in past milestones has come in handy!)
- Attempts a more challenging problem, such as putting a train track together (the kind that only fits together one way). They, however, might not be able to persist with it until completion yet.
- Can remember about 5 events of what is going to happen for the day (snack, play, lunch, store, home)
- Wants to drive your car
- Better fine motor control such as using a spoon better
- Better ability to regulate their own behavior such as placing the spoon next to their plate when done

Learns Quickly

- Learns new things quickly based on watching others.
- For instance, they might learn how to sit at a computer and pretend to use a mouse after seeing someone at the library do it.
- Or learns how to dip food in sauce after seeing at a restaurant for the first time
- Or picks up on any other thing, such as a new puzzle, quickly

Toddler Milestone 4 – Memory Expansion

Starts: 22 Months, 3 weeks

Most Intense: 23 months to 23 months, 1 week

Ends: 23 months, 3 weeks

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy, Defiant

- Starts out with a child who is simply clingy and/or might wake up crying
- Wants only their primary caregiver at certain times
- Demanding of your time
- Defiant in doing normal routines, such as taking a bath
- Possible meltdowns. They are fine—until they aren't.
- Might cry more

Sleep Issues

- Stalls going to bed (wants to read more books, play with toys, etc.)
- Skips naps
- When they wake up from sleep, they often cry

Crazy Behavior

- Crazy behavior: might crawl, climb on top of things, or put crayon on their face
- Grunts instead of answering questions
- May become slightly clumsier, fall down easier, or run into walls

Most Intense

- All of a sudden one day cries more easily or thrashes around, wants to be held, might seem confused, refuses naps for a few days in a row or other sleep disruptions (might wake up at night), might have a slight fever or get sick easier, and may demand large amount of time from primary caregiver

New Abilities Summary

Memory Increase

- Can remember entire songs
- Learns many words (10+) in a short amount of time
- Might be able to play the actual Memory Game, in which they match pairs of overturned cards
- They can answer a question about something not in sight, as they remember what the answer is, such as the color of something.
- They can remember stories and reference back to them, such as remembering the plot of a TV show, such as Thomas the Train.
- They might say things not in sight, such as your family's pet, are "missing." This suggests they quite remember those things.
- Uses more complex sentences, with subjects, objects, verbs, and adjectives as opposed to simply "more!" or "more juice!"

Imagines One End Goal

- An increase in memory seems to always coincide with an increase in imagination. In this case, an ability to imagine one simple end goal.
- Persists at activities that require imagining/visualizing the end goal, such as putting a train track set together (the kind that can only fit together one way).
- Or they purposely pose with a certain facial expression, such as a cute pouty face. This suggest again that they can visualize this end goal.
- They seem to actually think about one option or another, such as “Do you want a kiss?” and they ponder if they do or not.
- They may associate wrapping a gift with a birthday or Christmas coming up.

More Proactive

- They can imagine more. And they think how they think things might go is how they *should* go. As such, they make their thoughts a reality more.
- Before they developed a flow to conversations. Now they initiate conversations, “Hi, Mommy! It’s nice to see you!”
- They might ask you to change their diaper
- You might ask to kiss them and they say no. Later they come up, “Kiss? Kiss?” It’s like they remember they can do such things now.
- They might run up to people and say, “Ready, set, go!”
- States opinions, e.g, “That’s crazy!”

Fine and Gross Motor Control

- Much more delicate fine motor control, e.g., careful in handling and transferring objects
- Might take an interest in using scissors
- Better at puzzles, knobbed cylinders
- Might have an increase in gross motor control, such as they start skipping, ride a balance bike, dance to the Wiggles, love to climb, or love to jump on a trampoline

Toddler Milestone 5 – Persistence and Insistence

Starts: 2.0.1 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: 2.0.3 until 2.1.1

Ends: A few days after the intense period

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy

- At first, it's a child who might grab your hand and lead you somewhere a lot, wants to cuddle, be sad that you left, etc. Then:

Bossy, Demanding, Rigidly Particular

- Bossy, demanding, and possibly whiny
- They are bossy and particular about what you have to do. You have to sit on a particular chair or change their diaper a very particular way.
- Their favorite words right now might be “no,” “sit,” and “move.”
- They want things done exactly the same way as days earlier, which may not be possible and may result in a meltdown. For instance, their dad assembled a toy train track in a certain way, and you don't know how they did it, so you can't exactly replicate it.
- Or they want a ball to roll down the stairs the exact same way each time

Defiant

- Higher propensity to bite (may happen only when they feel trapped such as being held against their will)
- Hates diaper changes
- Takes their clothes or diaper off (may be a desire to change their diaper on their own, diligent diaper changes may help)

Sleep Issues

- Won't nap or stalls at naptime
- Clumsy (which may be from not napping)
- May wake up at night
- May have fears at night

Most Intense

- The previously listed behaviors start out somewhat subtly and get increasingly more intense until the end of the most intense period. At its most intense is a very demanding child who wants you almost hours of the day.

New Abilities Summary

Persistent Over Days

- Comes back to the same activity day after day and gets better at it each day
- Remembers how something was done from a few days ago
- Their memory now is not over everything but very specific things that make a big impression on them.

Persistent at Activities

- Very persistent at accomplishing a challenge, e.g., a jigsaw puzzle or an app

- Can follow a simple verbal instruction about something new such as “hang this picture up with this tape over there” and they keep at it until they get it
- Might draw shapes such as circles
- Can count higher than they could previously

Insistent

- Insistent on doing what others are doing, e.g., to do what their older siblings are doing, such as painting
- They might have a sense that something or someone is gone forever (when it is), such as a toy is missing, and they keep asking where the thing or person went.
- Wants things done similar as before, such as how to build a toy train track

Language

- Very conversational
- May speak in two sentences, e.g., “Hi, Mommy. It’s nice to see you.”
- Gives their opinion, often, such as things are “beautiful”

Identifies, Empathizes with, or Invokes Emotions

- There is a very clear heightened reaction to emotions, in themselves and others.
- Take a look at how YOUR child does this. It’s a clue to their personality.
- They might identify their own emotions, as if it’s novel and interesting, such as, “Wow! Thunder! I’m scared of thunder!”
- They might tell you what they are scared of, many times.
- Might be struck by seeing the emotions in *others*, such as seeing that a character in a book is sad
- Might purposely try to make *you* scared by dressing up in a “scary” outfit (a simple hat) and saying “Boo!”

Toddler Milestone 6 – Deliberate Decision Making

Starts: 2.1.3 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: 2.1.3 until 2.2.1

Ends: 2.2.2 (or bleeds into the next mini-milestone)

Irritable Period Summary

- Slightly preceding this milestone is an increase in head circumference. It might be hard to fit old shirts over their head.
- There is also, at some point in this milestone, an increase in how long their tongue is.

Clingier

- For the most part, might just want to be cuddled
- Might ask to be picked up a lot
- Might cry, and you can't figure out why
- Might ask for help a lot, "Help me! Help me!"
- Might easily have a meltdown, but they easily go back to happy if you can guess what they want

Bossy

- Bossy, e.g., telling you where you are allowed to sit
- Picky and stubborn: might want the same exact shirt day after day
- They can be aggressive or adorable in how they get bossy, depending on the child.
- Might not let you put on their pants (it's probably because they want to pick what pants they wear)
- Insists you fill up their cup to a certain level with liquid
- Bossy about what TV show or movie to watch
- Might not let you sing a song—only they can

Joke Playing

- Plays jokes, e.g., hides things from you on purpose or hides themselves
- Very likely to cheekily dress themselves up, such as in high heels or necklaces, entirely to elicit a reaction from others

Shows Regret

- Might show disappointment in whatever manner your child does: maybe dramatic slumped shoulders. Or full-on meltdowns.
- Shows regret over past decisions. For instance, they choose one pair of shoes before going out, and then they want a different pair while out. They have a complete meltdown over it.

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Sleep disruptions, may be up at night
- Might drool or put their hand in their mouth
- Clumsy
- Might get sick easier

Fearful

- Before they seemed fearless. Now they show fear.
- Shows fear over specific things, such as thunder

- Fear of doing certain things, such as getting on a tricycle

Most Intense

- It varies from a child who just wants to snuggle a lot, gets sick more easily, or who does all of the bossy, stubborn behaviors listed above but more intensely with full meltdowns.

New Abilities Summary

Decision Making

- Can intelligently alter their course if one way isn't working,
- They might use a different word when they see you aren't communicating together well. They might be saying "plate," but you think they are saying "paint," so they say, "a WHITE plate," to help clarify.
- Or they want frosting on a cake, but they already have some. Finally they say, "the GREEN frosting," so you know which kind they want.
- Thus you may find yourself "having full conversations" with them.
- They can look in a different direction in a book to find a picture, if one way isn't proving successful.
- They can understand and answer a question like "Do you want to walk up the stairs or be carried?"
- Very deliberate and particular about what they want, e.g., what movie to watch or how high the liquid in their cup must be filled
- Loves to be asked questions so they can show off their knowledge. Non-verbal children can still do this by pointing.
- Might clap and say "yay!" when they are proud of something they did

Decisive and Picky About How They Dress, Behave, Etc.

- Decisive about many things relating to their life, e.g., how their hair is worn, what they play with, or where they sit at the dinner table
- Very deliberate in how they behave. They may see their siblings play rock, paper, scissor and they make one of the shapes with their hand to play too
- Might follow you around and do what you do, such as how you take care of animals
- Or they deliberately pretend to be like their sibling and put themselves to bed the way their siblings do
- They may now say "I am," an indication they are applying more behavior to themselves, as reflected in their language.

Symbols Help Them Make Decisions

- In the first Toddler Milestones, they developed a more solid understanding of symbols. Now they can use those symbols to make decisions.
- For instance, they may show that they understand that a strawberry on a cup of yogurt means it is strawberry yogurt and a blueberry means it is blueberry.
- Or they can press the "cold" button at a water cooler to get cold water
- Or they might understand that the sound of "a" is the first sound in "apple."
- This understanding may be why they are so picky and demanding. They sincerely think different color cups, e.g., a blue versus yellow cup, do different things (and they are sometimes right!)
- Other examples of understanding the meaning of symbols: may ascribe a triangle as meaning "mountain"

Longer Memory

- They can remember how things went from weeks ago.
- For instance, you had cashews at dinner once, with a particular meal. You have that meal again and they ask for cashews.
- They can't remember the exact time it occurred as in, "We did this thing two weeks ago." They make a connection between two things and remember the connection as such, even if it's been two weeks.

Loves Sorting and Comparing

- They love to compare themselves to others especially. They might:
- Call their dad, "Big daddy!" and themselves "Small [their name]!"
- Might compare their smaller feet to your larger feet
- Or compares quiet things to loud things
- Very likely to love arranging things up in order from big to small
- Loves sorting shapes and colors

More Initiative, Plays Jokes

- Initiates conversations and activities a lot more
- Initiate jokes and games with others, such as waiting for you to come in the room then scaring you
- Might make up their own song, singing "All day long," over and over
- Might ask, "What are you doing, Mom?"
- Might be annoyed by loud noises and say, "Pretty loud!"
- Might put a blanket on their sibling or give them a bottle. (They have more information with which to act now.)
- Makes up their own song
- May playfully hit as a way to get their own way

Toddler Mini-Milestone 7A – Fuses the Real and the Fake

Starts: One week shy of 2.3.0 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: 2.3.0

Ends: Shortly after the most intense period

Note: The timing of this one seems to vary for children.

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy or Bossy

- Again clingy
- Might be bossy and insistent on what they want.
- May just really throw their weight around.

New Abilities Summary

A Confusion or Fusing of Real and Fake Things

- Confusion/blending of fake things as real things
- Might think fake food is real food; may take a bite out of Styrofoam food
- Seems to think they can pick up and use a fork as found in a book. It's as if it "pops out" at them, as if it's a hologram.
- Or they do something like "scrape" at your face and sprinkle it around, as if that something (your face in this case) is actually something they can spread around, as if it's dirt (or whatever pretend play they are engaged in)

Toddler Milestone 7B – Deliberate Rearranging and Creation

Starts: Between 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: Around 2.4.0 and again at 2.5.0

Ends: 2.5.2

Irritable Period Summary

- Begins subtly but with a noticeable change in head shape and size
- You might also see them have “lazy” eyes to the point that they look cross eyed. Look for this around 2.3.2.
- Drooling
- The most intense period hits very suddenly at or before 2 years 4 months

“Rearranges” the Environment, Bossy, Wild

- “Rearranges” many things: throws their cup, puts their shirt on inside out, opens your eye lids, wraps themselves in the curtain, throws their stuffed animals around, etc., in a repeated ongoing way
- Bossy, e.g., about diaper changes or where you are allowed to stand
- They might need to have every single one of their toys before they are willing to have their diaper changed.
- You might have to stand at the top of the stairs, while they walk down first.
- VERY defiant (to get diaper changed, go down for a nap, etc.)
- At times nothing seems to console them
- Extremely clumsy, drops stuff, does very risky things like put their blanket over their head and runs
- Makes many bids for connection throughout the day (put on my socks, take off my socks, watch me play, read a book)
- Playfully lies, such as points to the wrong answer when asked a question
- Major meltdowns. Certain flare-ups can be intense.
- About one meltdown per day in between the two peaks

Strong Fears

- Doesn’t want to leave primary caregiver
- Possessive of primary caregiver
- Their thinking that fake things are real things continues and causes problems.
- They might get upset if you throw away paper in the garbage
- They might think balls on a video game are real and are flying behind the TV
- Or they are very upset by a fake scary shark.

Sleep Issues

- Major sleep disruptions
- A strong chance they only nap 1-2 times per week during the irritable period
- If you push naps when they don’t want to, they might throw themselves aggressively on the floor.
- On some days, may take a 6+ hour nap

Most Intense

- This one can be intense—and it’s long.
- There are two peaks at this one. It may be two overlapping milestones. Some see relief in between and others do not.
- A strong fear of abandonment and confusion of fake and real things around 2 years 4 months. They might get really mad you threw something away. They also might think the images in books/shirts are real (e.g., try to pick up and use a picture of a fork).
- Another intense period at 2 years 5 months, in which absolutely nothing seems to console them.

New Abilities Summary

- In the past milestones, they got good at making a data-driven (intelligent) decision. Now their imagination was just turbo charged with the belief that fake things ARE real things.
- This gives them every incentive to twist things around in imagination. They can make deliberate decisions now AND think imaginatively.

Builds from a Script or Idea

- They have a “script” of some sort that they work off of (sometimes literally) and build something intentional.
- They might put on a play, using the pictures in a book as a guide.
- Might follow a visual pattern to build something, e.g., attempts to build a tangram based on the picture of one
- Might put on a play based on a book, for instance a scene from Thomas the Train, over and over
- Can do jigsaw puzzles, specifically they can see a simple picture that should go together and then does it. (That they can know the picture and put it together is between 2 – 12 pieces; they may put larger jigsaw puzzles together by trial and error)
- They might be able to do the puzzles where there are 16 cubes with 6 pictures on each side of the cube.

Deliberate Building

- They build in a way as if they have something in their mind that they want to make a reality.
- Builds elaborately with wooden blocks or other sets on their own in creative ways; uses 10 or 20 or more pieces to do so
- Moves around furniture or other items in the house
- Plays with language; mishmashes songs; very fluent
- Plays around and gets refined/nuanced at whatever it is they do, for instance, making nuanced facial expressions to make people laugh (this is highly dependent on each unique child)

You Can See Them Thinking

- You can see them thinking. Perhaps as their eyes dart around thinking of what to do next in a “Follow me” game.
- Seems to constantly be thinking of what they can do with their own body next. Can they hop? Wiggle their leg? Be upside down?
- They might be struck when they see other characters or people thinking about something, such as the “grumpy” character in *Green Eggs and Ham* when he stops and thinks about eating green eggs and ham.

Visual Acumen

- Can do many Montessori activities, such as the pink tower, with total ease

- They may get the right size block (say of the pink Montessori cubes) on demand to fit into, say, any random box they happen to find.
- They handily match objects to things that are the right shape, such as rods to drawn representations of those rods on paper.

Fuses Fantasy and Reality

- Fantasy and reality are still blurred. When they pretend to be Snow White, they seem to think they ARE Snow White.
- This however allows them to play around wildly, spurring tremendous skills.
- Likes to spin and twist stories. The Prince doesn't love Cinderella. He loves [your daughter]!!!
- When they wake up, you have to kiss them. Because they're Snow White.
- They easily use one object to fill in for another, such as a white magnet attached to a magnetic train is a "snow plow."
- Might enmesh with other family members. They want to wear their hair just "like mom" or have a cup of coffee at the table "like the family."

Toddler Milestone 8A – Inference

Starts: 2.5.2 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: Behavior continues to escalate for about 10 days.

Ends: Just before 2.6.0

Irritable Period Summary

- Note some children do not go through this milestone—at all.
- It is possible that this milestone is shifted for children such that 8A and 8B happen at the same time. Hence please read through the skills listed here even if they don't seem to go through this one. Otherwise:

Head Shape Change

- Noticeable head shape change slightly before irritable behavior

Clingy

- Starts out subtle at first: wants lovey or to cuddle
- May attack you to get a hug
- May come inside just to give you a huge, then goes back outside to continue playing
- Or trots off occasionally and becomes inconsolable (a lovey may help)

Defiant, Demanding, Particular

- Defiant ALL day long to get a diaper change, take a nap, etc.
- You might be hearing, "I don't want to!"
- Wants your attention all day long
- Rigid about the order of things, such as which sock to put on first, then next, then which shoe, etc.
- If they get hurt, you now have to kiss the exact place they got hurt.
- May want a particular caregiver at nursery
- There may be intense nighttime battles.
- If something didn't go well previously, they make sure it goes better next time. For instance, if they didn't like only having one book at bedtime the night before, they make sure to line up two books next to your chair, so tonight you read two books.

New Abilities Summary

- They can make educated guesses about what just happened
- They intuitively start to see that things happen in an order over time.

Inference

- They can make an educated guess, with limited evidence, of what just happened.
- If the garage door is open, they can guess that their dad is home.
- If their brother's door is closed, they guess he is sleeping.
- Note in their early threes, they can *predict* a next event. At this one, they make a logical conclusion about what did happen (not what's about to happen).

An Ability to Use the Unseen

- They can think of things not in immediate sight.
- If you ask them what shirt they want, they might say a shirt that is in another room.

- They might like to hide a favorite toy and make you go find it.
- Can come up with a solution of their own, not presented to them. For instance, as they are crying, you ask what can help them, offering maybe a drink or a toy, and they say, unexpectedly, “a kiss”
- They come up with things not in immediate sight or not being currently talked about. Someone tells them they have pretty hair. They say, defiantly, “No! I have brown hair!”

Events Start, End, and Go a Particular Way

- They seem to understand that particular events are of a specific nature and happen at certain times.
- They might say “bye!” every time you leave something or something leaves them. It’s as if to punctuate their understanding that this event is ending.
- Or they might announce “I’m finished!” after finishing something.
- Or they want to carry the box of leftovers out of the restaurant. Because they know they are done, and that’s what you do.
- They might be able to handle introductions when being introduced to new people.
- They recognize that things should go a particular way. For instance, they insist on keeping the gate to a fence open, because they want to go get a rock in the yard (inside the gate) then go throw it in a pond (outside the gate).
- Reality and fantasy continue to be fused. They might tell their stuffed animal to “stay,” as if it would otherwise get up and walk.
- They can be, as noted, quite particular about the sequence of events. You have to put both socks on, then their shoes.

1:1 Matching of Problem to Solution:

- There is a deductive matching of cause to effect at this one in which simple connections are made.
- They might give their sibling a hug if they are crying.
- They might do something like press the pause button on the remote and utterly delight that it does actually pause the movie. (This also requires a bigger “leap of faith” that this works, as opposed to, say, hammering a ball in a toy.)
- They might also describe a stuffed animal as “sad,” as what is fake and what is real is still fused. But this shows the increase in empathy, which pulls at the heart strings and encourages problem solving.
- In their imaginative play, they might like to pretend their stuffed animal is “stuck” or “lost” and you need to rescue it.

Toddler Milestone 8B—Sequence of Events

Starts: 2.6.1 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: 2.6.2 until 2.7.0

Ends: 2.7.2

Irritable Period Summary

- There is noticeable change in head size and shape, several times over the course of this (long) milestone, with more intense behavior following each change in head shape. It's probably several milestones, but they come one after the other, so I put them in one.
- Note that 8A and 8B might mash together for some children. Please read through the skill set for 8A as well.

Highly Demanding, All Day

- VERY clingy
- Wants your attention all day long, to see what they did or to sit with you. This is, for many caregivers, a very frustrating milestone.
- Very jealous; tries to separate you from their siblings
- May even throw books at you to get you to read to them
- Bossy, e.g., about where you are allowed to sit
- Refuses naps (won't go to the bedroom, runs out of the room, etc.), even though very sleepy
- Loves to be messy and muddy
- Still particular about the order of things: you have to go up the stairs first, then Dad, then them
- The irritating behaviors at this one can last all day long. They are very picky about a lot of things: "NO, THIS for lunch! NO, make a bottle with tap water not filtered water! NO, I want to watch a show. NO, Mom, you are not allowed to sit for more than 10 minutes!" Sorry in advance.

Plays Around with "Lies"

- Deliberately tells mistruths and often. You give them their favorite stuffed animal, doggie, and ask "Is this doggie?" and they bubble, "That's not doggie!!"
- Loves to create dramatic little plays where someone or something needs helped or rescued and they do the rescuing

Hates Leaving Fun Things

- Will not want to leave a fun activity, such as being at the playground or taking a bath
- You might anticipate a major meltdown related to this around 2 years 7 months.

Physical Accidents

- Can be very dangerously clumsy, like they get super upset while on a changing table and almost fall over face first
- More likely to get sick

Most Intense

- Jealous and bossy about their primary caregiver, may hit or throw objects to separate and keep their primary caregiver away from others, may not let primary caregiver move, wants caregiver all day long, gets clumsy and may fall off chairs, changing tables, etc., head first. Be careful when they are simply sitting on a chair even.

New Abilities Summary

- Before, they made an educated guess about what is going on and also started to notice that events go a certain way, at certain times.
- Now they are more intellectual about this process. They can talk about it and make more plans with it.
- They can rely on their past experiences and knowledge to apply a (simple) solution at the right time and place now. In the next milestone, they are more flexible in matching solutions to problems.

Sequence of Events

- Understands sequences of events: "First this, then this" such as "I'll be with you after I finish my drink." They intently watch, waiting for you to be done, and then tell you, "You're done! Now come on!"
- Their new understanding of sequences makes them more cooperative at diaper changes, "First we are going to do this and then we are going to change your diaper." They submit willingly.
- Might use the word "because," e.g., "I am not going to cry, because I am happy" This is a sequence of events, as intellectually understood by them. I did this, because of this.
- Can identify themselves as "thinking," as in "I am thinking about what to do next."
- Might be capable of doing the beginning steps to sound out letter sounds to read a word, such as "n-e-t" spells "net."
- They use their knowledge of steps to manipulate the process. For instance, they know they can give their siblings a hug before bedtime. So, they ask to go give the hug. Then they dart off to go play.
- Loves a story in which something goes wrong in the past and it gets rectified. For instance, a child lost a doll and they go back and get it. Peppa Pig and Paw Patrol are ideal for this.
- After the most intense period, their imaginative play becomes more complex: more characters, more plot twists, they execute the actions faster and more reliably.

Continuity of Time

- Understands "yesterday," "today," and "tomorrow"
- Remembers past events, say the time they almost lost their shoe while running in the rain, and wants to talk about it again and again and again and again.
- They know that they are never getting a fun moment back if they leave.
- On the other hand, at times, they seem more comfortable with separation, as if they understand they will reconvene with something or a person in the future.

Imagination Changes

- Before, fake things and reality were fused. They thought a picture of a fork was a real fork.
- Now they note that such things are fake. They are losing this fantastical thinking.
- If they see a cookie drawn on a paper, they may pretend to eat it, but it's as if they know that's wrong and they are making a joke.

Applies Simple Solutions at Correct Time and Place

- This is not that they execute what is asked of them through pressure or punishment, e.g., eat your dinner or else you don't get cake.
- This is that they, on their own, apply a right or wrong solution to a life problem in a conscious, deliberate way. Such as:

- May know that when you get to a road you have to stop and look (might not be able to fully make a good decision but that you have to make the decision itself)
- If they get dirty, they may ask to take a bath.
- Says sorry after something went wrong (but only can do it immediately after it happened)
- This might show up very playfully at first. They may get to a road and throw their hands up like “Oh no! A road! Whatever are we going to do!?”
- Or another playful way is they intentionally say the wrong answer to something, emphasizing that they know they can choose to be wrong
- Exaggerates when something goes well maybe saying, “Woo hoo!” and when things go poorly such as saying, “Oh no!”
- They may purposely pretend to be shocked or scared.
- More reliably understands rules, e.g., they are unlikely to run into the road at any time now, if, say, on the driveway (It’s a relief, really!)
- Follows some directions like “Can you take your pants off?”
- Much more direct in knowing what they want. They might take your hand and lead you directly to the playground down the street.
- This ability to know what they want and how to get it increases greatly after the most intense period at 2 years 7 months, and they become very confident and fast.

Physical Changes

- More deliberate and exact in their fine motor control, e.g., may deliberately place fingers together
- Growth in their legs, arms, and feet
- Whereas before you may have been constantly worried for them when, say, taking a bath, now they are more reliably stable and coordinated.

Toddler Milestone 9 – Creative On-the-Spot Problem Solving

Starts: 2.7.3 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: 2.8.0 until 2.8.1

Ends: 2.8.2

Irritable Period Summary

- Milestones 8 and 9 are so close together as to likely vary and blend for many children as far as when they start.
- Looking at the behavior is, in my experience, the best indicator to know what milestone you are in. Milestone 9 is distinct from Milestone 8. Milestone 8 is marked by defiance all day long. Milestone 9 is marked by confusion and paralysis to solve problems.

Confused and Indecisive

- Becomes confused and indecisive, whereas not long ago they were confident and certain.
- They might ask you to take a walk and then can't make up their mind about which way to go.
- Seemingly paralyzed to answer a question, e.g., what movie would you like
- Refuses to move to solve a very simple problem. For instance, a toy, cup, or food is a few feet away but they won't get it and instead cry for it, as if paralyzed to do it.
- Wants to have the toys other children have. I believe this stems from a feeling of indecisiveness over what is the very best toy. Seeing a child with a different toy makes them feel the other toy is better.
- Shows regret over the solution they originally picked. For instance, they agree that one solution is OK, such as dad can turn the light off. But they have a change of mind (and gets upset) a few seconds or minutes later when they seem to realize what is going on, because they wanted to do it.

Jealous, Demanding

- Jealous if their caregiver gives attention to another child or person. They get jealous even if they are in a different room and you are giving attention to another child.
- Tries to separate primary caregiver from anyone or anything else that has the child's attention or who is not the child. "No! My mommy!"
- Wants you off and on, but now typically wants something specific and then lets you be again
- Very choosy and particular. Out of their entire wardrobe, there might be only two pairs of pants that they will consider wearing.
- They might demand you go to a particular store, then and there. Everything about their attitude suggests there is no not going to the store.
- They might march you over to a particular chair and demand you sit.
- Not as likely to want to be right next to you all day long. However, they hate when you leave the room. If they leave the room on their own, it's fine. If YOU leave, prepare to be attacked.
- You may have trouble doing the simplest of things, like going to the bathroom or going into another room to look something up on a computer.
- Asks to cuddle (some of the behaviors are cute!)

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Refuses naps, screams about being left alone

- Keeps stalling at bedtime to do “just one more” thing or loves to talk late at night
- Directly asks you to come snuggle with them at night, after putting them to bed
- Drools a lot, puts their hand in their mouth

Most Intense

- Jealous, demanding, won’t let you freely move, in seeming disbelief of what is going on, paralyzed to act, irritated and sad for seeming no reason, needs extra comfort

New Abilities Summary

Heightened Self and Situational Awareness

- Right away starts with an incredible increase in self-awareness.
- They might all of a sudden be embarrassed to not have clothes on, as if they understand this custom and their deviance from it. (Their last mental awareness dealt with applying correct behavior at a correct time or place.)
- They clearly start to understand when they are near their own house after coming home in a vehicle.
- Has an increase in imagination. Now they are likely to apply their imagination to themselves for a prolonged time. They may pretend they are a crane for days on end and they pick things up like a crane every time they go to do that.
- Their personality reflects this. They act in a pointed way more, putting their whole body into something. They might act shocked or surprised, on purpose, just to do it.
- Or they might build a tower then shoot you a devilish, “Look at what I did!” look.
- Or they throw themselves into play, acting as if they are a sort of “detective” solving a mystery.
- Also starts off with a noticeable increase in attention span, in which they might commit to a craft or other activity for 45 minutes
- Also has better fine motor control, such as they can squeeze a lime

Flexible Solutions to Problems

- Before they could apply one solution to one problem. Now they can choose a solution from many choices.
- You can all but watch them as they see a new problem arise and scan, in their mind, all potential solutions.
- This makes them more adaptable and quicker to apply a solution on the spot.
- If they notice it is cloudy, they might get an umbrella.
- Can match a song to what is going on. They might start singing “Rain, rain, go away,” when they see it’s raining.
- Color objects properly, e.g., colors Princess Ariel’s hair red
- Can match an etiquette to a social situation. When Dad comes home, they might show them Mom, as if introductions are taking place.
- Attempts to solve much more complex problems without help. On their own, on the spot, they might figure out how to put batteries in the remote control
- Can correct themselves on the spot better, e.g., they say something wrong and you say it the right way, they say it then the right way

- They might make a joke in which they play off of two things (as they can pick from several solutions now to apply on the spot now). For instance, they tell you to “count backwards.” So you say, “3, 2, 1...” and they say, “No, count BACKWARDS,” and they turn you around so you are facing backwards. It’s cute and funny.
- They might realize now that they can talk to you over the baby monitor. They pick it up and yell through it, “Mommy! I want to snuggle! Goodbye.”
- Advanced-language children might handle more factors needed to read, such that a picture of a cat also relates to the letters “c-a-t.”
- Can apply a solution at a particular time over a more extended time. For instance, you said they could do X in the morning and they wake up, realize it is morning, and they can do X.
- However, you can’t yet tell them to do Y at a time (e.g., “tell daddy Y when he gets home”). This skill develops soon. For now, it’s based on what they personally want to do and a seeming in-the-moment recognition of the time.

Thinks About Problem Solving Itself

- They might initiate a conversation itself about solving problems, such as “What should we do if the baby is crying? I know! How about a bottle!”
- May make up plays about characters who are “great helpers”
- Can go backwards and forwards in solving problems. They might start to build something and realize they made a mistake a few steps back and go back and fix it.
- They talk to themselves as they work through problems, “No, no, that wasn’t right.”
- Starts to make beginning value judgments like “Butterflies are nice” or “This creation I made is great.” Which one is good? Bad? Which way is better?
- Says “I don’t know” now. This suggests they recognize a path forward is possible, but they don’t know which one at the current moment.

Challenges Themselves to Solve Problems Differently

- Likes to challenge themselves with new problems and to use a different solution than normal.
- For instance, they might purposely walk a different way than normal to see if they can find their way home.
- Depending on the child, they might like complicated problems about 3-D space. They might challenge themselves to fit as many blocks as they can in a particular area, say the bed of a toy dump truck.
- Or takes on a complicated challenge such as putting together a Tangram puzzle (will need your help but may be committed to trying to solve it)
- Builds much more elaborate constructions, such as making Thomas the Train, with a funnel, whistle, and cab, out of blocks
- Or makes very long, elaborate train tracks that sprawl across an entire room and get bigger and different every day
- Has clever solutions to problems, such as building a bridge over something that has a gap or bump (if building with say train tracks or other materials)
- Might play damsel in distress to get others to come help them (it’s one way to solve a problem!)

Toddler Milestone 10 – Persistent Imagination and Execution

Starts: 2.8.3 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: A week before 2.9.0 until 2.9.0, getting progressively worse in that time, then starts to dissipate

Ends: 2.9.2

Irritable Period Summary

Clingy

- May be extremely clingy
- Demands primary caregiver be near them often, wants to sit on you often, nestles in really close to you, follows you everywhere, demands your attention by grabbing you often
- They want to be with you, all day, for weeks
- They might choose to be clingy with people other than their primary caregiver now, such as an older sibling.

Bossy, Demanding, Sensitive

- May cry more easily
- Has meltdowns more easily
- Might block people from moving
- Bossy about how routines are executed, e.g., agrees to do something but insists on doing something else first
- Might utterly refuse to agree to something, such as turn off the TV. When you do, they thrash around on the floor.
- They might still insist you sit in a certain place
- They might want their sister's dinner, not theirs (and are very upset when you don't let them.)
- Demands a specific type of food or drink that they haven't had in a year (suggests an upgrade in memory)

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Stalls at bedtime, majorly.
- Wants to stay up insanely late
- May work on their new skills during this time late at night
- Becomes drooly for a day or two
- More prone to illness

Most Intense

- Cries, won't stop an activity without an epic meltdown, may thrash around when you stop them from doing something (say taking their sibling's dinner), drools, highly possessive of primary caregiver, blocks caregiver from moving, may fall asleep at unusually early hours

New Abilities Summary

- Marked by having much more information in their mind more persistently. They can compare things mentally and execute instructions more reliably with this increase in persistence of imagination.

- This one is marked by a more persistent memory and imagination, resulting in an ability to follow instructions and make mental connections. The next one is marked by the beginning ability to *predict* a next event.

Mental Connections

- Can notice a pattern between things even if they aren't immediately in their sight. For instance, while looking at a tomato, they say it looks like an apple.
- Or while looking at the color yellow says it looks like a lemon
- They might put on a silly play with a potato asking if it's a potato or an avocado.
- Notices similarities, say between a model they built and the real thing

More Persistent Memory

- Can remember new information for a longer amount of time.
- If something interesting happened in the morning, say they saw a big boat, they might tell someone about it in the afternoon.
- If you tell them they can have food after doing X, after they do X, they will demand the food.
- Or they want to take a bath, but you tell them they have to wait until their sibling is done with their bath. When their sibling is done, they tell you it's time for their bath.
- If inclined to do so, can count to 100.
- Their growth in imagination might help them read as they remember certain words. They might read one complete sentence out of a familiar book.

Short-Term Instructions

- Follows and commits to verbal instructions better.
- You might tell them, "The safe spot is the sidewalk. Please stand there" and they actually stay there without forgetting they shouldn't.
- Or you show them how to do an exercise and they copy it well.
- Or you are on a ride and the worker says, "If standing up, hold onto the rail." They, although previously sitting, stand up and hold the handrail.
- Whereas before they didn't follow instructions in a class better, now they are the exemplary student.
- On occasion, more accepting about doing something based on the logic of something. For instance, they are agreeable to getting their diaper changed, because you point out that you don't want them to be dirty.
- Said another way, they follow short-term instructions longer.

Persistent Imagination and Creativity

- Impressive increase in imagination. Perhaps their ability to connect more things mentally spurs originality.
- They might make up plays. Maybe their train gets blocked in by blocks. As far as you know, they've never seen this plot line.
- Make up their own, new solutions to problems. Say they want to balance a block and they can't. They put together many blocks on the bottom to build a platform.
- Or perhaps they go and get a straw for you to drink with. For your glass of wine.
- Starts some simple patterning such as lining up objects by color in the pattern green, yellow, blue. May commit to doing this all day, with patterns getting longer and more complex day after day.

- They also remember things for longer as they re-enact them in their pretend play.
- They might re-enact a lot of stuff that they see. They might put on a play with a basic plot after seeing a show or movie, such as Diesel, a character from Thomas the Train, pushing logs off of a bridge.
- Or if they see, say, a train track structure in a book, they go build an identical one for real.
- Or they see, say, a circle puzzle piece and build a train track creation (or perhaps wood block) creation in a circle

Negotiates

- Negotiates with you on their behalf and in a wild way, e.g., “No the bacon only takes one minute to cook!”
- Clever in figuring out how to get their own way, e.g., if they get to listen to music or watch a video after a bath, they ask to take a bath often

Cognitive Empathy

- They (might) have empathy on a more intellectual level.
- Might pass bread out at the dinner table to others
- Might understand that if they like X, it doesn’t mean others do too
- Sensitive to what you think of their artwork or the things they created: is what they just did good?
- Might try to make something enjoyable for their stuffed animal, such as setting them up with a book to read
- If they are fighting over a toy and the other gets really upset that they didn’t get it, they might give it to them, “so they are not sad.”
- This really depends on the child, however. Some children can be told they hurt someone and not care at all.

Toddler Milestone 11 – Short-Term Planning

Starts: 2.9.3 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: 2.10.0 until 2.10.1

Ends: 2.10.1

Irritable Period Summary

Jealous, Possessive

- Clingy
- Falls asleep on you
- Possessive of primary caregiver
- Want all toys and food for themselves
- Might demand you all morning and again in the evening
- You might have trouble separating from them to do important business, like answer a phone call.
- May be whiny

Extreme Confusion Over the Timing or Completion of Things

- In seeming disbelief of what is in front of their eyes about what just happened. They might beg you to put butter on their bread—and you do—but they insist it’s not on there.
- They think someone is turning off a movie or turning down the volume to something, when they aren’t.
- A large time delay in responding to real events. For instance, after their head gets stuck in a shirt, they break out into tears about it—several seconds after they are no longer stuck.
- They understand processes continue on or “go out of sight” now.
- They might misconstrue this at first. When you brush their hair, they might think their hair will pull out or fly out.
- Or you have to throw away a bag of food, as it got old, and they get terribly upset

Bossy and Rigid—Down to Seconds and Inches

- Does not handle change well, even immediate change, such as moving a utensil a few inches
- Asks to do something and is upset if it doesn’t happen within microseconds
- Demands you sit in a very exact spot and not even inches different
- Extreme, major meltdowns, probably in public
- Strong desire to do things themselves, resulting in meltdowns if they can’t accomplish something
- Might try to put lipstick on and it ends up all over the bottom of their face
- Might hit you in the head with a toy they are frustrated with
- Bossy to others about their role as they solve a problem they are working on
- May use you as a human “tool,” such as making your hand move their toys for them
- Acts as if they are the driver of the car, “Turn! Turn!”
- Meltdowns can last a looong time now, 30+ minutes

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Want to stay up late

- Falls asleep at weird times
- Might talk in their sleep, such as repeating letter sounds they know
- Uncoordinated and clumsy, may drop glass cups, spill liquids while pouring them, seems to love to grab knives by the blade, and such

Most Intense

- One or more terrible meltdowns where they seem confused and in disbelief of what is happening and/or where they boss you around a lot. This one can be through the roof tiresome with some children.

New Abilities Summary

- In the last one, they started to understand that x things happen at y time. This ability strengthens at this one. They are very aware of all plans being made and, now, where they want to be in those plans.

Very Fluid at Understanding Short-Term Future Plans

- Fully understands short-term future plans and makes their desired role in those plans known.
- Understands something like “We can’t have candy now,” because it’s not a convenient time or place. But, on their own, when it is a more appropriate time to have candy (an hour later and after doing a bunch of stuff), they ask about it.
- They might ask about what is happening next.
- Can be told something like “Show Dad this picture when Dad gets home,” and they remember
- Can be involved in planning activities, e.g., bedtime routine
- They very easily handle things up to an hour and pretty well up to a day.
- Similarly understands the short term past. They (might) remember the events of the day and identify them as happening “that day.” But this is typically only if you were just talking about those things with them.

Plans Short-Term Events, Decides How Things Should Go

- Might make a little date with you like “Mommy, come over here and let’s take a nap”
- Very opinionated on how things should go. They are more “rules” oriented. They might admonish others “no taking!”
- May lecture you to “be careful” with them or others

Tries to Act in a Correct Way In-The-Moment

- Much more fluid in their movement. They are unlikely to get as seeming lost in what they are doing as in last milestones. They really change dramatically at this one; they are losing their “babyiness” big time.
- Clearly deep in thought while in mid-action, such as when running around and contemplating their next move
- Tries to do what is right while moving, such as being very careful not to spill a drink.
- They can be told, “I don’t like when you hit me here because it hurts,” and they understand and refrain from hitting.
- Better understands back and forth banter
- Might play cheeky little games where they resist but they know if you are clever there is little point in resisting

- Loves to explore places and know their way around
- Understands that red means “stop” and green means “go”
- More often reliably cooperative if you explain something like “You’re dirty and need a bath”
- Very forthcoming with saying “Thank you” and “You’re Welcome”
- Takes strong initiative to help other children, such as if another child fell off a bike. They stick with the whole thing, all the way until the child is back up and on the bike again. It’s extremely endearing.
- Or while on a walk, they always want to help. When your stroller gets stuck, “Ok, Mommy, I’ll help you!” As you are trying to get up a hill, “Ok, Mommy, I’ll do it!”

Very Exaggerated in their Likes and Dislikes

- States their strong likes and dislikes
- Might very bossy about what rules are to be followed when around them or how you are to treat them
- States what a favorite thing of theirs is
- Likes to exaggerate when things “GROSSSSS.”
- Loves messy/sensory play
- Love to show you gross things in their mouth, such as partially chewed food
- They get a big kick out of your reaction to smells

Toddler Milestone 12 – Imaginative Predictions

Starts: 2.10.2 [year.month.week]

Most Intense: With a bang at 2.11.0

Ends: 2.11.2

Note: Irritating behavior starting at 2.11.3 is the first Three Year Old Milestone

Irritable Period Summary

- There may be a noticeable head shape change which starts this one.

Clingy

- Starts out sweet and subtle at first
- Wants to sit and cuddle
- Right on you as you exercise or sit
- Attached to your leg
- You might see a few exceptionally sunny days at the beginning, which are the especially sunny times from the last milestone. (They are hard to separate as they overlap.)

Demanding

- Escalates about a week in, to a child who is more demanding
- Whiny
- Meltdowns
- Wants you all day
- Stall at bedtime
- At bedtime, they might say they have to go potty or say they are hungry. But they don't eat when you get them food.
- Won't let you leave at bedtime, often up until midnight

No Sense of How Far Away Things Are or How Long Things Take

- They have no sense of how far away things are. They might try to grab the moon.
- This is cute and innocent. It might, however, cause problems when they try to pour a drink and it spills all over.
- Or they put lipstick all over the bottom of their mouth
- If you ask them their sad part of the day, they might answer with something that happened weeks ago.

Disoriented, Confused

- More towards the intense period, they become disoriented and confused.
- They may have just had a toy, but they think you put it away. They keep asking you to get it, even though it is already out, and they should know it's out.
- They might spill a drink or bite into juicy food, creating a mess, then run around, oblivious to the mess, and take a spill.
- Easily falls off of chairs

In Everything, Bossy

- Wants to be “in” everything, such as medicine and other items that they shouldn’t be in
- You might have trouble convincing them they can’t have diaper paste or prescription medicine.
- You might not be able to move without bumping into them.
- The desire to do everything and make messes can be over-the-top frustrating with some children.
- Want to “help” do everything
- Won’t accept “No” as an answer
- Becomes a back-seat driver, dictating what street they want you to go down

Most Intense

- This one hits like a truck. The intense part starts off right away potentially with spills, accidents, clumsiness, clinginess, confusion and/or whining. They also might demand to stay up really late. However, it noticeably dissipates pretty quickly.

New Abilities Summary

- They’ve been getting good at seeing how things work and what plans are being made. Now they take their hand at predicting what might happen next. It’s wild and inaccurate at first.

Imaginative Predictions

- They are able to predict what next event happens or make a logical guess about what caused something, but in a highly imaginative way.
- This starts right at the beginning of this milestone and follows a clear head shape change.
- They wonder if the person jiggling the door know “is a monster!!!!”
- Their stuffed animals might now be “scared of ghosts.”
- They might make a guess of what will happen next like “Daddy will be back soon.”
- Asks “did you mean?” as they project thoughts about what wasn’t said, but what might have been said
- May understand that food goes into your belly (where you can’t see it)
- May love mystery stories (“who done it?” stories) already
- Might love to initiate and Hide and Seek, as the seeker. They are good at guessing where you are now.

Predictive Solutions

- They like to openly talk about what solutions match what problems. They think of the problem, talk about it, and pick a good tool or action. The problems are not just things happening right now but might happen.
- They might pick up the two utensils at dinner and say, “Fork or spoon? Which one should I choose?”
- They might like to play around with picking the wrong tool for a job, e.g., brushes your hair with a book.
- They might love giving you turn by turn directions to get to the grocery store.
- They might demand you go a different way than usual when driving in your car.
- They may love baking cookies or making a smoothie and seeing how the individual steps do lead to cookies or a smoothie.

- They are more trusting that, say, at a grocery store, you indeed put your stuff on the conveyor belt and pay for them. As such, they are willing to give up a toy and wait for this process to unfold, as they know the stuff will be handed back to them.
- They might match their understanding of what is going on to what you do. When arriving at a restaurant, they are “so excited to eat!” When they have a blanket on, they are “so excited to be warm!” They might state this in weird ways, but when you probe them, all they are doing is matching the theoretical problem to the solution.
- They come up with solutions outside of the paradigm entirely. If you ask them if they made the right or wrong choice, they might smile, “Um ... I made the HAPPY choice!”
- They might like a book in which you pick the right tool for a job. They might like “Are You My Mother?” Which of these animals is the bird’s mother?

Flexible and Creative in Their Imagination

- They are more flexible and creative in their imaginative play.
- For instance, they put balls on a DUPLO truck and says they are wheels.
- They might make up things in their free play like a toy chest needs a “key” to be opened.
- Their stuffed animals may now also “play with toys.”
- Might love to put on plays that they act in, often simple stories like *The Gingerbread Man*. They may be able to put the entire story on themselves.

More Mental Connections, Often Across Time

- Recalls past events and makes connections
- For instance, a character in a book rescued someone just like their dad rescued them in a pool (which happened in the past)
- They sort their toys at one level of abstraction higher. They might line up all “race cars” (ready to race) and all “spectators” (non-race cars like tow trucks and police cars) on the side (ready to watch). All of these things have “x” in common and these others have “y.”
- Might notice that a toy train rolled over a carpet and then left some marks
- Reminds you of something you promised earlier

Emotional Control

- They are much more willing to adhere to requests, even if against their own desire at the time, e.g., please don’t get into that pool you are filling up with water.
- They no longer chase you out of the house if you leave. If they walk you to the door, it’s just because they wanted to say bye.
- Doesn’t just understand but is fully committed to following principles, e.g., “Green means Go” or take their shoes off when you get in the house
- Better emotional control, can collect themselves after they fall
- Noticeable better control over their body, don’t fall as much
- Can easily now say “I’m sorry” and “Thank you” even when they are feeling bashful or uneasy.
- Accepting of “No” as an answer
- Better at playing cooperative games where players take turns

Interested in Small Things

- Interested in small details, such as where tiny mice are in their favorite story

- Or that the smallest speck of dirt from a spill needs cleaned up

Manipulates Their Eyes

- They might like to squint their eyes and points to things
- They might close one eye such that the other can focus on something further away.
- Or maybe likes to look at things through, such as a cardboard tube
- Or they purposely try to make their eyes be a certain way, such as copying your eyes as you pose for a selfie

Three Year Old Milestone 1A—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.
- More aware that you are making a “pizza!” as opposed to just putting pepperoni on dough
- 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
- Can follow along with instructions in picture format with some assistance. You might lay out LEGO pieces on the instruction that comes with them, and they can then assemble them by themselves.
- 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.)
- 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.

- 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.
- They anticipate better how others might feel, “I’m so excited for him!” “I am so scared for him!”
- 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.
- 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.

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.
- 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.
- Notices patterns in clouds
- Can follow patterns (such as from a pattern to a puzzle) 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

Finds Patterns in Related Events

- 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.”
- 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.

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.

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?
- In the late twos, they picked the right tool for the job. They picked a feather duster, not a hammer, to clean a dirty area. Now they see a cabinet is dirty and go get the duster
- 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 1B—Recollection

Starts: 3.0.1

Most Intense: 3.0.2 until 3.0.3

Ends: 3.0.3 plus a few days

Irritable Period Summary

- 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.

Bossy, Possessive, Rigid, Touchy

- Wants their own way
- 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
- Grumpy at certain parts of the day but not others, e.g., morning or night
- Their bossiness, if they are bossy, is more about in-the-moment things and directed inwards. It is over things that affect them and wanting them to go a certain way.
- In the next milestones, their bossiness becomes directed more outwards. It becomes 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—as a shock, of course.

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.

- If you 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, who move around more fluidly.

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
- These are great clues to your child's core personality and how they perceive the world.
- A feelings-oriented child may be perceptive about the quirky things that define other's personalities, e.g., distinctive things their mom or dad say or when their dad says an inadvertent swear word (whoops!).
- A thinking-oriented child may become more perceptive and place emphasis on mechanical things, "This tunnel will protect us from the rain!"
- More capable of finding a specific object 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.
- If you present a new story to them, they can understand it and retell it, over and over, pretty well.
- 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 2—Deliberate Role Playing and 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

Possessive

- Possessive of toys or things that are “theirs”
- Whiny

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

- They 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 get overwhelmed in a situation where things move a lot, such as older kids playing basketball in a gym.
- 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. This may happen because things “float” around senselessly in their mind right now.
- 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.

Fear of Abandonment

- Doesn't want to leave primary caregiver (fear of abandonment)
- May become scared of any other adult that is not the primary caregiver

Sleep and Physical Issues

- Falls asleep at weird times of the day
- May wake up at night upset
- 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.

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., pretends to be a bear, a particular character, etc.
- They can be involved in short-term planning, such as making a grocery list.
- As is typical of most milestones, they both go in and out: they apply chosen ways of being to themselves (role play) and make more deliberate choices in their outward reality (short-term planning).

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.
- They might say they are a particular character from a favorite story and carry out an 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 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.
- 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.
- 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 milestone, 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” on their own.
- Can understand, “If you clean your room, you’ll get a lollipop.”
- 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 make up 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 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.
- Very polite. May ask permission before doing anything (the opposite of rude)
- That they can actually plan different courses of action 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.

Three Year Old Milestone 3A—Unconventional Application of Principles

Starts: Hits like a Mack Truck somewhere between 3.1.2 and 3.1.4

Most Intense: The beginning is intense and throughout.

Ends: Shy of 3.2.0 but bleeds into next one

Irritable Period Summary

- This hits like a Mack Truck somewhere between 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 show other mild behaviors.
- These milestones over the next few weeks come rapidly and are hard to pin down.

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.
- They might 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.
- They might have 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.
- They might 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. They are applying new ways of doing things. They are nervous about which one is right. This is the very first subtle sign that they feel authentic, self-initiated guilt (an evaluation of themselves and their action).
- They might cry in a way that it seems like the world isn't fair to them.

- 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.
- They made flexible choices in the last milestone. Now they evaluate them—sometimes inducing shame even.
- A better merging of fantasy play to the current reality of what is going on

Unconventional and Flexible Ideas, Applied

- Tries out unconventional things for the sake of it.
- This reveals your child's personality greatly. What boundary are they pushing?
- Are they 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 with a sibling, 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 similarly 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 the routine without any help
- May understand more complex road signs and what they mean, e.g., curvy roads ahead

Evaluates Their Own Solutions

- They evaluate 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
- Might keep trying new things to get a desired outcome, such as making you laugh

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 outer space and pretend to do this.
- Perhaps cheekily pretends to “low crawl” up to where you are sitting and eating—so they can steal your food
- 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 herself is not bad.
- They 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 3B—Persistent (if Rigid) Application of Principles

Starts: 3.2.0

Most Intense: Intense for a few days towards the beginning.

Ends: 3.2.2

Irritable Period Summary

A “Rules Enforcer” or Comforter

- Meltdowns when things don’t go the way they think they “should” be done
- Wants other children to follow the “rules” and gets mad when they don’t. For instance, if another child doesn’t have their seatbelt buckled in a cart at the grocery store.
- Enforcer of the rules but breaks those very rules in enforcing them, such as yells at others to “be quiet” while being loud
- Or perhaps opposite of being rude and aggressive, they enforce what is “right” by taking on the role of comforter. They may go around taking care of “sick” stuffed animals.

Most Intense

- Gets sad or cries easily, doesn’t want you to leave them, demanding of your time, demands others follow the “rules”

New Abilities Summary

- This one is marked by an insistence on persistently applying abstract knowledge or principles to real life situations. They get more aggressive and serious about it at this one.

Insists on the Abstract Matching the Current Situation

- The abstract idea absolutely has to match the current reality now. If you make a “Three waffle sandwich,” it now must have three waffles.
- They use symbolic objects the correct way at all times. If they see a toy crown, they are guaranteed to try to put it on your head.
- That they expect persistent application of rules explains why they might get so upset during the irritable period when their brother isn’t buckled properly in a grocery cart

Wants to Make an Ideal the Reality

- The abstract MUST match the reality starting at this one. They are thus willing to work towards that.
- From my notes about my first, “What I have noticed is a genuine desire to do what is right. If I ask him to do something, he is focused on it, clearly trying to work towards the end of what I asked him to do, even if difficult.”
- A great activity now is to ask them to set up an activity for another child, such as gathering up objects that are the shape of a cylinder so their baby sister can explore this sensory box. They will persist at this and find objects you yourself never thought of.
- They may do this on their own, anyway, such as setting up a “bedroom” or “play area” for their sibling.
- Comforts other people on their own initiative; may go around giving everyone a drink, takes care of their “sick” stuffed animals.
- Or they might comfort their baby sister, “I know, baby, I know.”

- Or they might try to make people laugh to cheer them up.
- They might take a more aggressive role in conflict resolution. They might adorably “karate chop” someone who won’t stop fighting someone else. Or they might be bossy. Every child is different.
- They are very likely to apologize quickly upon realizing they hurt someone.
- When they learn that some others are less fortunate, say that some people are illiterate, they are aghast. On their own, they offer, “I know! We can teach them how to read!” This is even if they personally don’t know how to read.
- They may try to arrange things the way they want them. They might demand you put on a dress “so you can be beautiful.” Or they might want to cut your nails.
- Won’t let you help them with things, such as putting on their seatbelt
- They can do more physical things that require a bit more persistence and even trust in one’s own body. They might have an easier time floating in the water, riding a tricycle, or doing a somersault.

Can Use Abstract Information and Apply It

- Understands how to play a card or board game such as *Richard Scarry’s Busytown*
- May be able to read a map such as to know where they are going
- Willingly submits to how things are meant to be done, even if it goes against what they might think is fun
- For instance, they tear apart a gingerbread house to eat it after it’s made, as this was the purpose of building it (whereas before they wouldn’t have wanted to destroy their creation).
- Obeys requests better, such as “no hitting”

Three Year Old Milestone 4—Intentional Imaging

Starts: 3.2.3

Most Intense: 3.2.3 until 3.2.4

Ends: Shy of 3.3.0

Irritable Period Summary

Sleep Disturbances and Nightmares

- May fall asleep during the day at random times
- Stalls at bedtime (bedtime may be up to 2 hours) or simply stays up late
- 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.
- 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
- 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.

“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

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
- Hates that things pass them by too quickly when driving in a vehicle
- May be overwhelmed by something overly fantastical, such as a person dressed up as a character

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”

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

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.
- They also remember what was said and use it later.
- 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. They then 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
- Asks what others are thinking about or reading about

Notices Richer Details of the Present

- They notice yet more complex details of their surroundings or environment.
- 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.
- May act out the characters in their plays with incredible detail, such as collapsing, “and then the Prince fell into DESPAIR.”
- 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
- 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. Successful, veteran caregivers often understand the power of telling stories in getting children to cooperate. This is also 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.
- 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*.
- 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.
- Notices the overall environment. May come up with insightful life observations like, “Mommy, Daddy, and my brother make me happy when I am sad.”
- 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 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.”

Application of an Ideal to Themselves

- They pick a way to *be* now.
- They have greater self-awareness. If they are ordering others to be quiet, they realize maybe they should be quiet, too.

- They might force this ideal behavior on others. “Henry, be quiet!”
- May make up a character, such as a silly, wayward chicken, and persist at it, as they walk crazily all around, bokking. It is very funny.
- They are very deliberate, even confident and cocky, in how they adopt personas like this.
- If you say something like, “Emily is..,” they complete your sentence for you, “...smart.”
- More quick and nimble

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.

Three Year Old Milestone 5A—Brings Things Close and Booms Things Away

Starts: 3.3.0

Most Intense: Starts a few days in and lasts 4 or 5 days

Ends: Bleeds into the next one

Irritable Period Summary

Starts out Subtly and Then They Get Demanding

- Crashes into you with their tricycle
- Wants to make sure loved ones “get down safely” on the stairs
- You might be able to tell this one is about to start when they start thinking about how to magically move things, such as the cars in the traffic in front of you need to magically “boom away” so your car can move again.
- Then they get demanding throughout the day.

Sleep

- Falls asleep in the day

Most Intense

- A few days in, they might get very demanding, all day. It lasts a few days and dissipates.

New Abilities Summary

Brings Things Closer to or Further Away From Them

- 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 line.
- 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 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.
- They recognize others have to be looking in a particular direction to see something. 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 5A and 5B 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 with boats in
- Works longer at creating something, such as making a structure out of some kind of toy, making it match the picture shown on the box the toy came 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
- May, as such, better anticipate a future event like Santa coming
- 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.

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. They, however, don't quite 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 5B—Strategies

Starts: 3.3.1

Most Intense: 3.3.2 until 3.3.3

Ends: 3.3.3

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.

Meltdowns and “Misbehavior” Over Which Direction To Go

- Purposely goes the wrong way when walking around; such choices interest them intensely now
- Major meltdown when you go somewhere, say to the bathroom at a restaurant, without them
- You were supposed to sit THERE not here. You were supposed to push the train BACKWARDS not forwards.
- Major meltdowns about where they want to go, such as wanting to go to a cookie store when you say no
- 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?

Demanding

- Grabs you to come see the stuff they are doing a lot
- May want you to be right next to them all day.
- Highly demanding of your attention
- Stalls at bedtime

Most Intense

- Can see demanding or belligerent behavior

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 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, particularly over things that routinely happen. Their sense of patterns over time is growing.

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.

- They are 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 the next milestone.)
- Understands what happened a few days ago really well. They can recall events from the day or past day 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.
- Announces "how much fun!" they have with other children and enthusiastically exclaims, "I love you so much!"
- They might no longer need pictures in books when reading. They might sit far away from you and just listen. Their ability to persistently notice what is going on, conjure up images, and follow along in their mind has greatly grown in the last milestones.

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!"
- Figures out complicated 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
- Can accept advice about on-the-spot strategic decisions, such as "Walking this way is better than another way to get somewhere."
- 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.
- They might have a good strategy to figure something out. For instance, you hand them a sheet with X number of things, which are numbered. To figure out how many X there are, instead of counting, they look for the largest number.

Three Year Old Milestone 6—Specific 3-D Maneuvering

Starts: After 3.3.3

Most Intense: Very intense for up to one week at the beginning

Ends: 3.4.0

Irritable Period Summary

Nightmares and Physical Changes

- 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 wake up on and off throughout the night (suggests nightmares).
- Might stall at bedtime
- Might mentally zone out
- 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.
- Noticeably bigger and stronger
- More prone to illness or may have a runny nose with no other symptoms

Highly Demanding

- Demands you all throughout the day, to see what they are doing
- You might have to sit right next to them, as they turn your head for you to look at what they want you to look at.
- This can get pretty frustrating. You might not be able to get anything done all morning.

Sensitive

- Very sensitive and may cry easily over something small, e.g., over a book dropping on the floor or if they stepped on a toy.

Persistent and Aggressive in Getting What They Want

- They might scream, cry, whine, or otherwise *persist intensely* when they don't get their own way. For instance, they scream if they can't have your attention, because you are talking to a doctor.
- Orders others to be quiet, stop talking, or go away
- They can be very aggressive about getting you to do what they want. You might get physically pinned down as they demand you do what they want.
- They might chase who they want around, such as a friend or an adult whose company they enjoy.

A Bit Manipulative

- 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.
- 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
- They might pick fights with others. They might especially pick on younger siblings.

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. If a baby is crying, they might 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.
- Might be super upset that they can't read, when they've never been taught or even asked to

Most Intense

- Intense nightmares, in which they get up on and off throughout the night, might start this milestone. Then they might get demanding and even aggressive in getting what they want.

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.
- 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.
- Might think they can "Boom hurricanes away!"
- 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 suggests their understanding of "people need to be looking in one direction" or "someone talks and the other listens" is still a bit off.

Practical Ability to Bridge Space Between Objects

- They get practical about bridging space between two objects.
- They might become interested in string. They use it to build "bridges" between things.
- In their fantasy play, they might get specific. They might build a "hose" to bring water "close" (their word) to a "fire."
- Their plays might also involve telling character to "wait" or "I'll come help you!"
- They might handily figure out to get stools or chairs to get themselves higher to reach things.
- You of course are their favorite object. They might physically bring you to them or move your head to see them.
- Banging things together of course may be fun
- They might get very aggressive about bridging space. They get a running start and say "whooooosh!" as they jump and stick the landing.
- They might be really good at something like leveling overheaped flour in a dry measuring cup with the flat side of a knife.
- They persist at finding a very specific thing, such as "F" on a keyboard or anything else at their current ability level.
- 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.
- They also have some lighthearted fears about "monster chasing them!!"

Solves for the Next X in a Series

- They are much better about going to exactly x on any continuum. They can solve for the next x in a series of things [1,2,3...] ... what's next?
- 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.
- 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
- 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.

Builds Deliberate, Specific Patterns

- They build thing in a more orderly way.
- They might put colors in rainbow order.
- They might very deliberately and specifically build a flower arrangement, "The FIRST flower is going to be. The SECOND flower is going to be."
- Bringing a "hose" to a "fire" in fantasy play is also an example of being specific and deliberate in fantasy play.
- They get specific about time on a more macro scale: they understand something was X days or Y weeks ago.
- Very good at adding, e.g., five toes on one foot and the other make TEN!!!
- Love to make up nonsense words or type out nonsense words. Who says letters have to follow prescribed order? They are in the driver's seat now!
- 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.

Deductive Reasoning About What's Not Said

- They also start to understand what was *not* said.
- 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 if you point out one way isn't working, on their own they think, "Ok, let's try another way then."

Other

- More socially independent, may make friends spontaneously with children they don't know

Three Year Old Milestone 7—Compares and Uses Sets of Knowledge

Starts: 3.4.1

Most Intense: A few days between 3.4.1 and 3.4.2

Ends: Right after the intense period

Irritable Period Summary

Highly Demanding

- Wants you to again see everything they are doing or do things with them
- They might want you to sit RIGHT next to them.
- Gets mad if you walk away from them
- All this can get extremely frustrating.

Unexplainable Meltdowns, Paralyzed

- They can be like a “hair trigger” with their meltdowns.
- Might have a meltdown even though it seems like they have everything they could ever want
- Might become paralyzed. They might cry that a door is not opened and won’t open it, even though they can open a door.
- 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.

Sleep

- Might sleep a lot

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. Or hair trigger meltdowns, in which you can’t figure out what they want. You may very well get to your wit’s end.

New Abilities Summary

Notices and Compares Sets of Knowledge

- Notices patterns of behavior on their own. For instance, if they see it on TV or at an exhibit, “Mommy, bats sleep too!” Humans sleep. And bats sleep. Neat.
- May listen to lengthy explanation about history, government, etc.
- Might repeat words that others say
- Curls up to older children to learn from them
- Cheers for other children
- They might make their stuffed animals do things they do. For instance, a large stuffed monkey sits at a table and has breakfast.
- Loves comparing outcomes, such as racing two toy cars down a track
- They now get into “racing” big time. They might race two cars or race other children to your car or van.
- 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 sets of knowledge (and eventually 3-D spaces) to each other. In a few months, they will realize they don't have to do everything in a wash, rinse, 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.

Mentally Categorizes Things and Navigates/Reasons with Them

- 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."
- It's not just that they are categorizing things. They are using them to navigate: *go* to the page with X, Y, and Z.
- Might actively tell you, "I noticed I had to pee so I went to the potty."
- They now don't just come up with solutions. They verbalize them and reason them out. 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.
- Might 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.
- This is the first sign of the "periscope" that they develop in their mid- to late threes. It categorizes data and uses it to navigate.

In a "Driver" Role

- In fantasy play, they may want to play driver, inspector, or otherwise someone in charge.
- They may love to pretend to be a driver of a vehicle such as a tank (or boat) while making heroic decisions for it as they move it around on a play map.
- May literally want to pretend they are driving your vehicle
- They might like the task of inspecting things, such as seeing if the eggs in a carton are cracked or not. This is also comparison of knowledge sets: there is the standard—the ideal egg—compared to the reality, the carton of eggs in front of them.
- 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
- 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!"

Three Year Old Milestone 8A — Creative Rearrangements

Starts: One week before 3.5.0

Most Intense: The whole thing is hard but one week starting just before or at 3.5.1 is especially intense.

Ends: Shy of 3.5.2

Irritable Period Summary

Fears

- Fears show up big time at this one.
- Given their fantastical awareness of 3-D objects, in which they think things can magically shrink, they might have related fears, such as that they or a large toy will go down a bathtub drain or that their brother will spontaneously turn into a “bad guy.”
- These fears may make them scared to do things like go down the stairs or get into the bathtub.
- With their heightened awareness of how far away things are, they might have an unusually heightened fear of cars hitting them when in parking lots.
- You might want them to get out of the van, but they feel unsafe. But, they offer to wait in another (specific) part of the van while you get their sibling out.
- Gets mad at you a lot. Maybe because you can't reach up and get an airplane for them.
- Fear of “monsters chasing them”

Demanding

- *Demands* your attention, to do things with them or watch them do things
- Gets mad when you walk away
- Might have instant, whiny meltdowns
- Might interrupt you a lot (to get your attention)
- Does not want to separate from their primary caregiver, such as if you leave them with a babysitter or walk away
- Wants their lovey (a blanket or stuffed animal used for comfort)

Particular

- They want a particular box of waffles to get a waffle from, a particular TV episode, or a particular vitamin.
- Decision paralysis. They want a very particular TV show or movie but won't pick which one.
- Gets mad that they can't decide how a movie should end
- Gets mad they weren't the one to turn the lights off in the room

Bossy, Controlling, Aggressive

- Some children are more prone to whining and some towards aggression, yet others a mixture of both.
- 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.
- They 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 they kick things and throw things (probably more likely of boys). Playfully wrestling with them helps.
- 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 but can be very, very trying.
- 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)

“Rearranges” Things

- May open all the mini-blinds
- 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

Physical Accidents and Changes

- You can somewhat expect some big accident where they fall or slip on something during the intense part of this milestone.
- It is 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.
- Both my daughter and youngest son did this exactly 1,252 days from their due date. This is just shy of 3.5.1. It's an especially difficult time.
- 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.
- Coinciding with this increase in aggression and accidents 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.
- They might have a larger need for sleep, might seem very tired yet won't sleep
- May stay up late, talking to themselves in bed

First Sense of “Forever”

- 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.

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

Specific About Spatial and Other Awareness

- 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 is 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.
- Very specific in labeling what they are doing, e.g., “I’m on the SIXTH step!”
- Very specific in categorizing things, e.g., octopus have EIGHT legs and crabs have SIX
- 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?

Integrates Sets of Knowledge

- They’ve been noticing entire knowledge sets and how they relate. Now they integrate them together.
- They might they make 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.
- 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.

Physically Puts Together Related Things

- They go and gather things that strike them as similar.
- 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. It’s that they’ll go get the resource to compare the two things.
- Another example: They may learn to read a word such as “pig.” Later, they find another book that they remembered had “pig” in it, so they can read it to you or a different person.
- 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.

Creatively Mixes and Matches Objects

- They come up with creative ideas by mashing two different things or ideas 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 come up with a brand-new smoothie, such as a “Chocolate Smoothie.” It’s brilliant, really.
- 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 might make up other games where they mix and match ideas/objects, such as playing hide and seek with a set of toy animals

Puts Smaller Bits of Something into Something Bigger

- The value of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts now.
- 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.”
- They may be more intellectual about putting smaller parts into a bigger skill. They may put 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.”
- If you try spelling things so they avoid knowing what you are talking about, the gig is up. They know “p-a-r-k” means “park.”
- Letting them play with smaller pieces to make something bigger can really unleash creativity. While you may have some levers, catapults, bolts, nuts, pulleys, and slides to make specifically some simple machines, they turn it into “boats,” steering wheels, trucks, and upside down slides in which “nets” catch marbles. They want to make things safer, more novel, bigger, faster.
- 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.
- As they are starting to chunk up things into a whole, they may start to get pickier as well. They want a very particular episode of a TV show, not just any.

Inserts Themselves into Situations More

- Just as they physically gather objects together, they also throw themselves into situations more.
- They’ll play the game their older siblings are playing.
- Wrestles with dad more
- Strongly interested in animals, such as pigeons in the park, likely to chase them
- May love to help out with younger children

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!”

Over Ambitious

- 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.
- Similar to wanting to control how movies to end, they are overly ambitious in how creative they can be or what they have control over.

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 8B—Personal Reflection

Starts: 3.5.3

Most Intense: A few days somewhere between 3.5.3 and 3.5.4

Ends: 3.6.0

Irritable Period Summary

- This again bleeds from the last one. You may notice this one starting because they become much more interested in others and where they fit in (adored, rejected?)

Destructive and Demanding

- Becomes a “mini tornado” again: 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 open all of the cabinet doors. (Prepare your house and heart for this! It can be maddening—or cute—just depends on the situation.)
- May be demanding and in a way where they gather up many things to bring to you and do things with

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 they 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 staircases.
- 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.

New Abilities Summary

- They throw themselves into the middle of more situations and figure things out on the spot well, as they did in 8A. 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.

Physically Sturdier and Manipulates Objects Handily

- 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.
- 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 control and turning on the TV.

Interest in Other People

How this plays out depends on your child:

- They may love to chat up strangers while out, such as the grocery store.
- They may want to make sure their younger siblings learn just like they do.
- They may be fascinated by children going fast on a bike.
- Can take a noticeably greater interest in art, especially of children

- May ask questions about others. Like, “What do zombies eat?”
- 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.
- 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: they 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).

Inserts Themselves into Others More

- 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. What better way to make friends than to notice you both are wearing red shirts?
- Teaches others (e.g., grandma) what they know
- May be very protective of younger siblings
- 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!”
- Very much understands 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 ask to do it and stay with it.
- They continue to integrate, compare, and gather. They might see a character with goggles on and go get their own. But now they really ham it up big time.
- They may want to get things for you. They want to be the one to get baby wipes for the baby.

Cautious, Hesitant, Wants to Get Things Right

- As they insert themselves into situations more, they want to get it right.
- Likely to want to watch you do something first, such as color, rather than do it themselves
- May try to get words exactly right. For dolphin, they try "DO-FIN" "DAH-FIN" "DOLL. FIN."
- They transfer risk. Instead of looking over a high place, they might ask a stuffed animal to first.
- Quite scared to go down a scary set of stairs
- 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.

Sensitivity to Rejection (or Expects Adoration)

- 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!”
- May be more painfully aware when they are socially left out. For instance, at a dancing class, they are asked to pair up with a friend, and they are the odd one out.

- 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 broke something, so you can help them fix it.
- Not all children will be sensitive to rejection. Some fully expect adoration. They gush when they meet a new friend and see them again, “Oh! I get to see you again!”

Three Year Old Milestone 9—Deductive Reasoning Across Time

Starts: 3.6.1

Most Intense: 4 or 5 days in between 3.6.1 and 3.6.2

Ends: 3.6.2

Irritable Period Summary

- It starts off mild. They might just want to be by you. It builds to a child who is:

Possessive

- Very possessive. Another child can go get any toy whatsoever and they are mad the other child has it.
- Screams or has a meltdown when they can't have their primary caregiver, or if primary caregiver leaves their side suddenly
- Orders you to sit and watch them play, for activity after activity

Bossy. Also Aggressive, but Towards the End of Being Bossy

- They may get bossy. How they do it depends on their personality:
- If they are otherwise easygoing, their bossiness in their sweet little kid advice can be adorable.
- They tell people they are doing things all wrong. They might give a lesson to young sibling on PLACING things not THROWING things.
- Might throw things, as if to experiment
- May playfully hit and kick adults

High Propensity for Shame

- In the last milestone, they realized they really can be responsible for a situation going poorly, and, thus, developed the potential for shame. This (might) show up in a big way now.
- They might get 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 something, say the TV 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

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, the same threat of 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 in the middle of the night

Most Intense

- The exact behaviors depend on the child, but they are indeed intense during the intense period. Perhaps big meltdowns, highly possessive, whiny, 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?”
- Very good at remembering things from the past, such as how to play games
- They can think into the future, such as thinking about what they want from Santa.
- 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, so they say, “Oh, I’ll have 6!”

Has Something in Mind and Does 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 persist with the idea until it’s done.
- They might order you to sit, as they go and get some LEGO pieces, to act out a play they thought up. In the play, you and they sit together while they make “coffee” out of the LEGO pieces, complete with kitchen, etc., and you drink coffee together. Also, your favorite thing to do, which they can observe anyway, is drink coffee.
- In addition, they want you to read book after book to them, look at animals, and practice counting.
- Or they might turn into a mini-tornado, rearranging everything in your house. They might move a garbage can from one room to another (“It’s where it belongs!”); take a fitted sheet off of a bed and try to put a flat sheet on (“This is the right one”); move all of the night lights around; get many flower vases out to make different flower arrangements, put strange things in them, like coffee stirrers; get out creative toys and build the structure as based on the instructions or pictures on the box that comes with it; and drag their stool out and made a piece of toast on their own for the first time ever.
- They might also do something quite athletic and exuberant now, like ride a bike for the first time or go sliding down a hammock.

Plans Across Time

- 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. They want a new bridge or hill for their toy train set. They definitely have something in mind for it.
- May save up their own money to buy a toy they want
- May be really good at completing jobs from a list of things to do.
- Completely committed to doing something like decorating a Christmas tree

Mentally Precise

- It’s as if they can hold onto 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
- 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

- 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 solidified in their mind.
- Likes to read (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 Proficient with Their Hands

- 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 disc in, and operating a few buttons on the remote and television
- Might pull up a stool and make toast—all on their own
- May want to put on their own seatbelt
- Better use of their hands, e.g., better able to catch a ball

Fluid, Flexible, and Proactive

- Whereas before they were cautious and deliberate in in-the-moment situations, now they are fluid and proactive.
- 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.
- They might dramatically carry in the heavy grocery bags to the kitchen and announce they are a “Big strong man!!”
- 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
- Challenges adults. Dad might say “Diesel [the fuel] dropped in price,” and they challenge him, “No, Diesel [from Thomas the Train] dropped jobi logs!” Diesel is the name of one of the trains, who did indeed drop jobi logs. They need information in their mind about past events to challenge such things in the now.
- Or they admonish their dad that he said, “Bad words.” What were they? He said, “No doughnuts.”

Physical Changes

- Hands and feet might get bigger

Three Year Old Milestone 10A—Enormous 3-D Imagination

Starts: A little after 3.6.2. It can be very mild or intense depending on the child.

Most Intense: For a week around 3.7.0

Ends: 3.7.1

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, Rigid, Stubborn

- You have to do everything as they want.
- 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.
- When they order you to dance, you’ll instinctively comply.
- 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.
- They want to be the one to do nearly everything.
- 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.
- 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.

Hard on Themselves

- If they can’t get something to work right, they may get mopey and hard on themselves about it.
- Or they get very whiny and upset when they can’t make things go the way they want

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 concept, 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

- They 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 imagine having a party on the moon.

- They might create new stories with this 3-D awareness. They might hear someone needs to go to outer space, so they urgently offer to make a “rocket” out of wood blocks.

Likes to Hear or Create Larger 3-D Scenes

- They might 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, in intricate detail.
- Depending on their personality, they may want to be involved in everything and they have a very specific process to do it. They want to be the ones 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.)
- They might create elaborate scenes, with a bit of a story, with their blocks or LEGO pieces. The two of you, represented by something such as a LEGO, are trapped in a fence.
- A renewed interest in building 3-D shapes out of various objects, such as magnet shapes or wooden blocks

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 might offer to their toy cars that they can 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?”

Loves a Knowledge-Based Adventure

- By “knowledge-based adventure,” I mean something where they are given a bit of information and then can go do something or solve something.
- An example might be a treasure map they are given, which helps them find a treasure. They might take this map with them the rest of the night and next day. It is an important thing, indeed.
- Or they might love something like the “Wilderness Explorers” at Disney’s Animal Kingdom. In this, you get a map with places to go visit and do things at, getting a stamp at each.
- Loves to read or at least pretend to. It seems to make them feel big and important.

A Very Fluid, Robust, Joyful 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!”
- Complete strangers might get the biggest kick out of how “full of life” your child is right now.

Focused and Committed

- 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 might take note of how very careful they are being in coloring and they might surprise you with how long they stick with it.
- They easily string Pony beads on shoestring (to make “garland”).
- They broom the floor, the walls, and the ceiling.

Follows Requests for a Longer Amount of Time

- They obey requests better and longer. 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 tell them “No hitting,” and they comply for the rest of the afternoon or evening.
- Or if you make cookies for Santa, they are relentless that they are for Santa and that no one eats them.

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.
- Thinks about the feelings of others
- They are perceptive and inquisitive. If you are staring into space, they might ask, “Mommy, what’s wrong?”
- After someone explains perhaps deep breathing or resting to a child, they copy it and say, “I do this to calm down and not be an angry brother.”

Other

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

Three Year Old Milestone 10B—Segmented Knowledge

Starts: 3.7.2 or shy of

Most Intense: From shy of 3.7.3 until one week later

Ends: 3.8.0

Irritable Period Summary

Easily Has Meltdowns, Sensitive, Clingy

- 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
- May easily have meltdowns over the slightest of things
- Highly sensitive to when they have been hurt or perceive they were wronged
- 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, than the activity and ask for them and use them.
- Your entire kitchen might—might—get covered in string (or tape, etc.)

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

- They want outright contradictory things and can be insufferably choosy.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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."

Sleep Issues

- May wake up the in the middle of the night from nightmares

New Abilities Summary

Large, 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
- 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."
- 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.
- Very technically accurate, even if contradictory. For example, "You just hit your brother." "No, I hit his TOE," or any other similar example
- 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 ... ?" Because they know.
- Asks curious, pointed questions like, "Do peperoni have a backbone?"
- 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.

High-Level Overview of Situations

- 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 home today? Because if not, they won't set a plate for him.
- 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 may act out funny things based on the circumstance of the situation. They see you and they are just waking up from a nap. So they re-enact a scene from Disney's *Frozen* when Anna just woke up, "The sky's awake! So I'm awake!"
- May ask you what the rules are. The three rules are x, y, z. Is n the "fourth rule"?
- They might ask you, "How is it going, Mom?" What's up, Mom? Right now, how are you feeling?

If/Then Logic

- With their higher-level overview and being able to segment knowledge into chunks, they draw more advanced conclusions, using if/then logic.
- 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.
- Indeed, set a breakfast plate out for dad if he's home, but not if he's not home. This is if/then logic.
- Asks intelligent questions based on observed facts with some logical conclusions. "Does the sun use electricity since it's so bright?"
- With some assists, they can play "Twenty 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 Twenty

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.

Breaks Traditional Routines

- Given their advanced thinking, they are likely to break traditional routines now. They see the whole situation. And they question things.
- If you do something day after day, they now challenge if it has to keep going that same way.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- 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.

Absorbs and Applies New Knowledge Quickly

- Very handily remembers information told to them, day after day. They are an utter vacuum for knowledge.
- They can apply what they know to real world situations handily.
- After reading a book with activity ideas, they immediately want to go try them out.
- If you tell them about a surprise party for someone, sometime after this, they may innocently and happily go tell the person.
- 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."
- Can learn new sight words quickly
- 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.

Does Things with Their Hands

They love to do things with their hands. They might:

- Send marbles down a Marble Run
- Cut paper
- Paint with watercolors
- 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
- Write letters nicely, put on makeup with impressive ability, or operate the remote better
- Play with string and other materials to make “bridges”
- Tie things up
- Be interested in simple machines and how things move (both boys and girls may show this)

Three Year Old Milestone 11A—Themes

Starts: 3.8.1

Most Intense: 3.8.2 for just a few days

Ends: 3.8.3

Irritable Period Summary

Extremely Particular and Picky

- They want a very exact episode of a TV show or they want X movie in a series, such as in Star Wars.
- Very picky about which waffle they get out of the box
- Mad you threw away food—that just fell on the floor
- Mad you can't respond to them within milliseconds
- They often have trouble communicating that they want a particular nuance of something, resulting in frustration.

Sleep Issues

- May have nightmares, such as you dropped them off at the donation store
- May want you late at night, suggesting nightmares
- 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.
- May keep getting up at night, wanting to color or work on a skill
- May fall asleep during the day
- During the time of nightmares and sleep disruptions, you may see head shape changes, such as it elongates.

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!"
- They might tell you there are dinosaurs or snakes in their bed.

Most Intense

- A child who is very picky and particular and may have nightmares

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. They are perceptive at first then creative.

Socially Perceptive

- They see more exact details of things that go down around them and, more, what they mean.
- They might 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 might ask you what's wrong, if you seem sullen or are just quiet.

- Able to correctly identify who is at fault over something. Before, they said so, but often got it wrong.
- Totally in awe of a show like *Cirque du Soleil*. Also, they want to go back to that neat show about dinosaurs you went to once.

Eavesdrops

- 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.

Moral Themes

- They can string together specific incidents of action to understand an overall theme.
- They can pick up on the moral theme of longer, more adult stories on their own, e.g., "Luke [Skywalker] has to decide to be a good guy or bad guy."
- They can tell you the plot of the movie, e.g., about Star Wars, "The bad guy tries to steal the robot that looks like a basketball."
- Can relate a book of a movie to the movie itself, such as a book of Wall-E to the movie Wall-E (while watching it)
- Understands the plot of a movie more readily as it progresses
- Begins to prefer movies with real people instead of cartoons

Understands the Rules

- In the last ones, they developed large, detailed knowledge, as well as a better understanding of the overall picture. Now they understand specific rules that govern human behavior.
- 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.
- 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."
- A sense of justice itself. You might now get told that something is "so unfair!"
- May enforce a general way of being on other children, such as how to eat properly at the table

Creatively Does Things with Themes (Details That Make up a Whole)

- 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 draw out the details of what they just learned
- 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
- Their drawing or crafts may now have quite a few details and complex themes, such as colors or shapes that change logically
- 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.

- They might like to count numbers by breaking them up across two hands. They hold 2 fingers up on each hand to make 4. They like doing it like this. They marvel at it. It's like they are thinking, "My own hands can be a calculator!"

Core Personality Integration

- They may not show you this is happening, unless something goes wrong, such as they think you think poorly of them. Thus, they confront you about it. But in that they put things into themes and in that they see other's good and bad traits, they are developing a portrait of themselves, too. Here are some things that may alert you that this is happening:
- They ask you to see their positive attributes and give detailed reasons why they are good, "I put the dishes away, I am kind to my sister ..."
- 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."
- 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.
- Puts on clothes to define themselves, such as a football jersey. They're the winning quarterback.
- May tell story after story. These stories are them grappling with different ideas to decide how to be—until they can hook them onto something. Indeed, like being a winning quarterback.
- Tells you what they love to do, such as sing and dance
- Takes pride in doing things to improve their wellbeing, such as brushing their teeth well or eating healthy food
- Tells you definitively what they are *not* good at, "I'm not strong, so-and-so is strong."
- Or describes others are "big and strong!"
- Gives reasons for why they love someone or may say "And 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."
- Loves when you take notice of what they are doing

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 1,358/1,359 days in development, which is around 3.8.3. 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.

A Beginning Ability to Put Themselves in Another's Shoes

- They recognize that other people have experiences as well. It kicks off a better understanding of someone else's perspective. It often starts with how they treat stuffed animals or dolls.
- Very caring and loving to stuffed or real animals. They may want to take care of and protect them, perhaps tucking them into bed at night with their own special blanket: a baby wash cloth.

- Or they ask you to try to send their favorite stuffed animal to the moon. Imagine watching a beloved stuffed animal being hurled up into the air, suspended for a second as they “look” down at you, then coming back down. Neat, right? I think they “see” such facial expressions better now.
- Coaches and consoles their stuffed animals as if they are real. They might assure their stuffed animals that, “We would never leave you in the van. We would never leave you on top of a tree.”
- 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.”
- Keenly aware that someone else is dizzy, may try to make others dizzy
- They are in awe that they are cold. “I’m so cold!” Like it’s a new awareness
- May want to help their sibling learn how to do something, like go down the slide. They want them to have this experience, too.

Three Year Old Milestone 11B—Precision

Starts: 3.8.3

Most Intense: At the beginning for a few days and again at 3.9.0 for a few days

Ends: 3.9.0

Irritable Period Summary

Possessive

- Possessive of what they are working on
- Hates when someone breaks something that they built
- May hit their sibling, if they mess with their workspace

Extremely Possessive

- At the start of this milestone they are a little bit possessive. 5-10 days in they get *very* possessive.
- Might be aggressive, rude, or bossy, likely in setting their own boundaries
- Super possessive and may thus get rough with their siblings or friends
- If they think something is “theirs,” they take it.
- Can be expected to never share

Confused

- 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.

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.
- You might see a physical growth spurt or hormonal changes, such as their voice changes slightly.

New Abilities Summary

- They become very precise in more than one way.

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.

- 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.”
- They like to make two creations of something and to make them be exactly the same height.
- Takes an interest in measuring things and can measure things with a ruler
- If they are mathematically inclined, may write numbers bigger than 100
- Gets advanced ideas exactly right
- Very precise in estimating price. Something is \$8. They have \$5. They should put the item back.
- 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.
- Makes things go slow, then fast, then slow

Highly Precise in Their Imaginations, Thinking, and Perceptiveness

- They might be able to increment the day it is mentally. Yesterday was July 10, so today is July 11.
- They might notice that “The Parthenon is in Aladdin (the movie).” They’re right.
- They get jokes on a more intellectual level. Their sister says something funny. They look over in acknowledgment that Big Sis was funny.
- Might talk about what they would do if they had \$100. They would buy a house.
- May be able to read words without pictures serving as an assist

Takes Social and Other Risks

- Takes social risks, e.g., says “WAH Wah wah” when someone else’s joke falls flat.
- 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
- 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

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
- They might pour cereal in up to the right place in the bowl, instead of letting it overflow and dump all over.
- 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)

Initiates Impressive Creative Projects, with More Details

- Initiates their own highly creative projects
- Initiates projects which are impressive and with more types of parts, such as making a “light saber” out of a paper towel roll and green construction paper.
- 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

Three Year Old Milestone 12—Two Alternatives

Starts: 3.9.1

Most Intense: 3.9.2 until 3.9.3

Ends: 3.10.0

Irritable Period Summary

Extremely Stubborn

- Extremely stubborn about how things should go.
- They might totally refuse to go do what the family is doing.
- Demanding and stubborn about how to do things.
- You peeled the banana peel all wrong.
- They are extremely rigid that the thing they want (a cup or toy) is a specific color and that the other colors are definitely not acceptable.

Two Alternatives

- They come up with solutions that satisfy both you and them now. YOU go to the pool. THEY are staying home.
- They seem to now recognize that others have their own identity, needs, etc.

Cynical and Distrusting of Others

- But in that they recognize others have needs and can make plans, they seem totally untrusting that others will do that properly. They need to order you around.
- They are convinced their brother was going to take their snack, when he wasn't.
- They are in complete hysterics as you are driving because. Before even getting to the restaurant, they are certain you are going to order 6 chicken nuggets instead of what they want, which is 8 chicken nuggets.
- Or they get mad that you didn't use the word "SOMETIMES" when describing how something works, e.g., "The sun SOMETIMES shines" on their face.
- They get upset with you over tiny details of things. For instance, their dad always says, "Look at this little heart!" before you watch a video together, and he forgets to do it once. They are completely distraught.

Meltdowns Over Who is Faster or Better

- Meltdowns over what likely seem nonsensical, but which is likely over who is faster or better
- They might get 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"

Hates Distractions

- Very upset with things that are distracting, like loud noises when they are trying to watch something. Or if someone hits them accidentally
- They are starting to become like a dog with a bone now. They know what they want, despite any distractions (and they thus don't like them).
- They might agree to a solution to something, such as they turn the TV off. But then they realize that this is a bit of a trick, change their mind mid-action, and announce, "No! I want to watch a MOVIE!"

Physically Grows

- Their arms and legs get longer.
- When they run around now, they might crash into things, such as 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

- Around 3.9.3 might show an epic meltdown, and it may be regarding what two different people or different things do. Maybe they want you to go to the pool while they stay home, or they have an epic meltdown that someone got somewhere faster than they did.

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, perhaps 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 odd-shaped and large, like a large stuffed animal will NOT fit into something small, such as a small basket. This is significant because in the last milestones, they were wildly off about this.
- They understand North and South (two directions) even as you drive around. They might say, "We're going north, but if we turn around, we would be going south."
- If they do a play, there is a greater trust now that the other person will deliver their lines, and they can respond on cue.
- 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."
- Before it was "One person can do something, and another can't." Now it's "Boys can, and girls can't." They generalize now.
- Or, "If we got into a car crash, we could try again." Two alternate versions of reality.

- Or if something goes wrong, say flour puffed up at them from a kitchen mixer that wasn't locked, with flour all over their face and clothes, they say, "It's Ok. Sometimes we make mistakes."

Sizes Up Others

- The overly optimistic skill that kicks off these milestones is a sense they can make decisions for other people. They learn they can't and why in these late three milestones.
- You as such might see them size up what others can or can't do.
- They check the truth of what you are saying. You say it is raining. They go and check. "Mommy, you were right." It's not to prove it to themselves. It is to see if YOU were right.
- Sizing up that "Boys can rock climb and girls can't" is also sizing up others.

Adopts Other's Personality

- They adorably adopt other's personality into their own. Other people are more real to them—but so are they—and they mix and match some characteristics.
- 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 might announce they are also a great thinker with great ideas.
- They might put on a play of one of their favorite books with full emotion, hitting all the details, such as playing the happy, go lucky pig from a Gerald & Piggie book by Mo Willems.
- 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.

Very Immersed in Projects and Social Play

- Initiates games with other children, such as Go Fish
- Can play independently of adults

Three Year Old Milestone 13—Persistent Focus on One Idea with Many Variables

Starts: Some time before or after 3.10.1

Most Intense: For up to a week starting around 3.10.2

Ends: It might last until 3.10.3

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.)
- They are upset you turned right instead of left. Because going left would have got them to where they wanted to go, which was a particular restaurant, playground, etc.
- Very bossy in a specific way. You might have to take turns when helping them get dressed.
- 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 they want to be called "handsome" not "pretty"
- Or they insist 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, Rigid, Possessive

- 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.

Very Confident in Making Decisions—Which Can Cause Problems

- They become 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 demanding you to go to one or the other.

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.

Persistently Moves Forward with One Idea (or Themselves) While Other Stuff is Going On

- 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 push their one idea (or themselves) forward.
- They understand that north is only a particular way. It's not this way, this way, or that way. I list this first as it is 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?
- 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 might want to make such decisions more.
- They may constantly ask you to help them identify letters or read. Reading provides useful information to a child who is now steering their own "ship." Which button do they pick to restart versus resume a movie? What are road signs actually telling them?
- In their imagination now, 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. They intently, even slyly, size something up, as they perhaps hold onto the object slightly away from them. Focused: that is this milestone.

Encourages Others to Persist

- They might order you to keep persisting. "Keep singing, Mom!"
- Or they parent their Dad after he cut himself shaving, "It's OK. Your body will heal it. But you should be more careful next time. I hurt myself a lot! But it's by accident..."

Focused and Fast at Games

- They are more persistent at doing things and may play games better or build things faster.
- 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*

Three Year Old Milestone 14—Pushes Bounds

Starts: 3.11.0 or shy of it

Most Intense: A couple flare ups throughout, each lasting only about a day.

Ends: 3.11.3

Irritable Period Summary

Sleep Issues

- May easily fall asleep in the day

Aggressive

- They might get aggressive in getting their demands met.
- By push the bounds, I mean literally. They literally push things away from them.
- 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
- Upset if they see another child with candy and they can't have it

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.
- 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.

A Sense That They Can Magically Push or Pull Objects Slightly Out of Reach

- 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. (You just go get it, right?) It is as if they are thinking, "Wouldn't it be fun to get it by magic!?"
- I believe this fantastical thinking may kick off the next cascade of skills, where they push boundaries. As such, this magical sense will slightly precede irritable behavior.
- 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.
- 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. It needs to be complete.

Physically Pushes the Bounds, Exuberantly

- Very exuberant
- 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.
- Throws their whole body into the things they act out. They may run in place while describing how they have to save someone.
- May put face paint or marker all over their face. But you should see how proud they are!
- Might crash a birthday party they see while out (no, they weren't invited)
- Their physical gestures might show how they "push the bounds."
- They put their legs and arms out dramatically as they order someone to stop.
- They might chase their sibling around, wanting to hug them.
- May rush to open a door for someone
- After someone playfully messes with them, they pop up, "YOU CAN'T CATCH ME!"
- Loves to be flipped over and tickled

Intentionally and Easily 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.
- Big jobs are done right: your entire back porch may be swept of all sand
- 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 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, cast a fishing line, or spray a hose.
- Or they easily take to activities in which an object moves with them or others on it, such as pulling a wagon or riding a pony
- 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.

More Realistic About What Can be Done

- In the previous milestones, they seemed to want to puppeteer those around them: you do this, I'm doing that. Now they seem to realize others have limitations, wants, needs, etc, and/or need to be slightly persuaded.
- If you can't get them milk right away, they might conclude, "Mommy must not have heard me."

- To get your cooperation, it's like they plot. They sit up in bed, "Wait a minute! What if we were to go downstairs?" Because they want to go downstairs. It's as if they realize they have to be a bit sly to get you to do what they want.
- They size up their environment with more realism.
- 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 used for swimming—but they can learn. We don't own any pets—but this stuffed animal can be my pet.
- They have both realism and a desire to push the bounds. Creative, effective solutions ensue!

Just Plain Smarter

- Somewhat into the milestone, they get 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 they find 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. They stay 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.
- 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."
- 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.
- They are soon to run a much fuller spectrum 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.

Sizes up the Bound Visually

- Towards the end of this milestone, they start to size up visual distance, weight, or other things that run across a spectrum 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!

Four Year Old Milestone 1A (3.11.4-4.0.2)—Magical Metamorphosis

Starts: Between 3.11.4 and 4.0.0 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: A few days at or around 4.0.1. All of 1A and 1B can be fairly intense for some children. Other children might show intense behavior only during the peaks.

Ends: It bleeds into the next one, but a few days at and after 4.0.2 can be an especially delightful time.

Irritable Period

Aggressive, Assertive

- They become more aggressive: hitting, throwing, taking, acting out.
- They might harass their siblings a lot, such as when you are giving their sibling attention.
- Might push their siblings off a swing if they want it
- They might kick or punch more, even just lightheartedly.
- A typically whiny child might be unbearably whiny right now
- There is, however, also a jovialness and an assertiveness to them. They might, for instance, poke their body through two people to make sure they are included in a photo being taken.
- How aggressive they get is dependent on the child's personality and situation. Some children are naturally more aggressive. And life situations, such as moving or health issues, will affect their behavior.
- Reminder: Take a note of your child's behavior and how it affects you. It might affect your relationships, goals, or work.

Demanding

- Demands you stay with them late at night
- Demands your attention in the daytime
- Might be in your lap a lot
- Might be a bit grumpy
- Or they might ask you to be next to them by patting the area next to them on the couch. They may clean off all papers, books, etc., so you have room to be by them.

Can't stop themselves

- Does destructive things seeming ineluctably, like cutting a doll's hair
- Might do things to make things "beautiful." Like put marker all over the dresser or cut their own hair.
- Sincerely can't stop themselves from doing certain things, like peeling at things they shouldn't (like chipped paint on a wall or their fingernails) or hitting people with something (like a toy sword)
- Prone to exaggerations, such "We'll NEVER see my friend again." Or, "Halloween is gone FOREVER!"
- Deliberately throws things
- Won't stop when asked to stop
- Gets very upset when you ask them to stop, such as walking off dejected when you tell them that their lingering on you is hurting you

A ~relationship~ with doors

- They have a heightened interest in doors.

- They do not like when they are locked out of a room (say, because you are getting dressed).
- They might politely knock on doors to get in—or kick them.
- Might slam doors
- Four-year-old children are “out of bounds.” They don’t like being contained.

Physical and Sleep Changes

- Coinciding with this kicking are longer legs and longer feet. More, their legs are stronger.
- Their whole body feels heavier and denser. As such, they might unexpectedly slide down a slide quicker than they can handle.
- They might fall asleep unusually early at night or they might stay up late.
- A few fears might show up, such as “the floor is lava!” Fears and physical growth often coincide.
- Although it’s more difficult to detect in some children, an otherwise noticeable head shape change starts this milestone at around 4.0.0 or sooner. Bulk is added near the forehead and then the head elongates noticeably within 5 days.

Most Intense

- They are very assertive and in a physical way. They might hug and tackle their sibling and not let up. Or maybe they just playfully kick and poke you a lot.

New Abilities Summary

- They intellectually mash together two different ideas or stories together constantly in crazy, wild ways. Superman helps Thomas the Train. Or they wonder, “Can cats lay eggs?”

Magical Metamorphosis

- Magical metamorphosis: they wonder if things can change into other things.
- They have questions about what can turn into what. Questions such as:
 - Can their brother turn into a girl?
 - Can you put your head on theirs?
 - Cats can lay eggs?
 - Can they fly?
- They might “lie” about things, saying something did happen that didn’t.
- Many other things hilariously change or morph into other things:
 - They tell their joke: “1 plus 1 is pizza!”
 - They love the idea of “magic” making things happen.
 - They might like things that morph, such as a “Water Reveal Pad.” With a “pencil” that is filled with water, a picture is revealed after “coloring” on a blank page.
- Children of this age may also like to “morph” other things as well. Such as your walls—with some crayons.

Ponders “what if” situations:

- They might ask “what if” a lot.
- They might say things like, “We need to solve this mystery!”
- Their motto is “let’s see if.” Let’s see if we can hook this hook to the tv. Let’s see if their stuffed animal, a monkey, can swing on a crane as if it’s a tree.

Snuggly and Contemplative

- They might love to wrap up in a blanket, cozy, just being with their thoughts.

- They might stare out windows, lost in their thoughts.
- They might snuggle into a favorite stuffed animal.

Creative, heroic, mish mash of stories

- They tell endless stories about heroes and superheroes, in which things crazily happen or appear in random places. Superman saved us and took us to an island. A boat crashed on a beach, but we figured out how to put it in reverse.
- In these heroic stories, two different stories get mashed together. Superman appears in Thomas the Train adventures. A rocket might start doing more what boats do (sinks, gets a hole in it). You, their parent, all of a sudden turn into a bad guy. What!?
- It's all a bit of mumble jumble, but in these stories, they are mashing creative ideas together and getting an enormous brain power boost in it. As things accidentally morph into other things in their mind, they get to ponder interesting questions like, "What would happen if ROCKETS were to get holes in them and sink in the water?"
- Their mash ups of stories occasionally touch back to reality. If you are stuck in your vehicle on a steep hill with a narrow road and must drive backwards to get off of it, they might tell you a tow truck can help. They tell a detailed story of how that would work.
- Or, if a new baby is coming, you may need to sell your current car, as it's too small now. This actual thing, your car, needs to "transform" into something else (something bigger). Also, it will sell for \$14 or \$15. And you should be patient while selling it.
- In general, things are always "too small" right now. Things needs to be bigger and better.
- I suspect more "analytical" children (being more analytical or more fantastical, I think, is a spectrum and neither is inherently superior) are less prone to fantasy and more prone to realistic things that can change or morph. They might be fascinated by big, realistic things that morphed, like blimps and stories of them, such as the Hindenburg, which caught on fire and crashed to the ground.

Physically pushes the bounds: "watch this!"

- In the last Three Year Old Milestone, they started to push the bounds. They became fascinated with things that were near them but that could be pushed away, such as casting a fishing line or spraying a hose.
- Now, they want to test those limits in a more physical way. The best way I can describe it is that, in the last one, they threw the anchor over the boat. Now, they want to tug on it to make sure it's working.
- They are more deliberate in the challenges they take on. Imagine a child with a hand on their hip, looking around, pondering what to do next. Go outside in the sandbox? Do a little hop? Several things they can pick from. Which one? Hmmm.
- They might demand you watch them do something big and dramatic. "Mommy, watch this!" As they run and do a little hop.
- They are more physically daring. They might run and then jump on their scooter yelling "Woo hoo!"
- Or they might purposely do a roll on gymnastic rings
- They might love to swing on a swingset.
- On swings, they demand you push them "faster and faster!"
- All day long they say, "I did it!"
- Looooooves superheroes. Or maybe for the first time ever, they mention some new superheroes.

- They have increased lung power, such as blowing a dandelion or blowing up a balloon.
- It's as if they don't want to be contained by a room or house because they want to do big things.

But also better understands what is "good" and realistic:

- They have "magical metamorphosis" thinking but they also get a bit of realism.
- They don't "cheat" at games as much, such as no longer skipping spaces on board games.
- They might be able to play Hopscotch correctly (again, doesn't skip spaces).
- They can win at a game like checkers, if you go easy on them.
- They might be surprisingly good at other games that involve some mechanical strategy, such as Plumber (an app involving orienting up pipes correctly so that water flows).
- Intensely interested in academic things like reading, such as noticing what letter words start with. If they are or are not reading, they might take (a possibly renewed) notice in this.
- Really wants to be good or do good. They hear you talking about what is good and they announce they are committed to being nice.
- They are always listening, watching, and understanding what adults say and do and note more about the emotions involved, e.g., may note when you were angry (beginning introspection).

Likes to ride things

- At exactly 1,468 +/- 1 day (almost 4.0.2), all three of my children pretended to ride something. One, on a kid-size motorcycle; another, on a bouncy horse at a playground; and another got in a cardboard box and pretended it was a car to "catch bad guys." Vroooooom!
- This feeling of being chased or moving quickly seems integral to some of their development.

Attaches to a particular character (or topic)

- They might (or might not) attach to one particular character right now.
- This character might be Wonder Woman, Wall-E, etc. I find it endlessly endearing to think of who they attach to and why.
- They are obsessed with this character. They might want to dress like them every day.
- They get excited that they know everything about this character: where they live, what they do.
- A more analytical child might attach to a topic rather than a person.

Emphasizes the nature of things

- In becoming obsessed with a character, it's as if they are emphasizing the nature of the character: Wonder Woman is Wonder Woman and acts like Wonder Woman, not Superman. She lives on an island, she wears this, etc.
- They might emphasize the identity of objects: something is a "puncher punch." Or "The giant truck is a giant truck."
- They start to size up things as well, with details, based on what they do know. "An SUV is a truck with an extra window."
- Objects have been metamorphosizing in their mind, and, I think, in this curious questioning, the actual identity of things becomes clearer in their mind.

Four Year Old Milestone 1B (4.0.2-4.0.3)—Defined Sets

Starts: A few days after 4.0.2 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: A few days before or around 4.0.3

Ends: Right after the intense period

Irritable Period Summary

Demanding

- Remains highly demanding of your attention.
- Might tell you they would really like you to be by them
- They might adorably ask to be by you. “I would really love to have breakfast with you.”
- They might want to be *right* next to you, such as underneath you while you are exercising.

Grumpier, more easily frustrated, possibly angry

- They can be quite grumpy.
- They might be back to whining and harassing their siblings.
- They are more independent: they do things on their own initiative more, such as getting out of their bed on their own in the morning or insisting on doing a puzzle by themselves.
- This independence can come with a frustration if they can’t do something successfully.
- They might get very angry sometimes, perhaps if they are not allowed to do something, or if, say, they can’t get to you because a door is locked.
- Their hitting and throwing might be so out of control that you find yourself putting away all balls, toy weapons, etc.

“Aggressively Curious”

- They are very likely to draw on walls, etc.
- They might playfully kick you.
- It’s not malicious in how they do it. They just do stuff like this. They are very deliberate and calm when they do it. But hence my description of “aggressively curious.”

Moodier, private, more independent

- Can be withdrawn, quiet, and clingy
- They seem to value privacy and space more.
- Might tell people to “go away” or retreat to their room and shut the door.

Wants an impossibly immediate reaction

- They ask a question, and you start to indeed answer, but they yell, “NO! LISTEN to me.”
- Or they are telling you, “Mommy. Mommy. MOMMY! LOOK.” And nothing you can do can look fast enough for them. You promptly say, “I see it!” but this is totally unsatisfactory to them.
- You might have to repeat back to them their question, showing you fully understand it, before answering it. Even if you go to answer the exact question they asked, they feel you aren’t listening. Repeat back the question itself, without answering the question, and do it with unparalleled facial expression, showing you are interested in what they said.

Most Intense

- This milestone shows a better ability to verbalize in an assertive way rather than going straight to physical assertiveness. When pressed or uncomfortable, however, they might still resort to

aggression, such as kicking people in the foot or jumping on them. And they can also still be quite demanding.

New Abilities Summary

- In their late threes, children had no realistic sense of sets. You can tell a three year old, “Don’t hit your sister.” And they inform you, “I didn’t hit her. I hit her TOE.” That “her toe” is part of the set of their sister doesn’t dawn on them. Now they start to understand what individual parts properly make up what set.
- Previously, things were accidentally, magically changing in their imaginations. Now they get realistic about how such things operate: what is actually in what set and what things can realistically be interchanged.
- They, as such, can figure out more, such as a more complicated puzzle or a toy that projects something.
- They can also actively contemplate “what if” scenarios, away from the live scene.

Challenges you about what should be in what set

- They’ve been noticing how things might be mashed from one creative thing into another. Superman used to suddenly appear in a story they are telling about Thomas the Train. Cats could lay eggs. As they evolve and get practice with this, now they question if X being in Y makes sense. What is Superman doing in a Thomas the Train story!?
- This applies to their immediate surroundings. They might see a box of diapers in the master bedroom. This doesn’t make any sense. Diapers should be near the changing table, not the bedroom. They ask about it.
- Or they notice you sometimes accidentally put their sister’s sock in their drawer. Again, it doesn’t belong there.
- They notice entire sets now. A set is items in a list. The set of things in the master bedroom was normally [a bed, a table, a TV, a dresser]. The diaper box didn’t belong.
- The nature of entities around them is being put into place. Their sister is their sister and is made up of all of her attributes, which persist as such. A bedroom is a bedroom and made up of all of its attributes. *Persistent* 3-D awareness is being put in place. For now, this is just the first mental building blocks.

Realistic interchangeability

- Given their interest in sets, they become more resourceful and realistic in which items in a set can be interchanged. They have a “plug and play” ability.
- They can interchange parts. If they are playing with something and missing a part, on their own, they find a different but workable part.
- They might impressively find a LEGO brick from a different kit than intended, but which still works.
- Or they use Lightning McQueen instead of Goldilocks in a Three Little Bears play. As long as the particular attribute needed is satisfied, it’s good. In this case, simply a “character” of some sort needs to play Goldilocks.
- They are mature about mistakes that arise when things are in the wrong set. If you put their sister’s sock in their drawer, they might say, “Mommy, you made a mistake. That’s Ok. You can work on it.”
- Or they recognize “Sometimes I make mistakes.” It’s that they verbalize this now that is of note.
- They can understand a concept like socks are interchangeable, but shoes are not. The left shoe has to match the left foot and the right shoe has to match the right foot. But socks can go either way.

- They can use their ability to compare and contrast sets to cleverly explain things. You might ask them what does “strong” and “fast” mean. They respond, “Dash [from *The Incredibles*] is fast, and Mr. Incredible is strong.” They run around their room to show you this. They handily matched the ideas in these two sets.

Firm understanding of people and players

- In understanding what individual items make up a set, their understanding of moral or other social themes becomes more exact. Who does what is more firm in their mind.
- They might learn that the children in Pinocchio turn into donkeys at Pleasure Island. But this won’t happen to them, because they’re a girl. They personally are not in the set of the type of people who go to Pleasure Island [specifically boys who skip school].
- They might better understand a theme in a book. The Siamese cats in “Lady and the Tramp” caused a mess and blamed Lady. But it wasn’t really Lady who did it. It was the cats.
- They might put their shirt over their feet and say they are a “pizza,” because it makes a triangle shape. Then they take the shirt off of their feet and tell you they are “back!” They understand they can’t actually morph. There is more realism there.
- They might readily recognize that a group of children are being way too rough for them, and readily agree to play somewhere else. This set of children is not for them.
- They understand lessons pertaining to “the earth” or “the world” better, as if the concepts themselves are more crystallized for them.
- They might have many questions about you, other people, and characters: why are you so sad, why are you so excited, why did this character do that.
- They might want to learn about moral themes such as asking, “What is this song about?” as they ask what the chorus and words of a song mean.
- That a song elicits the strong reaction, “what does it mean!?” in some children doesn’t surprise me. Information throughout most of human history was conveyed in a holistic way, with sights and sounds. Songs call up for them an idea that an important life lesson is about to be imparted.

Persists with information and challenges

- Information seems entirely implanted in their mind now. They forget less and less, including about things in-the-moment. It gives them more fortitude.
- They persist in solving a problem. Say they are doing a more complicated puzzle than they’ve done before. They can get mildly flustered for a minute or two when something goes poorly, but then they come back to finish it.
- They persist at a challenge like icing cookies. They stay with the activity for a long time, filling the entire cookie up with a color. They actively ask for another color they want.
- They might like to make something “beautiful,” such as with stickers.
- They want to take on big challenges, like carrying a heavy basket at the store. They commit to doing it despite the difficulty. They see how long they can do it.
- They comply much easier. You can ask them to go get their favorite stuffed animal, and they do, without complaint.
- On the flip side, if the bedtime routine is reading two books, it’s what you will be doing. If they’ve laid down, they will remember this was missed and demand it.

- They really are much calmer at this one and less whiny or aggressive. It is likely stemming from this ability to persist, intellectually and emotionally, with in-the-moment things, despite moderate frustrations or distractions.

Adopts a “character,” stays with it

- They persist with a character or personality longer. They might like to “trick” you, such as they are going to trick you with a math question, and they do it in a “snobby girl” way.
- They might like to set up serving stations or be a “waiter.” They love to help set tables/serve food.
- Or they like to pretend to be a teacher, a restaurant owner, or something similar.
- It’s how they are a bit more “stable” that is of note. They stay in this character (snobby girl, waiter, or other) they are making up for a bit of time.

Notably more independent, in a private way

- They seem to value their independence and privacy more. They like to do things without you helping them.
- They might do something they previously couldn’t do, without you even watching, such as climb up a tall ladder. They just run off and do stuff like this.
- They might figure out how to use a toy that launches some type of projectile. The projectile launches at you at totally unexpected moments. It’s quite funny.
- They might spontaneously start spelling words, which other people previously showed them how to spell.
- They might tell you to sit away from them while they go do something. They don’t need you to help them!
- They slyly hide their favorite stuffed animal for you to find.
- They can clean up an entire room (bedroom or toy room) on their own and in fact may want to. But don’t get your hopes up: it’s probably a one-time deal.
- They might be able to clean their entire body in the bathtub.
- They might reliably execute a routine in the morning, such as changing clothes.
- If you cosleep, they might surprisingly slip out of the bed without you in the morning. Before, they waited and demanded you go with them somewhere.

Evaluates and updates their own behavior

- In their late threes, they could pick a solution for a problem involving many variables. They could do this in the moment. Now they can be separate from the live event and think about what happened. They can handle “what if” scenarios.
- They, as such, can evaluate past decisions to improve in the future. They can come up with reasonable solutions when asked about things going wrong.
- You might ask, “What would you do if you found your sister’s socks accidentally in your drawer?” If she was asleep, they would wait. If she wasn’t sleeping, they would put it in her drawer.
- If their tablet battery dies, they conclude they should have let their tablet charge longer, so it lasts longer next time.
- If they bump their head while running, they say, “Maybe I should go slower next time.”
- As they get better at navigating mindfully in their immediate surroundings, they take a deeper notice of signs telling them what to do. They are unusually interested in reading all signs, such as STOP signs, reading what sewer plates say, or reading the signs at any park or business.

- They take these signs *very* seriously. STOP means STOP.

Social and Relationship Changes

- Settled on who is their best friend
- Very friendly and intimate with their friends, may hold hands, etc.

Four Year Old Milestone 2 (4.1.0-4.1.1)—Ordered Sets

Starts: Somewhere between 4.0.4 and 4.1.0 [y.m.w]. Irritable behavior might not be seen right away.

Most Intense: A few flareups throughout

Ends: 4.1.1 or after

Irritable Period Summary

Demanding, Upset Easier

- There is one particular day, around 4.1.0 (or about a week in), where they might be unusually demanding that things go their way.
- They demand your attention. But they come up with in-tune things to do it, such as becoming interested in a book you are reading.
- The smallest details might bother them: perhaps that you wrote their name on their soccer ball.
- They might harass their sibling.
- A child prone to shame will absolutely hate being told they were bad or made a mess.

Possessive

- Very jealous if someone so much as looks at something they want to look at.
- Might be whiny, aggressive, or demanding of your time; whatever it is your child tends to do.

Physical and Sleep Changes

- They might fall asleep unusually early at night.
- They get physically taller and heavier.
- They are physically bigger and more forceful. They might come right up to you and grab your hand.
- They might kick things when mad.
- Their voice might change. It sounds part toddler, part little kid. If you have an older child, you might confuse your four year old's voice and the older child's voice on occasion.

New Abilities Summary

- They put sets in better order. At the grocery store, you must: go in -> get stuff -> go to the cash register.
- In this chain of things in a set, they can "debug" any broken sections. This includes sets of mechanical things, as well as emotional things.
- Identification of internal states: they can identify their own internal states: that they were sleeping, how a particular thing made them feel, etc.
- They play around with emotions in deliberate, planned ways.
- They take an interest in and monitor other's emotions.
- They abruptly see that others can see things that they can't.

Deliberate in their emotions/charisma

- They've gotten good at identify the essence of people (outside of their own family). They now apply that to themselves, purposely creating emotions and facial expressions.
- They become very expressive with their face. They might show they are happy, sad, surprised, shocked sly, contemplative, etc., all one after the other in one sitting.

- They are more deliberate in how they use their gestures. They very carefully do a “choo choo” motion. Or they walk away, stop, look back at you, and give you a very pointed, cute, “come here” wave.
- They might change how they say “Mommy” or “Daddy.” “Come here MaaAAAAah-meeeeee!”
- They can be bolder in how they do things, on purpose. They shout, “HEY, MOMMY.” They do it in this bold way, making their voice be loud and their posture be bold, on purpose. They are trying to get you to notice them.
- They might put on their brother’s hat and tell you they are their brother. They know they aren’t. They know they are being super cute, though.
- They might get dressed up in a funky way, such as a shirt as a turban and a shall or scarf.
- They say “smile,” and then they smile. They ask you to take their picture. Then they command you to stop.
- They might invite you to “fake laugh.” They told a purposely corny joke and invite you to slap your knee.
- They develop a more matured sense of humor. They might deepen their voice to make a joke.
- They stay in character to tell jokes.
- Loves to whisper to you.
- Loves if you notice their little jokes.

Identifies their own internal states

- They can identify more of their own internal states, and they also test if you can see them as well.
- They recognize they were just sleeping and now they are not.
- They might play around with knowing if they are or are not sleeping, “Mommy, I’ll pretend I’m sleeping, and you wake me up.”
- Or they say “hi” to you, and then pretend to be sleeping.
- If you say their nose is red, because they are cold, they argue with you. Their nose isn’t red, it’s [whatever color they come up with]. They are aware—and assured—of this.
- They might notice more about their appearance or clothes, such as that their shirt is “jangly.”
- They might tell you how they want to be. They want to be SMART, not pretty.
- They are more sincere in saying “I love you,” (the internal state of how they actually feel). You say “I love you,” and they, in a knowing way, perhaps with a little sigh, say, “I love you too, Mommy.”
- They feel more comfortable running around with a blanket on their head as a “ghost.” If you can identify your own internal processes, you’re more Ok with going without them for some time.

An awareness that they are in their surroundings

- They become aware not just of the things that are happening, but that they are experiencing them. They also attach emotions to what they are doing.
- They might say something was “really cool to watch!” They noticed that they did in fact do this. They watched something, and they liked it.
- Or they might say, “Going to the playground makes me so HAPPY!”
- They might say an answer to a math problem is “beautiful.” “100. That’s beautiful.”
- Or they might say, “Mommy, I love being with you.”
- They might identify how much they love to learn or that learning about things is “so much fun!”

- They might demand you take pictures of things they like, with them in it. They want to capture their moment of happiness or something that struck them as beautiful.
- They tell you they are doing something (such as swinging) just so you can take a picture of them doing it.
- Conversely, they might get intensely upset if you say they are “bad” in anyway, such as they threw something on the floor and made a mess.
- This can be thought of as the “I exist” milestone.
- In this one, I think they realize they exist as within their surroundings. In next milestones, they will be taking this awareness and committing the many events that happen to them to memory, creating a persistent 3-D awareness that lasts day after day in their mind. I call it “persistent consciousness.”

Monitors other’s emotions

- They recognize other’s emotions, as such.
- Before they came up with solutions: one for you and one for them. Mostly it was what seemed semi-good, such as you go to the restaurant while they stay home.
- Now they monitor your emotions to see if the solution they have for you is good. They are sensitive to your emotional responses and keep trying to get one right.
- They might become interested in what you are interested in, such as a book you are reading, such that you will spend time with them. Did it work? No? Time to try something new.
- This depends on what kind of emotion the child wants to elicit. They might try to make you happy, or they might purposely try to get a rile out of you.
- On their own, they declare that you should not run the vacuum cleaner when their sister is sleeping. They don’t want to wake her up.
- After someone falls, they ask, “Are you ok?”
- If you are playfully messing with their sister to take her pencil, they inform you, “You can have the pencil when she is done.”
- If their sister wants the roll of tape they are using, they say “I know!” They scurry off and come back with a different roll of tape for her. Then they admonish her, “Now stop annoying me!” (Well, I mean: they are better at identifying their own internal states and solving problems!)
- They take delight when their younger sibling learns something, “Hooray! My sister knows who Dopey is now!”
- A highly empathetic child might even now “catch” your emotion, such if you are sobbing because a friend was diagnosed with cancer. “I am so sorry your friend was cancelled!” they tell you, as they also cry and rub your arm. They keep tabs on you, emotionally, all afternoon.
- You might see them intently watching others a bit more now. They are learning.

Abrupt differentiated perspective

- Their sense of perspective between you and them is still enmeshed. They still think everyone sees the world as they do, from their perspective, based on what they see. However, they now abruptly realize that other people can see things that they cannot.
- They still think you see things as they do. Say you are looking through something green, such as a plastic green ruler (because they asked you to), and they are looking through a yellow ruler. If you tell them they look green, they inform you “No! I am yellow!” Everything looks yellow to them. That you are looking through the green ruler and would see it differently does not register yet.

- If you ask them if mommy (you) can see her own eyes, they bubble, “Yes!” They then cover their own eyes, pretend to be lost, and open their eyes. “There you go! Now you can see your eyes!” They can see your eyes. Thus, you can see your own eyes.
- However, they get jealous of their sibling even seeing things. If there is a cool water tower (a tower supporting an elevated water tank) on their sister’s side of the van, which she can see and they cannot, they get jealous. They demand she stop looking at it. This speaks to them having a heightened awareness that others can see, feel, etc. and it’s different from them. This realization can be painful at first.
- They might want to spell the word “STOP” explicitly to inform others that they need to stop. They understand that a simple thing like this needs to be explained to someone else.
- They seem to understand that others have their own perspective and see things they cannot. However, they don’t yet quite accept that others cannot necessarily see what they can see. They are in fact jealous and possessive of what others see. But maybe this serves a purpose: they are going to borrow your eyes for a bit.

Turbo boost in imagination

- They become highly imaginative again.
- They might tell you that they or others can magically boom things away or jump over things. Their beloved stuffed animal can jump over three cars. They can boom other soccer players away to win.
- Their solutions are turbo charged and might involve “booming” things. Their older sister might be asked to sing a song on a stage, but she is “worried others will see her.” Your four year old offers to build a cannon to “punch” the others away. (Notices her feelings and solves the problem!)
- In this, they start in on their epic story telling again.
- Something totally catches them, and they immediately start telling stories about it. Maybe they see a picture of a boat in a book, which has many details on it (a crane, etc.). They go on and on about what the boat can do.
- With this new imaginative boost, the problems they imagine they can solve get bigger. They hear that, say, that a blimp can explode. They go on and on about how to save it.
- Or they learn that a driveway is made with concrete. They immediately think about how to build one.
- They might “come alive” after being around a certain person. Something about being around their dad causes them to turn into a pilot.
- They have many “wait a minute! I have an idea!” moments. When on a bed, they realize it might be fun to pretend to be a spider, or the like.
- Play-Doh creations are likely to immediately turn into the earth, the moon, the sun, etc.
- They turbo charge the problems they like to solve. They might spontaneously come up to you and tell you they want to “count to 100 by 10s.” They surprisingly want to count from 10 to 20 to 30, etc.
- Or they might love to skip steps as they walk, like they are turbo charging the process, making it faster.

Imaginary friends

- Imaginary friends make an appearance in a subtle form.
- Before they had people in their stories. But now they interact with them.
- They might help “pigs” get into a cave, so they don’t get hurt. They actively talk to the pigs now.

Loves to be “in” things

- They might love to be in, say, a lookout tower. They keep asking to go back.
- If they see a map, they might try to put their toys or trains “in” it, by going underneath the map.
- They love when things go “into” things in movies or books, such as a rocket comes back “into” earth.
- They might build solid parking spaces for their toy cars, so they are nice and protected.
- They might utterly insist that their sister be buckled in a swing, so she doesn’t fall out.
- They also love to be securely strapped in a swing.
- They might like to pretend to ride on a horse.
- Their imaginative stories might show this: they want to keep pretend animals nice and safe inside [a cave, a pen].
- They might love marching around to songs like “The Ants Go Marching,” as they stay in single or double file, parading around to the song.
- Wanting to be nice and contained like this, while also doing something slightly fun or dangerous, seems to have developmental purpose.

Spelling and Reading

- They can more readily put individual items in a set into the correct order, and this shows up in more academic work, big time.
- They might show off a word they know how to spell. They come up to you, spell it, and run off. Show off.
- They show an interest in more spelling activities, such as practicing spelling words, matching letters to objects, or watching videos on spelling.

Math

- They add more math to the things they classify now.
- There are FOUR tires on the truck. There are FIVE dirty tires in the garage. You might challenge them to count the things they see to encourage this.
- Their stories have more details about how many things there are. Their favorite stuffed animal can jump over THREE cars.
- They might enjoy sorting things into even and odd numbers.
- They might spontaneously like to cut things in half.
- They might write math equations. Typically, children this age will write that “ $1 + 0 = 10$.” They’re not wrong. They’re just figuring out how double digits work for now. With some simple explanation, they’ll understand (and write) that $1 + 0 = 0$ in a few weeks or months.

Debugs problems

- They can put items in a set together and see how those items interoperate. They now constantly try to fix problems.
- If something on the TV stops playing, they go behind it to check the cables. Or maybe they check the batteries in the remote.
- If you mention you smell fire, they go and get a fire extinguisher.
- If it starts raining, they might want to go back to the house to get an umbrella.
- If they are prone to cleanliness, they might clean up a particular mess, with verve.

- They may want to make sure everyone else is “safe.” They won’t leave the house until their sister comes, too.
- They might demand their sister be buckled in a swing. Entirely to make sure she is safe.
- They might work to see that things fit right. For instance, you do a Goldilocks play and make chairs that are “too tall” and “too wide.” They find figurines that can fit on the too tall and too wide chairs. They are actively thinking about it, deciding what should go where.
- They might be better at jigsaw puzzles, as they are more aggressive and interested in finding out what fits in what.
- They might figure out how they want to solve their own problems: they might be sneaky when playing board games.
- They have an idea and make it happen. When making cookies, they have exact ideas of what cookie shape and color they want to make.
- A child super gifted with language might be inspired by a set of instructions and put the thing together. They use the pictures from a LEGO instruction manual to put a LEGO set together.
- They like to think that they “solve problems!”

Interested in “chains” and cycles

- They are interested in things that happen in a set routine, one after the other (an ordered set). The cycles they are interested in get bigger and bigger.
- They might tell you that you plant seeds, they grow, and that’s how you get popcorn.
- They urgently come up to you to tell you that milk ACTUALLY comes from cows.
- They love to play “grocery store.” On their own, they set up aisles, a cart, a cash register, etc.
- They might be fascinated with their ankles and knees (joints). They marvel that their legs and joints help “stabilize” them.
- Fascinated that the legs of a table balance it
- They can more easily hear the tune to a song and immediately hum or sing it back.
- When they play musical instruments, it might now be more enjoyably melodic.
- They might love to hook things to each other in a highly practical way. They really want their toy race car to hook up to a trailer. They can work at this for several hours.
- They might build an entire traffic stop out of their toy train tracks. They get railroad signs to accurately warn people in vehicles of an upcoming railroad track.
- When they tell you that you can have a pencil after their sister is done, this is also a “chain.” First, she is going to play with it, then you.

Shockingly aggressive in trying new things

- There is a sense of “what can I do now?” They are far more aggressive in trying new things.
- In particular, they seem to want to know what fits in what now. What they do is dependent on your child. A more physical child might see where their own body now fits. A more analytical child might experiment with physical objects. This happens more towards the end of the milestone.
- They might try to go down every slide they reasonably can. They constantly scan looking for new things they can try.
- Having sized up that they can do it, they might totally surprise you and scurry up a six-foot tall ladder.

- They turn on lights they couldn't previously reach.
- They push a toy dump truck around longer and faster than they previously could.
- They have a lot of exuberance and verve.
- If they see you doing a project or baking, they happily come over and stay with it.
- They might do more on their own, such as get dressed in the morning or help clean.

Four Year Old Milestone 3A (4.1.2-4.2.1)—The Full Cycle

Starts: A few days after 4.1.2 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: 4.2.0 to 4.2.1

Ends: 4.2.1 (but really, bleeds into the next one at 4.2.2)

Irritable Period Summary

Sleep Disruptions

- The first part of this sees a lot of sleep disruptions.
- They might stay up late.
- They might get up at 4:30 in the morning.
- Might talk in their sleep

Self-Conscious

- They continue to be more aware of their environment and who they are in that environment. This can cause frustration or embarrassment.
- If they are asked to get up and dance and they don't know the dance, they might run off in frustration. They feel embarrassed and awkward.
- Many situations can be uncomfortable for them now, such as a scary scene in a play or movie. For instance, they don't like the way the "mean" nanny in Mary Poppins makes them feel.
- They might be more sensitive to having dirt or "germs" on their hands.

Highly Demanding

- They might make you keep watching what they are watching, such as a video of a train about to crash. There is nothing more interesting.
- It is always "come play." They might want you to play Hide and Seek, pretend to put out fires, or pretend to rescue animals.
- They want others, including siblings, to see what they built.
- They might demand you keep getting toy after toy, which are in another room, that you would have to go find.

Rummaging

- They rummage through things to find things they find important. They might get a step stool out so they can rummage through a pile of books to find the exact one they are looking for. By the way, they do this in the middle of the night.
- These next milestones, up until age 4-1/2, largely bleed into one another. You might buckle up now. The good news is after they dissipated, there are longer stretches of sunny times during age four. There will be some very intense times, but also longer times of relief. But not right now.

New Abilities Period Summary

- They've been noticing entire sets and then putting them in order. Now they see sets from start to end, easily. They see both the whole and its parts.
- They also push the cycle. "What's next?" is their motto now. In the cycle of baking cookies, after they [make the dough, bake the cookies, eat them] they should [wash the dishes]. They think of what's next or what might be missing in what you are doing.

- This “what’s next?” thinking engenders creativity and problem solving. They have an idea and keep at it.
- They also become highly cognizant of their own body parts and how they use them: their teeth chew food, their hands take off their shoes, their own eyes see for them.

The Full Cycle: High level overview of sets

- They have a high level overview of cycles (the entire set of steps of something). They can “see” the whole cycle as they implement steps, make decisions, and easily remember what was said to them.
- They can reliably remember several steps in a process, told to them just then, such as steps to make a salad. As they make it with you, they ask you what to do next and then do it: get a bowl, get a cutting board, fill up the bowl with spinach, cut a strawberry in half, etc.
- They will stay with a friend who is telling them how to play dress up. The friend shows them all the stuff they need to put on, and they do it, accepting instruction and help.
- They can finally learn a dance routine that they’ve been working on. Before, you tried to teach them, and they ran off after only a few steps. Now they do the whole routine: step, together, step, together, forward, back, together, CLAP!
- You might show them how to wash all their body parts, and they do. They similarly might get themselves completely dressed, after being shown how.
- You can tell them the overview of how something works, and they understand. You can tell them, “When we first turn the hose on in summer, hot water comes out. Let some water out before you touch it.” And they sweetly reply, “I will.”
- You might make a cake together for an upcoming party. They understand they have to wait until the party to eat it and sweetly ask permission before eating it.
- They can narrate most of a (known) play by themselves.
- They might talk in their sleep as they go over the steps in a routine, such as the dance routine they were learning.

Yet still sees the details

- They can see the whole cycle more intuitively. But they also see the details of the cycle.
- They might investigate every water droplet on the side of the bathtub.
- They might size up absolutely everything about a toy truck, etc.
- The castles that they build might become more elaborate or intricate, such as many blocks put together, arranged in a geometrically pleasing way.
- A charismatic child might play a character with devastating detail. They gather up objects and pretend to crush them like Wall-E. They then pat the couch, just like Wall-E does, for you to come sit by them.

Stark observations

- They have an intuitive insight into the overview of a cycle now. They see things more as a whole. It, thus, seems to cause them to make some stark observations or otherwise blurt things out—both endearing things and embarrassing things.
- Say you are at a matinee of a Mary Poppins play. As she pulls a hat stand out of her bag, they blurt out, “IT DOESN’T FIT!” It’s to everyone nearby in the audience’s delight.
- They notice that a certain person looks lonely or sad.

- They might start clapping when two people kiss.
- They might parent you, noticing all the things you do. “Mommy, look at how FOCUSED you are!”
- They might also notice what others do. When their brother does something nice, when usually they fight, they directly say, “Oh! I see you’re being NICE to me!”
- But they also might blurt out that a particular woman “is pregnant!” (They aren’t.)
- Or they might notice a man’s “big belly.”

“What’s next?” thinking, as to solve problems

- They not only see the cycle; they think one step further.
- After they make a salad with you, they cut up some extra strawberries and put them inside, “in case we want them later.”
- With a bit of information, they can figure out “what’s next.” If they see a coach, a pumpkin, and a castle, they can figure out that, given this set of things [the coach, pumpkin, and castle] that the person in the coach is probably Cinderella.
- When they write equations, they might write $1 + 2 = 3$. This makes you think they get it now. But then they write $2 + 3 = 4$. I think the “what’s next” skill is just that strong in them.
- The “what’s next” of what they solve might be an imaginative problem that they thought up and are now pretending to solve. They pretend to be a chief fire fighter. They walk around in circles with a firefighter hat, pretending to be on the phone. It goes like this, “Can you get here? No? Ok. We need a different plan. We have to ...”
- They exclaim, “That’s IT!” A problem in their mind has been solved.

Rummaging, persistence, has an idea and follows through

- There is a strong element of them being able to go and get what they want. They have an idea in mind, and they want to make it happen. They don’t give up. They persist at finding a solution, even rummaging through a few resources or ideas first.
- If they want to get a book for a specific reason, they’ll go and look through your whole kitchen counter until they find it.
- They can fall back to “Plan B.” You tell them, “To make gray we can use a black pencil but hold the pencil lightly.” Instead of doing this, they go and look for a gray pencil. After not finding it, they come back to the solution of using a black pencil but holding it lightly. They can see an idea to its completion, as they try different paths, possibly failing, until one works.
- They might work to find something particular on a globe, such as the Sahara Desert. They persistently look for whatever word they are looking for.
- They stay with it to make sure a campfire stays kindled.
- They really persist at something challenging for them, such as climbing up more challenging playground apparatus.

Creates with intention and purpose

- They build intensely and creatively. They have an idea and follow through with it.
- After watching Beauty and the Beast, they have the idea to make several props related to the movie. On their own initiative, they put together a castle, a ballroom, and a prison, made out of wood blocks, so that you can put on the play.
- They might get inventive, such as finding and using Play-Doh to wrap around a figurine to act as a dress.

- They might figure out how to cradle several objects in a makeshift basket (such as by using a cloth eye mask) and then lifting things up with a toy crane.
- They might start to draw more things, perhaps race cars, tow trucks, yetis, or your whole family.
- They might take all the toilet paper off the roll (imagine them spinning it fast and creating a puff of toilet paper) to make a sort of cape.
- They might choreograph a dance to a song: matching the dance (a set) to the song (another set).

Very confident in how they use their hands

- They are really confident and deliberate in how they use their hands and other body parts.
- They get much better with their hands, in general. Their hands are stronger, and they are bolder in what they do with them.
- They might make new Play-Doh creations entirely on their own. They initiate a new project, flatten the dough, cut it out, put stamps on it, etc. It's how sturdy, confident, and forward moving they are that is of note.
- They give a "Thumbs up" sign more.
- They might hold their hand up in a rectangle, as if they are taking a picture.
- They can run their fingers under words as they read better.
- They can use a calculator more handily.
- As noted, they might wash all of their body parts now or get completely dressed.
- They might really enjoy building Lego kits or doing Marble Runs right now. Anything where they get to build hands on.

Cognizant of their bodily movements

- They verbalize how they are using their body parts to solve issues. "I closed my teeth, and I stopped the milk from spilling out."
- Or, "I used my hands and took my shoes off."
- They verbalize all the steps to solve a problem in great detail. "I had a potty accident. First, I took my pants off. Then I took off my underwear. Then I got new pants. Then I got new underwear. Then I put on my underwear. Then I put on my pants. Then I put a towel on where I peed. The end."
- They take note of how they use their body to solve problems. They might be proud that they were dirty, but they stayed up in a certain position, to avoid getting the rug dirty.
- They might get in a plank, with a necklace on, and marvel that they look "just like a dog!" (As they have on a "collar" and are on all fours.)
- Or they put on a cowboy hat and note, "I'm like a cowboy!"
- Being deliberate in their bodily movements makes them seem just a bit more debonair (for boys) or demure (for girls).

Their eyes see; Their ears hear

- They might have realized already that "eyes see" before, but now they realize that their own eyes see for them, and their own ears hear for them.
- Before when they put on earmuffs, they thought that YOU now couldn't hear THEM. They thought that what they can hear, you can hear. Thus, if they can't hear, you can't hear. Now when they put earmuffs on, they say, "And now I can't hear the TV." If they realize that YOU still can hear the TV, I'm not sure. But they realize now that they cannot.
- They might notice that they can't see their own eyes.

- They might hold up their hands as if they are taking your picture and switch from a “portrait” view to a “landscape” view. They thus have a better understanding that they see through their own eyes and control what direction it goes.
- They might close one eye and purposely look through only the other.
- They might notice that Superman is simultaneously Superman and Clark Kent and that “When Superman is Superman he is Clark Kent, and when he is Clark Kent he is Superman!” Superman/Clark is thus always seeing the world through the same eyes, with or without those glasses!

More aggressive and confident in their environment

- They are more aggressive and confident.
- They might run around with a light saber and a Darth Vader mask, inserting themselves into play with other children.
- They might like jumping into pools, possibly even jumping off a diving board.
- They more easily enjoy floating in a pool or the bathtub.
- They might help do the laundry better.

Epically powerful

- Their imagination progressively gets more detailed and more realistic at this milestone.
- At first, they run around pretending to be a fire chief. They just *are* a fire chief. As it progresses, they add details: they saved a cat by _____.
- Their imaginary play gets more realistic. They go from saving cats in imagination to wanting to play “grocery store.”
- They march into a class or appointment and announce, “I’m [so-and-so] and I solve lots of problems!”
- They again walk around exclaiming, “That’s IT!”
- These epic imaginations greatly coincide with the sleep disruptions seen at this milestone.
- They might even talk in their sleep. What they talk about is a problem they’ve been working on.
- Or when they get up at night, they actually try to solve a problem that they’ve been thinking (or, likely, dreaming) about.
- These more epic and realistic imaginary stories eventually lead to them actually inserting themselves into situations more, in bolder, more confident ways.

A look ahead

- Sometime in this milestone they might talk about a big, epic threat, such as a meteor hitting their house. This probably coincides with some sleep disruptions. Although I am not entirely positive, this seems to be putting into place the development that will come in the next milestone, where they start dealing with existential threats to their life.

Four Year Old Milestone 3B (4.2.2-4.3.0)—Intermixes Sets

Starts: Around 4.2.2 [y.m.w] (but, really, continues from the last one)

Most Intense: 4.2.3 until 4.3.0

Ends: 4.3.0

Irritable Period Summary

Relentlessly Demanding

- They become relentlessly demanding of you again.
- You might be back to having a child who wants you (or someone else) ALL day.
- Wants to be right by you, all day, sitting with you, cleaning with you, etc.
- Very demanding of you all day: play hide and seek, play train tracks, etc.
- They sit by you and it's right in the crook of your arm or neck. They might burrow in so hard that it hurts, such as they keep hitting your boobs.
- They might "linger" on you. They rest their head on you. They don't quite stay but don't quite go.
- Or they want to put a "hook" on you to trap you. (This can be utterly maddening.)
- They might demand you drop everything to bake a cake.
- They might want to play "Bring Mommy a package," over and over. They are a mailman bringing you packages.
- They love to be with you in the kitchen, helping with dishes or cooking.

Demands your direct attention

- They demand you watch every second of a movie they are interested in.
- They might keep asking you to watch them do a "Cannonball!!!"
- They keep wanting you to see something. This can get really annoying if, for instance, you are a woman, and they insist that you come into the men's room with them.
- They want a lot of attention right now. But on the bright side, they are always up for a lesson. Before, you might have a hard time prying them away from a movie they were watching or whatever else. Now you have a very eager student.
- Take note of your emotions and your relationship right now. They might be taking a hit.

Jealous

- Very jealous of who has mommy or daddy. They might even directly tell you this now.
- Might attack anyone who has mommy's attention
- They can be extremely sensitive to rejection, such as if other children say they don't want to play with them.

Bossy, gets in fights

- Wants their own way, has more meltdowns over it
- They demand that everyone be their friend and only their friend.
- They want all toys, crayons, etc., for themselves.
- They get into fights over who is allowed to do what:
 - Who can hang the first stocking
 - Who gets the last piece of bread

- When their sibling is allowed to open a toy that you just bought
- A more aggressive child might get out of control sometimes, harassing others or spinning around, out of control.

Sleep Issues

- MAJOR sleep issues at this one
- Gets up late at night, often.
- They might fall asleep at 4 pm and then wake up all out of sorts.
- They might fall asleep in the early evening and then get up at 4:30 am.
- When they get up in the middle of the night, they might do something like try to put a movie on. They get really upset that they can't make this happen.
- If they can describe their dreams, it might be of falling off something.
- There might be many nights where they want to be up late building something.

Scary Visions and Fears

- Towards the beginning of this milestone, they seem to have scary visions, which pertain to the floor especially.
- They might all of a sudden be scared by the stairs in your house or tell you they have to "hold" on when walking down the stairs. It is as if they are seeing, for the first time ever, that there are distinct stairs, and that you must walk on each one to get up and down them and that this might be a risk.
- Or they are simply extra cautious and careful when they are walking up and down the stairs. They might ask you if they have permission to go up and down them.
- Or they say, while walking, "The stairs are slippery!"
- They might "see" a river or lake at the bottom of the stairs or on your floor.
- As noted in the last milestone, they also started to have visions of perhaps meteors hitting your house. This seems to have initiated this development where they start to directly face potential existential threats to their life.
- After these scary visions and fears, they might be more boisterous and aggressive in testing the floor itself, such as jumping on beds or climbing up rope ladders.

Fear of abandonment

- They have a high fear of abandonment, such as if the primary caregiver simply leaves the house.
- Or they might think you are going to drop them off at a recycle place (after you simply dropped off your stuff).

Beginning sense of mortality

- They seem to have a beginning sense of mortality.
- If they see someone about to die or thinking about dying in a movie, they might get really scared. For instance, they see Rose about to jump in the movie *Titanic*.
- They might talk about people dying or bad people.
- They might get intensely fearful about getting hurt, such as with bullets if they read about it in a story.
- They might not like any "Monster" games or anything where anything scary is chasing them.

Physical Growth and Issues

- About two weeks into this milestone, there is major physical growth. It coincides greatly with the sleep issues, their new beginning sense of mortality, and when they are more prone to illness.
- They get taller. When you pick them up, they are a verifiable tree trunk. As such, carrying them becomes much more difficult.
- Picking them up to get out of the bathtub might be harder. You might find yourself asking them to get out by themselves more.
- Walks faster
- Their facial features seem more intricate.
- Their fears plus physical growth might make accidents more likely, such as they trip and fall over face first.
- More prone to illness
- They might demand you be by them to “keep them warm.” They seem a bit out of it when they ask this. You essentially act like a “fever” to them, which regulates body heat when they go through something.

Wants to build a house, probably late at night

- At around 4.3.0 [or as offset from when your child follows the milestones], it is almost assured they will stay up very late. During this time, late at night, they want to build a “house.” They might:
 - At 10:00 pm, demand you go to a vacant lot. They tell you all about how they would build a house there.
 - Or, again late at night, they set up bins and blankets in their room to delineate a kitchen, bedroom, etc.
 - Build a house with a “dancing ball” (a disco ball), made out of Crazy Forts
- It is again at night that they are most likely to do this. If you don’t let them stay up late or aren’t with them late at night, you might not see this intense desire to build a house. But, otherwise, do pay attention—how they do it is highly unique to your child!
- They might build this house during the daytime instead of late at night. However, they are still very likely to stay up late at night around 4.3, even if staying up late is very out of character for them, and to be fascinated by houses. They might, say, want to open the curtains to a window and talk about all the houses outside.

Most Intense

- Possible meltdowns, might harass others like siblings or parents, major sleep issues, might be very demanding of your time and that you do highly physical things with them constantly (be near them, play “mailman,” watch them be a cannonball, etc.)

New Abilities Summary

- They’ve been learning about sets. They just learned to see sets as a “whole.” Now they compare entire sets to each other, in a deliberate way. One set might be [Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman] and another set might be [Wonder Woman, Super Girl, Bat Girl]. Why is Wonder Woman in *both* sets?
- One of the most important sets is themselves (all that they are) as against their surroundings. How do they fit in? They just developed an intense awareness of what their physical body parts do. Now they compare themselves to the backdrop of a situation.

- As noted, they build intensely, and in a way that is very wizard-like. As they have been gifted with highly imaginative thinking, they go into a learning phase. They are highly curious, inquisitive, and become highly attuned to others.

Asks questions about sets of things

- Perhaps they see a picture of superhero women, such as Super Girl, Wonder Woman, etc. And then on another page they see members of the “Justice League,” which includes Super Girl, Super Man, etc. Why is Super Girl in BOTH sets?
- How are there bees AND bumblebees?
- Why can you see colors in the day but not at night?
- Why can you see lights at night but not in the day?
- What happens when sets are mismatched? If we want to play a game that can only handle two players, but we have three players, how do we do that?
- A highly analytical child might write $11 + 11 = 22$. I think they are experimenting with what set goes with what: where the tens and ones go.

Compartmentalizes, then intermixes sets

- They have a solid idea of who is in what set. One set is X. Another set is Y. They now slightly mix and match them, in a holistic way, in their environment. It is funny and interesting to them.
- Let’s say there is a set of people, say the cleaning ladies, who need to be downstairs, and another set of people, children, who are to stay upstairs. They are told to stay upstairs, as the cleaning ladies need to do their work. If there is a situation that arises such that the child needs to be downstairs, how do they solve that? They found an ornament that, in order to be cleaned up, needs put on the Christmas tree, which is downstairs. Do they have permission to go? You say yes. They tiptoe down “so I don’t distract them!” The ordered sets are violated: a child is downstairs. But it’s ok. They handled it: they were quiet.
- They get how characters in a book interact better. In *The Very Busy Spider*, there are two sets of animals: the quiet and hard-working spider and the frolicking animals always trying to get her to play. Before, they took one side or the other: the spider or the frolicking animals. (And what side they take, I think, is quite interesting! Some children identify with the hardworking spider and others with the playful animals.) Now they understand the interplay better. If before they were more on the side of the frolicking animals, they might say about the spider, understanding her better, “But she was very busy.”
- They might similarly do this with “Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed.” They take delight in the interplay between the jumping, frolicking monkeys and the admonishing doctor.
- They might follow along with a chapter book better. They become concerned and immersed in the book, noticing the characters and how they interact. They might notice and become sad that younger siblings don’t get to go to wizard school in *Harry Potter*. (Given they are the younger sibling, they have a heightened awareness of this.)
- They might enjoy picking a role and playing with others in pretend play more. If they stomp around to the song, “The Ants Go Marching,” they assign themselves the role of “the little one,” and they go and suck their thumb, tie their shoe, climb a tree, etc.
- They similarly might want to play another role, such as mailman. They love to get the mail and hand it to you.
- That they see who fits in where might explain why they are so intensely hurt when other children exclude them.

- On the other hand, they might now forcefully stick up to other children who are being bullies.
- They also start to ask permission a lot—to the point it can get annoying. This will grow in the next milestones. Perhaps they are this cautious about violating ordered sets or the way of things.

Intermixing Perspectives

- They can get super complicated and “meta” about mixing and matching sets, as to include the sets of your perspective versus theirs. This greatly fuels a heightened understanding that other people have their own perspective.
- If a character in a book disguises himself, they might note, “If they disguise themselves as [x], others think he’s [x]. But if he disguises himself as [y], they think he’s [y]!” And then they take it to the level, “But what if everyone thinks they are [x] when they are [y] and then they pretend to be [x]!” That *would* be super tricky.
- They might marvel that, “If Wonder Woman used the lasso of truth on HERSELF, then SHE would have to tell the truth.”
- They might like reversing roles with you, where they are the Mommy, and you are the child. They might do this especially after they think they did something wrong.
- If they go upside down, they might make the joke, “Hey! Why is everyone upside down?” But the realize this is a joke, and that they are the ones upside down.
- If you are taking their picture and didn’t get it and ask them, “Can you say cheese again?” they say, joking and smiling, “Cheese again!”
- They mix and match sets. One set, X, is their perspective. Another set, Y, is others. Playing around with the interplay of this seems to fuel the idea that other people would see the world a particular way, different from them.

Takes a guess as to the perspective of others

- They take a guess as to how others would see things or how they might feel.
- They might be able to guess what the saddest part of the day was for their sister—when she fell down and hurt herself.
- They might take notice of what makes others happy, such as their baby brother likes playing with train tracks.
- Respectful of others such as saying “Mommy I am going to respect you. I’ll let you sleep!”
- Or perhaps “You need to do chores? Does that mean you need space?”
- If you tell them your belly hurts because you are pregnant, they might guess about you, “Is that why you have to rest so much? Because you need to let your body heal itself?”
- These guesses as to how others see things or feel are based on what is widely regarded, on a human level, as to what others like and don’t like. Most people don’t like falling down, extra loud noises, having their stuff taken, etc. They don’t truly know the other’s perspective yet.

Traditional restraints no longer apply!

- Their ability to identify and intermix sets unleashes creativity. They lose unnecessary restraints.
- If you are playing a game where all characters walk (say a board game where the tokens are a shoe, cat, etc.), they realize the character they have is a bird. They don’t need you slow pokes anymore. They can fly! They then do. They understand the nature of the object and the overall context.
- They might surprise you in how resourceful and creative they are. They might make a dress for a doll out of rose petals. Old conventions don’t apply!

- They might like building with things where you can mix and match whatever you want. Perhaps they build a LEGO house in which they can mix and match parts: maybe a cat hides under a bed. Their toys can get to be real actors in the larger scene.

Cheekier understanding of what is going on

- The essence of humor is often that something is where it shouldn't be. They have a heightened sense of that now.
- They sense when you withhold information from them. For instance, you sneak off to have some private time with your spouse. They keep asking you, "What are you doing? Where are you going?" They know you aren't answering them fully.
- If you put on lingerie and they find you while wearing it, they ask why your shirt has "holes" in it. They know it's an unusual shirt and the answer you are giving is probably weak.
- They are very confident as to what set they might be in. When they are playing with a boat, you ask if they are a pirate. They coolly respond, "No. I'm the captain."
- They 100% know if they are dressed up cute that they are cute and cheeky, such as in a huge parka on a cold day.
- If you joke around with them and say something ridiculous, they pause and look at you like "Errrrm, no," before responding.
- If you try to lecture them, you might get a four year old's equivalent of "Bla, bla, bla" in response.
- They get a kick out of you joking, "Stop swinging so high! Don't go to the moon! You can't survive there, and I can't get you if you go there! Stay on the earth!" The juxtaposition of a human living on another planet is funny to them.
- They might make funny or offhand comments about success of survival like "I am going to be with Mommy. She helps keep me alive." (This also speaks to their growing sense of mortality, sense of self, and survivability.)
- They understand the overall setting better and might be more aware of what day of the week it is.
- They enjoy the environment more. They might enjoy smells more, such as coffee brewing.
- Conversely, with the heightened awareness of what is going on, it might engender grief. If you found the tiara that was missing for their Halloween costume, they are really sad. Halloween was 3 months ago, and they couldn't wear their tiara, as it was missing. But now you found it. The lost moment!

Practical joke playing

- They start to play little jokes, likely involving being somewhere they shouldn't or dressing up as someone they are not.
- They dress up as a Star Wars Stormtrooper and inform you they are the Stormtrooper. Then they reveal who they REALLY are.
- Or they might sneak up on you and say, "Surprise!"
- Their giggle fits and infectious laugh right now is of note. To elicit it, you might do something like call Wonder Women, "Wondey," drum on their back (their back!?), or read a funny book like those from Mo Willems.

Highly attuned

- They become highly attuned to you. They constantly want to be by you, learning.

- If you take a series of photos with them next to an adult and play them at rapid speed, you might see that they are copying what the adult does down to the microsecond. If the adult slightly opens their mouth, so do they, etc. They are intent and focused, watching what you do.
- If you get frustrated with them and throw your arms in the air, they do the exact same thing. They even look at their arms and hands and shake them to see that they are copying you exactly.
- They might adopt the behavior of another sibling (for better or worse!).
- They might do things for you that you have always done for them. If you always rub their back, they now offer to rub yours.
- They might take instruction really well now, such as at swim lessons.
- They might play “back and forth” games more, such as they ask another child a math problem, back and forth.
- Or they might want to lock all the doors, and then have you unlock all of them.
- Loves to help Daddy in the garage, copying what he does.
- They ask you to “read!” and “learn!” And it’s said as, “Daddy, let’s read!” They very much expect to learn side-by-side with an adult.
- They might ask you endless questions.

Highly curious and inquisitive

- As comes as no surprise, given their insightful perceptions, they become highly curious and inquisitive. They need all the data about all the things to size everything up.
- They have many scientific questions like:
 - Why do some things snap when bent and other things don’t?
 - Why does liquid evaporate?
 - Why don’t they wear clothes in the swimming pool?
- They are, again, mixing and matchings sets, questioning them. Why *aren’t* clothes worn in the pool?
- They might have endless questions. “Why are you so excited?” “Why are you sad?” Why did every character in every book do the thing they did, ever?
- If you go anywhere, they want to investigate everything, perhaps what the words on benches say.
- They might notice interesting things, such as a model engine or statues, while out.
- They might ask you to pick them up so they can “see more.”
- Very interested in numbers. If they haven’t yet, they might want to count things all the way to 100.

Highly resourceful

- As noted, at 4 years 3 months, they are almost guaranteed to want to make a “house.” How they do it will be unique to your child—take note. But they have a big idea in their head and go make it happen. They are resourceful. This is very characteristic of this milestone.
- It’s not just that they have make-believe problems and find the solution. They think of solutions that they have to go get the materials for—and do.
- Leading up the days where they make this house, they seem to all but be a “wizard.” They have crazy ideas in their head, and they talk a lot about making their ideas happen. Piles of stuff get moved around and rearranged as they implement their wizard-like ideas.
- Leading up to this night, they also “build” constantly and in a way that is very “wizard” like, i.e., they want things to happen almost as if by magic. They might:

- Have imaginary friends that help them in this resourcefulness. A guy named Joe might help them find their missing tiara. Imaginary workers might help them build a house.
- Think their dad built everything around them, such as the playground equipment at a playground
- Ask you to help them make things for everyone, such as baking a cake for their siblings
- Ask for tape, road signs, and other materials, to make a traffic scene they had in their mind
- Get a set of clippers to cut their own nails
- Become intensely interested in rearranging items in a doll house or something similar, such as a LEGO structure that is a house.

Solves BIG problems

- Towards the end of the milestone, they move into problem solving mode, and big ones at that. Their stories progressively have more details added to them and get more realistic, leading into the next milestone.
- At first, they are never just solving a problem. They are saving the world. All things that get fixed right now are blown up to something big.
- If Dad is changing an outlet in the house, they imagine you are installing an elevator in the house.
- If a restaurant goes out of business, they declare, “It’s my job to fix the restaurant.”
- If they make a mess on the floor, they might solemnly declare “It’s my job to fix it.” They say this as if their village just got plundered from a mistake they made, and they have to fix it.
- They get very forceful about imaginative solving problems. They might swing their hands like a gavel, hitting the open palm of their other hand as they say, “We need to solve this problem!”
- Zombies get “pewed,” handily.
- They take it upon themselves to solve many things. They walk around, “Oh no. What can we do? I know! How about a ladder to help us!”
- What they want to solve reflects their core passions, e.g., a child who wants to fix a restaurant may very well be a child with a passion for cooking.

Four Year Old Milestone 4 (4.3.1-4.3.3)—Obsessions

Starts: A few days before 4.3.1 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: The first week can be intense as well as a few days towards the end.

Ends: A few days before 4.3.3

Irritable Period Summary

Builds and Builds

- They build and build and play and play to the point you might get overwhelmed.
- They get lots of toys out and leave them all over the house.
- They keep wanting you to watch everything they build: with Play-Doh, building towers, etc.
- Their creative efforts might literally be in your face. They make “food” out of Play-Doh and want to feed it to you. Or they make tracks in sand or Play-Doh and want you to “smell” it.
- They might want to destroy other children’s creations. They need the materials.

Fear of Abandonment, Demanding

- If you leave and come back, they might run up to you like they were frightened the whole time you were gone.
- They might build a tower out of, say, paper towels, to block you in somewhere (so you don’t leave them).
- Might demand your attention a lot

Defiant

- They can be super defiant and have major meltdowns if asked to do anything at all, like leave the house, get in the bath, etc. They won’t put their underwear on. Then they won’t come downstairs. Then they won’t put their shoes on.
- Their behavior depends on how many things are asked of them: how often they have to get dressed to go somewhere, if they actually want to go to wherever, etc.
- In this defiance and aggression, they might unknowingly trip over and fall splat on the floor.

Sleep Issues

- Sleep issues are seen in the intense period especially, about a week into the milestone.
- They might get up in the middle of the night.
- When they get up in the middle of the night, they might go on and on about their favorite topic. (Pay attention to what it is!) Or they might want to build.
- They might tell you they have dreams, constantly, of a topic, perhaps of dinosaurs.
- Might not want you to leave them at night

Anger, Aggression

- Anger and aggression are seen in the intense period.
- They might harass their siblings a lot.
- Or hop on their parents so much that it hurts.
- Even the most chill child can get all of a sudden get angry. They might throw something, because they are frustrated that they something they made (that is easily breakable, such as a LEGO creation) got broke.

- A more aggressive child might not back off, even though something they are doing is making someone cry.

New Abilities Summary

- This one is marked distinctively by them becoming obsessed with something, in a good way. They work on learning or doing something day after day, and they can work on something difficult for hours.
- They've been getting good at seeing whole "sets" and cycles of things. Now, it's on turbo drive. They "see" the final destination of what they are working towards, and they persist at it until it's done—going up, down, left, right, gaining wins, making mistakes, learning.
- Double Matrix Sorting: Before they were intermixing sets. Before they wondered why Wonder Woman was in both [Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman] and [Wonder Woman, Super Girl, Bat Girl]. Now they can answer, "Wonder Woman is both a member of the Justice League *and* a female superhero."
- They start to become wowed by outer space and dinosaurs.

Highly persistent in pursuing goals

- They are impressively persistent at solving at problems. Before, they wanted to solve big problems. Now they try to actually do it.
- Their dad might have showed them how to set up a winch for one of their toy trucks, using the parts of a Simple Machine Kit. They want to do it later—and don't want your help. It takes them two hours, but they do it!
- They might try to raise the Titanic. They set up a scene where the Titanic is on the bottom of the ocean floor, and they get yarn to try to raise it.
- They get really good at doing some things with multi-steps entirely on their own, such as making scrambled eggs (can crack eggs, put milk in, all of it).
- They want to build a LOT. They may get out every puzzle/science kit you have and want to do it.
- They can set up many of their own play activities, such as setting up a baseball T to practice hitting balls.
- They are a jolly help around the house.
- They might take out their own garbage bag and put it in the big garbage bin.
- They might march around staying persistently in character, such as marching around like a drummer boy.

Initiates problems to solve

- They initiate their own lessons, constantly. Maybe something you showed them a long time ago once, such as putting numbers in order.
- They might make up a game where you have to persistently keep trying until you find something. Perhaps a ball is under one of several dozen cups that you have to find.
- They might insist on following a diagram of some sort (with your help) to build something, such as Snapcircuits.
- They might persistently try to cheer their sibling up. As they try to make her laugh, they note, perplexed, "But she's not smiling."

Obsessions

- They can work at things over several days. They become fascinated with a particular topic or problem.

- On their own, they might perfect something. Perhaps they've been reading or learning about how the Titanic sinks. They can tell the whole story, down to devastating detail, about it. They work on telling it day after day.
- They might build things with LEGO and engage in imaginative play all day.
- They might tell you they obsess over a particular topic, such as, "I love dinosaurs! I think about them all the time!"
- They might cheerfully want to work on a new skill, perhaps teaching a stuffed animal how to use the potty. They stay with it, constantly learning, even pretending to be immersed in reading the instructions.
- They are able to pay attention to new things they have never seen before, such as National Geographic video documentary, "The Making of a Planet."

An Appreciation of Tools

- They love working with tools.
- They now start to appreciate that tools do things that their body can't. They might note that you can do certain things with your hands but it "makes your hands sticky." A tool would be handy, right?
- As noted, they might stick with figuring how to use a real tool, such as a winch (a tool).
- They grow in how much they investigate, when it comes to the properties of materials around them. They might use a hammer to tap on some metal to see what it does. They might notice that something was made of metal, and it bent.
- They also might like playing with coins and, perhaps, putting them in their pockets. (Pockets, in general, are very interesting and novel to young children.)

Information is entirely implanted now

- They very reliably have information in her head and can use it for the practical purpose at hand.
- You can ask, "What's the happy part of your day?" and they remember every part of the day and pick the very, very favorite one.
- They've been "rummaging" for a while, and now it's a natural part of them. Now as they look around for something that is missing, they say out loud, "It has to be around here somewhere!"
- As they solve problems, they monitor progress. If you have to wait 15 minutes for something in the oven, they bring you to the clock to watch the time go by.
- They notice and fix their own mistakes. If they spell a word and intuitively see it's wrong, they want to go back and fix it.
- They get really good at left/right directions, even when discussing something entirely theoretically.
- They can talk about yet more complicated "What if?" scenarios, as yet more information is implanted in their mind.

Double matrix sorting

- In the last milestone they were interested in intermixing otherwise seemingly contradictory sets. They had more questions than answers. Now they have some answers (clarity). They can accept that things don't contradict; it's just that more than one attribute can make something them up.
- They can fill in a double matrix. Imagine a grid with columns of numbers and rows of color. If there are two of something red, where does it go on this theoretical grid? It would go in the column for "2" and the row for "red." This is the kind of understanding they have now.

- Some apps do exactly this, and they might be able to keep up with this app now.
- They can identify that a penguin is a bird but can't fly. If you imagine it as a theoretical double matrix, they sort this by "Animal Type" and "Mode of Movement." They correctly put the penguin, intellectually, in the box for "Bird" who "Doesn't fly."
- They might play around with it and determine that "things that are metal can't be bent." These are also two attributes that they note: it is metal and it can't bend.
- That they note that they can "use their hands to build things" but they also "get sticky" is also a double matrix sorting.
- This sorting might show up in their play. They might endlessly love to sort fruits of a certain sort in a basket and others in a different basket.
- This sorting might let them accommodate them and another person better. If racing, they draw out a path for you to race on: one for you and one for them. Now you both can race without crashing into each other.
- This double matrix sorting shows how "smart" they are getting. They can size up the world and categorize it, correctly. Information is implanted and they see things more as a "whole" as they categorize things, working with ideas quickly and accurately.

Mish-Mash of Ideas

- They handily size up two different sets. They mish-mash ideas together in ways they know are ridiculous but funny.
- They tell this joke: "Would you eat broccoli? Would you eat ice cream? Would you eat BROCCOLI ice cream?"
- They wonder if you would eat a ship? A TV? They know it's ridiculous but funny.
- They make up stories that are a mish mash of things, perhaps of Star Wars, Harry Potter, and princesses. Ariel flew around on an X-wing earlier, and Harry Potter landed on Kamino.

Space, dinosaurs, and other historical novelties

- They are super interested in big topics across time, especially outer space and dinosaurs.
- This is of no surprise, really: four year olds are fascinated by dinosaurs!
- They love dinosaurs. They might:
 - Like to make scenes out of dinosaurs in their pretend play
 - Tell you they have lots of dreams about dinosaurs
- They are into space, too. They might:
 - Enjoy documentaries about earth and space
 - Notice a picture of a planet and want to talk about it
 - Blue and green Play-Doh are likely to get shaped into the earth.
- They might also really take to a historical event, like the sinking of the Titanic.
- It's like they enjoy realizing that they are part of this entirely cosmic thing of space and time. They soon will become aware of time itself, and I don't think this is a coincidence.

Social changes

- Their relationship with their best friend changes. They are far chummier.
- They verbally identify who is their best friend now.
- They melt if the two of them are separated then see each other again.

- They melt at the thought that one person is helping another, such as Daddy is doing something for Mommy.
- They have deeper laughs and more interaction with their friends.

Four Year Old Milestone 5 (4.4.0-4.4.3)—Astute and Forward

Starts: Very mildly a few days shy of 4.4.0 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: Flareups between 4.4.1 and 4.4.3

Ends: 4.4.3

Irritable Period Summary

Sleep Issues

- The beginning shows a few sleep issues.
- They might fall asleep in the day a few times. They might do this while holding onto their favorite toy.
- They might want to stay up late at night, doing something totally different, like wanting to play soccer.

Demanding

- Very demanding in wanting to have a particular caregiver at night
- Wants your attention a lot
- Wants to be by you
- Wants to play every single board game you have in your house
- Demands other children play with them, doing what they want
- They might demand you get things for them. They absolutely will not get it for themselves.

Extremely sensitive to matters related to paper (or other 2-D surfaces that you “read”)

- I know it sounds bizarre, but the pattern I found is that they are extremely sensitive to things related to paper or reading. This is, however, the skill they are soon to work on.
- They might be very upset if you opened a Valentine’s Day card that they excitedly handed to you and said was beautiful. The envelope itself was the “beautiful thing.” When you ripped the envelope open, you ruined it.
- They otherwise hate when anything else gets “ruined.”
- They might all of a sudden wants something very different from normal, such as a different meal than normal at a restaurant. They have a really big meltdown if you failed to ask what they wanted for dinner. I believe they saw the menu, half read it, and wanted something different.
- They start to “read” and “plan” better at this one. It’s possible that, for the first time ever, they realize they can somewhat read the menu and plan what they want to eat. Anything related to any paper, such as a menu or envelopes, might be super meltdown territory right now.

Sensitive to the deeper meaning of what is happening

- They also are very astute about in-the-moment things and what they mean. As they survey a scene, they have a deeper understanding about what things mean: someone is slighting them, someone is mad at them, etc.
- If another child yells at them, perhaps because the child tripped on a toy of theirs, they might completely break down. They start disassembling the offending toy. They are this aware of what happened, and this hurt. It tugs at your heartstrings, big time.
- Being more aware of their environment, they can get super upset that other kids don’t do what they want. They stomp off, “Guys. I’m LEAVING.”
- They might seem to feel slighted that you spend more time with other children.

- They don't like when their brother calls them "silly."
- Some children are more prone to aggression, such as lunging at a child who took "their" balloon (even though they were done). However, explaining the situation to them (their sister thought they were done) causes them to agree to share.
- Given how astute they are, in the flareups in the intense period, it seems like almost anything can unexpectedly upset them.

Super physical with you

- They might demand to be right by you, in a physical way, for much of the day. It can get very grating.
- Or, this might be seen as a positive if you have only one child to deal with and can do all the lessons and activities they want to do now.
- They are far more physical with you. As they walk by you, they might purposely "bump" you, such as with their shoulder.
- They might use your body as a playground. They want to use your legs as the "water" that a ship is going to sink in.
- They might get unusually aggressive. They might unexpectedly punch you in the crotch.
- Having them be so near you and having to frequently ask them to stop (as they are near sensitive areas) can be very irritating.
- As they ask for your attention, try to run between your legs, pop up behind you, and put things right in your face, it might literally make you dizzy.

Physically Grows

- They get a bit taller, and their head might get bigger too. Old hats might not fit, etc.
- In growing, they might trip and fall more easily.
- They really change big time now. Their entire face really seems different. It's more intricate.

Most Intense

- VERY sensitive. Might scream or have meltdowns over everything, wants your attention, extremely upset over anything and everything. It can be maddening, but it is short lived.

New Abilities Summary

- Astute means they take in information very well. Forward means they use that information in very proactive ways. This is very rapid now: they absorb information and put it to use quickly. It's very "springy."
- They also start "reading and planning," which is similar to "astute and forward," but a bit more formal. They can start to interpret things on a 2-D surface.
- They can also intellectually size up their environment and make intentional plans in it.

Astute and Forward

- Very, VERY reliably understands what is happening around them. Very active in taking in new information and using it.
- For instance, they understand how much something costs (astute), which they then use to make a decision (forward). While looking through shirts at a store they announce, "Hey mom! This shirt is FIVE BUCKS!"

- Or they need to remove all size 4 clothes from their dresser, as they are now size 5. They do this, with verve and commitment. When they find offending size 4 clothes (the astute part), they march up to you, “This is totally terrible! It’s a size 4! I need size 5!” (the forward part).
- More opinionated and argumentative about what they read. For instance, if an evil character says the world is filled with only wicked people, they disagree, “No! That’s not true! The world is filled with kind people!”
- Not having it if others are disrespectful. Another child tells them to stop crying and they respond, forcefully, “No! I am a girl who cries, Ok!?”
- They act on cue in a play you are performing. As Snow White, after being handed a poisoned apple, on their own initiative, they convincingly falling to the ground, unconscious.
- If you hand them a paper cutout of the Titanic, they rip it in half. Because that’s what happens.
- They can answer reading comprehension questions about what they read more thoroughly.
- They are generous with their knowledge: the sun can power solar trains.
- They might be more willing to participate in activities with older children, such as reenacting a history scene where you pretend to step over hot rocks.
- Or perhaps they insert themselves into an activity where you check things off, such as what foods you have eaten and liked, which you were doing with their older siblings. “How about milk!” they offer, as a food they can check off. They understood what was going on the whole time and want to participate. They play along happily.
- Might want to help you with more stuff, like putting on lipstick or even cleaning up a room

Reading

- They take an incredible interest in “reading.” This is the “astute” part taking on a more focused form, finding itself analyzing things on 2-D surfaces. This may be indeed words themselves. But it can also be any picture that they see on a 2-D surface.
- You might show them a diagram of how something works, and they can understand and explain what they just learned, over and over.
- They might be very interested in an academic app like Starfall Academy, phonics apps, Plumber, or want to play Minecraft like their older siblings. They understand what is on a 2-D screen better.
- As they watch videos, they understand words like “Skip Ad” better. They better know what to do when they see it.
- They might also be more adventurous in using the remote, going up, down, to the left, etc., as they navigate their way around the screen. It is, again, as if symbols and movement on a 2-D surface pop out at them much better now.
- They similarly might enjoy being the person to push “Start” and “Stop” on a stopwatch while timing someone doing something.
- They might, also, indeed, take an interest in reading itself. They spontaneously pick up a book and take an intense interest in reading it.
- They might actively try to teach themselves to read. They put on videos to learn to spell. Or they ask you to spell with them.
- They are likely to be able to identify at least 1 or 2 words, such as the title of a favorite movie.

- A language-gifted child (some children are and some aren't—please don't compare your child negatively to these lists!) can become a voracious reader, reading beginner book after beginner book.
- As they read, they don't want to have to spell out the words. They want to just be able to read the words. I, as always, advocate an approach to reading where you just say the word for the child, in lieu of making them sound out every letter. Mom reads as mom. Cat reads as cat.
- As they ponder what they read, perhaps it serves as a launching point to help them plan things a bit better, of which they also get good at:

Plans what they are about to do by sizing it up intellectually

- Instead of just doing something, they plan out what they are about to do better.
- If doing a maze in a workbook, instead of just doing it, they hover their crayon over it first, figuring a path that lets them go from start to finish. Once they have a workable solution, they actually do it.
- They might look at a chart tracking children's success at something, say of how many books they've read. As they look at how many books their brother has read, they say they want a reading chart of their own and conclude, "I will win!"
- They might realize they can actually make something or do something, based on their skill set. For instance, you taught them how to sew. When they see something, such as a corn bag (a fabric filled with corn used as a heating pad), they tell you, "Hey! We can make one of these!"
- They are thoughtful about their projects. As they mix Play-Doh together by rolling it into snakes in their hand, they tell you, "Orange and green Play-Doh mixed together make yellow, but too much green and it's just light green!"
- They might invite you into their newfound skill of surveying a situation and then making a plan, "Yeah! Let's work as a team!"
- They might be more willing to do purposeful activities where they are blindfolded, such as "Find Your Tree." In this, you ask them to close their eyes, walk to a tree and then walk back. They go find their tree. If you can think, imagine, and plan, you are a bit more OK with going without sensory input.

Alert to their surroundings

- They enjoy knowing that they understand what's going on. As they watch a favorite movie, they marvel, "I know exactly what's going on!"
- They overhear you talking about getting a pet. You joke you might get a zebra. There is a very knowing, understanding, unexpected giggle that comes out of them as they overhear you talking. A pet zebra! Hilarious.
- You tell them it's Tuesday. On their own, they realize it's garbage day and go take out their bag of garbage.
- There is a better overall understanding of any process itself, as it goes down in real time. They might use the phrase, "so far." Somebody has found three of the things they are looking for. Your child says, "They've found three things," and they follow themselves up, thoughtfully, with "so far."
- They are mindful of you and others. If they barge in on you to find you are in the bathroom, they sneak out, "I'll let you be!"
- Or they quietly close doors, so their infant brother doesn't wake up from a nap.

- This ability to follow plans/steps as they happen over time is what will grow and grow in the next milestones.

Figures out more on their own, sticks with it

- They figure out more on their own. They might figure out how to use a mechanical thing, such as a hospital bed they saw for the first time, almost entirely on their own.
- They might figure out how to assemble a bird feeder, taking the whole thing over from you, doing it entirely on their own. Little to no explanation needed.
- If their fitted sheet is being washed, they might try to put on another one. They nearly do it.
- They can easily set up a board game now.
- At this milestone or soon after, they take a renewed interest in magnets. They are more pointed in figuring out how to use them. They figure out, on their own, that magnets stick to metal and not plastic.
- They are also interested in what things are metal, plastic, wood, etc.

Cheekier, planned jokes

- Age five is marked by prank pulling. It starts, however, around here, in a subtler form. Being astute and forward is the essential skill needed for prank pulling.
- They wait for you to be done with your shower. When you get out, they are dressed up like Darth Vader, waiting to surprise you.
- They wait for you anywhere and then pop out, “Boo!”
- They might show up doing something funny. If their sister is dressed like a princess, they show up in a scary mask.
- They might put on a costume to go to the grocery store and announce, “People will think I’m hilarious!”
- More likely to be a bit of a “punk.” Near a body of water, you might get playfully splashed.
- They might wrap up their jacket on their head as a turban, to make people laugh.
- They are a scary ghost here to scare you. They reveal just one eye and tell you, “Mommy, one eye is looking at you!”
- As they plan their mastermind jokes, they might wrap their blanket around them like a cloak. Kind of like a ghost with a billowing blanket walking around.
- They might copy you, say when you are exercising, in a way that is very funny.

Socially Proactive

- While you are super busy, they might hear their new baby brother is crying, find his bottle, and feed him entirely on their own.
- They arrange proactive solutions among siblings. They might agree to taking turns eating the last piece of bacon.
- They might make up stories of their stuffed animals or other creations fighting, but they work to solve the problem, perhaps through Mommy and Daddy’s help.
- If their sibling falls on the stairs, they move to comfort them. They help by telling them, in the gentlest, most comforting way possible, “See? Your bones can BREAK!”

Deliberate choice over emotional reactions

- This is the first age where they seem to have some deliberate control over their emotional reactions. It's not just that they deliberately create emotions, which they've done for a while, but they are deliberate in *response* to what happens to them.
- They might step on a sharp toy. Instead of having a meltdown, they seem to wrestle with their own emotions. They try to not scream/cry but rather deal with it.
- When you tell them you are going on vacation, they purposely put their face into an excited face, as if it to exaggerate that they are purposely showing they are excited.
- They might play around with emotions big time. They might theorize their dad will be mad at them if they demolish a tower they just made. (Dad would not be mad.)
- Really, they seem to just be playing around with the emotions, noticing how they can respond in more deliberate ways.

Highly creative in exact, planned ways

- They are very creative and playful in what they build. They have highly creative ideas AND can make them happen.
- They might do something really complicated, like build a ship out of LEGO bricks, but such that it can easily crack in half. They need this for their story they are setting up where it cracks and sinks to the bottom of the ocean.
- They might build a wood block creation that has a sliding roof, to reveal something.
- Colored blocks might get stacked in creative arrangements. They slope down at an interesting angle—in rainbow order.

Very confident, expressive, aggressive, and precise with their hands

- They really love to draw, cut, and tape things. They are more ambitious in their projects and more precise in what they make.
- They pull tape off of a roll of tape to exactly a certain length. They then put it on an object in a way that is very lined up and well done.
- They take on brand new challenges. They might impressively make something like a “zip line” out of a few household objects, such as a straw over some yarn. It's strikingly more advanced than what they've been typically making.
- They also love noticing that they in fact did this. “I made a zip line!”
- They might make elaborate things with paper, like an airplane with wings (that they cut out).
- Or they even might make a book.
- They might have more realistic and detailed drawings. Perhaps a dinosaur with roller skates and a hat who gets killed by meteorites. Or they draw an elaborate mountain scene.
- They can be very exact in how they use their hands. Free handing it, they draw an airplane with symmetrical wings.
- Or, again free handing it, they might draw perfectly straight lines, such as the decks on a ship.
- Really good at folding paper in half
- Really loves when a parent sits down and draws their favorite things with them, maybe a boat or an airplane
- They are astute and forward and more aggressive with their hands. Your walls are prime targets to be drawn all over. Fair warning.

Communicates with their hands

- They also use their hands aggressively now, to communicate and make things happen.
- They might readily give a “thumbs up” sign to things they approve of or agree to.
- They might spread their hands out a lot to show people things, “See?”
- They might “buzz” like a bumble bee, frequently and with verve.
- They might spontaneously trace letters with their fingers.
- They also might readily playfully “punch” things they don’t like.

Bodily gestures that suggest they are thinking

- That they are thinking about and absorbing everything is very apparent in their facial expression and bodily gestures.
- They might hold their hand up to you. It’s as if to tell you to stop talking, because they are thinking.
- Or they might wave their hand around while mulling an idea.
- Or they hold up one finger, “I know! I have an idea!”
- To get you to do things, they are more handsy. They put their hand right on you and ask, “How about you be by me to keep me warm?”

Their speech improves

- Their enunciation might also improve. Instead of “pashengers,” you now hear “passengers.”
- They might now even use the word “exactly” more.

Multiplication (grouping numbers)

- They take a spontaneous interest in counting things in groups.
- They might see 3 blocks together. They keep counting them over and over, “1,2,3,” and then “4,5,6,” and on and on.
- They might line up something in a grid, such as 3 rows of 3 bean bags.
- They might get out every math manipulative toy in your house to play with.
- If they didn’t take to it before, they might now like tying the number of something to its numeral. Five of something ties to “5.” The number of objects in a group is more intuitive to them now.
- They might really love counting past 20, over and over again.

Intuitively remembers things from long ago

- This is the first age I found where random old memories get kicked up. They might:
 - Shockingly all of a sudden remember a toy they used to have, which went missing 18 months ago.
 - Remember a room from a house they haven’t lived in for months
 - Remember how something was arranged in a room (perhaps decals on the wall), which they haven’t seen in months
 - Remember that time you let them eat pizza in the bathtub (which was a LONG time ago!)
- They don’t say “I remember this thing from years ago.” But they very clearly remember some thing or way of doing things from months, if not years, ago.

A loss of a certain kind of fantastical thinking

- They are watching ice skating on TV. They then step on some bean bags. You ask them if they are ice skating. They look at you and say, “No. I’m standing on bean bags.”
- They no longer respond to “distraction” as well, not even the more imaginative kind of distraction that worked in the threes. For instance, to get them down a set of stairs that they don’t want to go

down, you offer to tell them a story. They tell you, "That makes no sense, mom." Why would telling them a story help them down the stairs?

- If they had an issue with it, they get better about realizing Christmas will come again. It's not gone "forever."
- This realism, however, might make them more upset. They might realize they'll outgrow their favorite dress, for instance, or that a favorite holiday, such as Christmas or Halloween, is over.
- Similar to understanding the progression of time, they might say, "I'm growing up to be a Henry!"

Social changes

- Loves when people love them, e.g., loves to hear that Mom and Dad will always, always love them, if they are good, bad, silly, or not
- Spends a long time (hours) with other children

Four Year Old Milestone 6A (4.5.2-4.5.4)—Persistent Consciousness

Starts: Between 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: It can start around 4.5.2 and last the rest of the milestone, getting “worse” as it goes. This is an extremely intense time.

Ends: 4.5.4

Irritable Period Summary

Playfully punches things and others

- It starts out mildly. At first, they just playfully punch you or others.
- They might say they are going to “punch bad guys!”
- Might ask you to punch bad guys on their behalf
- They might “punch” things using their stuffed animal to do it.
- They might readily punch things in the plays they put on, such as Rapunzel hitting Flynn on the head with a frying pan from the movie *Tangled*.
- They might often punch you or others in the butt/crotch or knees. (It’s at their level.)
- They might seem like an “Energizer Bunny” with how much they run around and even taunt you.

Directly says they see something that is not there

- Alligators might be under their bed—but they’re fake.
- Or, a “baby” that looks “just like them” is there, also on the floor, somewhere near them.

Awed by space

- Around this time of seeing things that aren’t there, they also become awed by something in space, perhaps wondering, “Do you see the moon?”
- Or they shockingly remembering all sorts of facts about space.
- This new wonder is likely what’s kicking off all this brain growth.

Increasing awareness of death

- They might, for the first time ever, declare that someone is going to “die.”
- They might put their hands over their eyes to cover them, which suggests they are scared of what they see.
- Similarly, they might hide under your dress.

Insists on being included / very upset if left out

- They insist on being included and they can get very upset if left out of anything.
- They want to be hyper involved in what you are doing. They want to help you with multi-step things, such as making coffee. If you don’t invite them to do this, they become deeply upset.
- You might tell them that you are going to the store with their brother and that they are staying home. They one hundred percent refuse to be left behind.
- They go up to others and insist that they be included.
- They won’t take “no” as an answer from other children when they want to play.
- They might stomp off to another room if they feel you aren’t paying attention to them or doing what they want.
- Might kick someone in an attempt to get their own way

- No amount of explanation that trying to force others into things is wrong seems to make a difference.

Sensitive to events ending

- They are especially sensitive to the fact that time is finite or that events end.
- They realize something definitively is about to end, such as the last Easter egg to be colored. They insist they be the one to color the last egg.
- They might tell you they do NOT like cleaning things up. It eats away at their time. They could have been doing something much more fun.

Intensely aggressive, whiny, clingy and/or prone to fights

- Towards the intense period, they are intensely aggressive, whiny, or clingy (whatever your child tends towards).
- A more aggressive child might come up to an adult and hit or kick them repeatedly every time they see that adult.
- They might be defiant, refuse to take baths, or jump on others.
- Their whining and fighting might become unbearable.
- They might get upset if someone takes “their” toy, which was just a toy another child happened to find in their room. After you give it to them, they throw it.
- Set to a hair trigger, they might stomp off a lot right now telling you, “Mommy, I’m MAD at you!”
- They might be utterly glued to you for a while.

Copies others

- They are deliberate in how they respond when angry, and they might copy exact behaviors.
- If mad, they purposely put their face in an expression to appear mad.
- They pick up easily on other’s behaviors of how to handle others. If an adult says, “You’re wasting my time!” they start saying this.
- Or if their brother deals with things by saying “I’m going to kick you!” they start saying that.
- They might start swearing! Check yourself and the influences they are around if you want to stop this now!

Wants to cooperate but has difficulty

- They want to cooperate and do things well, but sometimes they don’t know how or just need a bit of time.
- They might get out of control as if overcome by passion. For instance, they cut things that should not be cut, but they seem genuinely confused. They tell you they don’t know what they are allowed to cut or not. Believe them.
- If you get frustrated with them and they sulk for a bit, it doesn’t take too long for them to come back and be chummy or play again.
- You can ask them to take a deep breath and they might actually do it.
- If they are stuck in a scary spot, like they need to go down a scary set of stairs, with some gentle coaching, they are willing to take at least the first step. This gives them the confidence to go the rest of the way.

Physical Changes and Sleep Issues

- Around the intense period, they grow big time.
- A big head bulge might be seen.

- Or their head might become absolutely enormous, with large eyes.
- On one particular day, their eyes might look extremely sleepy, with darker circles under them (which is sometimes a sign of brain growth).
- Spits (always a sign of physical and/or mental growth)
- Might want to stay up late, working on new skills, such as reading
- A child who processes a lot of data might seem to go “a mile a minute” (suggests a major brain/memory upgrade, as does the head bulge).

New Abilities Summary

- It starts with another increase in imagination in which they are wowed by the possibilities of BIG things happening.
- They also might have a few visions of things that aren't there.
- They get good at multi-step processes, including projecting what some good steps would be into the future.
- They remember things and relate them to each other, persistently, day after day.

Wowed by the BIG possibilities of what can happen or what they can do

- This milestone starts off with a sense of doing BIG things.
- In the last one, they were astute and forward. They sized up their environment handily and made little plans (and jokes!) in it. Now it is as if they take this understanding and blow it up to something big.
- They might want to make something really BIG, like a BIG bean bag.
- When they read a book about hunting for fossils, they imagine themselves not just looking for plant fossils but DINOSAUR fossils. They imagine the very BIG truck you would need to bring that home.
- Cardboard boxes probably get turned into rockets or pirate ships.
- A simple hammock becomes their “Henry Pirate Ship!”
- Play-Doh gets turned into something big and imaginative, like rockets.
- Anything yellow-ish and glittery is “gold” to them.
- Note that this awe of big things is not exclusive to this milestone. This behavior happens at the beginning of a hill, when they've been gifted with new, bigger imaginary thinking.

They personally feel quite heroic

- They feel very big and important.
- They might want to save the whole universe.
- They do more fearless things, on their own initiative, like walk across rocks barefoot.
- They show fearlessness and courage. They might be intimidated by a game that children are playing, but after talking to them and comforting them, they trot off to go play, “Bye! I'm going to be brave!”
- About any activity they do, they say, “I win!”
- “I can sweep anything!” they say, after sweeping a bit of dirt.
- They tell you they want to dress up as an astronaut for Halloween.

Loves to help others and melts when helped

- They LOVE to help others.

- They want to make you coffee. They get upset if you make it without asking them to help you.
- They might really want to make their brother a sandwich—and does. They make the entire sandwich on their own and give it to him.
- When they ask you to make a smoothie, it might be because they want to give it to their sister. Please, I encourage you to indulge them.
- Unusually willing to help out around the house, such as putting their dishes away.
- Conversely, they might like when you help them. If they can read, they gush, “Mommy! I can read because you taught me!”

Good at multi-step processes

- They can easily remember several steps in any process, including ones just presented to them or presented to them in the past. They can stop, linger, and ponder any step. They know where they are in the process, where they are going, and what next step (or steps) might best.
- They can play a game with complex steps, such as Robot Turtles, Mastermind, Sorry!, or Checkers. They understand the instructions easily and pick up on strategy better now. For instance, they can tell you, in Mastermind such-and-such peg is the right color but the wrong spot.
- Or, in games like Sorry! or Checkers, they have better strategy. They can selectively pick what move to do next to further himself.
- They can play a game like Robot Turtles. In this, the child pushes a turtle around the board to get a diamond. They have to pick the correct card to tell the robot which direction to go, as if they are programming the robot. They might be able to do this now. (Don’t fret if they can’t. This multi-step ability might show up elsewhere for your child—maybe they can now play mini-golf well.)
- They really understand “protocol.” Any game or procedure has steps and they will follow them, strictly. They will, for instance, play “I Spy” all the way to the end.
- They might love to take part in something completely new to them, such as passing out candy at Halloween. They do it in an exact and fair way. They mind both how much they and the people at the door get. They are very fluid, exact, and comprehensive in how they do this.
- They might get fairly good at playing a physical game that requires commitment and skill, like putt-putt (mini-golf).
- Their drawings might reflect this new deepening ability to understand protocol. They perhaps draw out some routine you have in the house, such as where to put dirty dishes, by drawing the counter.
- Or you take them to vote and they come home and draw a vote ballot, pretending to vote.
- If they see a 100 chart and something is covering one of the numbers, they challenge themselves to figure out what it is. They have “one step ahead” thinking. A 100 chart is a 10 x 10 grid with numbers 1-100 on it.
- Perhaps their ability to see all the steps causes more independence. They might, for instance, be Ok with going into a public bathroom stall by themselves now. They revel in their new independence.

Makes multi-step plans into the future

- They can come up with solutions that will project into the future. For instance, Mom can put them to bed one night, then their brother gets Mom the next night, then come back to them the night after that.
- They come up with pretty good ideas when confronted with a problem while out. The coffee store is closed, so why don’t we go get what we needed while out, then go home and make coffee? They

offer to help make it with you, “I’d love to help you make coffee!” It’s a good plan, and their ability to come up with it is strikingly new.

- They wrestle with the big life issues they discovered in the last milestone, e.g., they were worried about their favorite restaurant closing. Now they have better ideas of how to keep a restaurant in business, “The restaurant needed more people to stay in business.”
- They might ponder if they can run for President. They realize they aren’t quite old enough yet.
- They might tell you who they want to dress up as for Halloween (which is months away).
- They might realize that practice makes them better at something.
- They might bubble over with excitement on how “all I have in my head are ideas and solutions!”

Persistently notices events across time, relates events at different times to each other

- In the last milestone (or you might see it just now in this milestone), they started to shockingly remember things from months or even years ago. This memory increase likely plays a role in their new mental connections across time.
- They make more connections as across time. On their own, they can identify things and their relevance.
- They might see a restaurant as you drive by it and say, “We went there last week.”
- Or when they see a park, they say, “That’s where we looked at the stars the other night.”
- After you get out of a store, they might remember where you parked your vehicle.
- They like knowing what is going on and taking guesses about what is about to happen. You were at your vacation rental house, then you went somewhere, and now you are probably going back to the vacation rental house.
- They might keep you apprised of all events going on all day, “Daddy is going to take a shower,” “We’re going to eat lunch now.”
- They might make a highly educated guess about something, given they know the goings on. For instance, something comes in the mail, and they know you need an unusual ingredient for something you are making. They guess that ingredient might be what has come in the mail.
- They use information that they gathered. You might ask them what they want to do, and they say they want to go to that special playground that they overheard you talk about the other day.
- I believe this is the age where they start to remember things day after day such that they stick. If you think back to age 4, I bet that is about the time you remember what you regularly did: you went to school or stayed at such-and-such house. You might remember your house or where your aunt’s house was. You likely do not remember these things from when you were 3.

Deeper understanding and conversations

- Your conversations with them get deeper and their perceptions are stronger. They get all the steps in the process and, as is natural, they draw deeper conclusions about what they now know.
- They love to see the books they read on TV or in a movie. They can relate ideas better, not just facts.
- They might watch movies in a way that shows they understand more. They have a sly smile when watching, say, Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*. They know he’s playing games and the whole thing is kind of funny.
- They make ethical admonishments. They might call you a “liar” when you said you gave them lemonade (and you did), but some misunderstanding happened, such that they think you didn’t. It’s

with deeper, more fervent conviction that they say these things. These things happened and they, the decider of truth, call you a liar.

- Or they are playing a game, such as Battleship, and their brother tries to pull one over on them. They give a look like, “Oh, *don’t even.*”
- They are intensely interested in the topics of space and dinosaurs and have been. But now they have a deeper interest beyond just facts. They want to understand the concepts as they span across time. They might ask, “How did the universe start?” “Can we live on Mars?” “What happens to me if I go to Jupiter?”

Loves to pretend that they “magically” changed

- They love to do things in which they magically morph without you seeing.
- They tell you to look away. They then change something, and then tell you to look at them. It’s as if something changed by magic.
- Or they might run from one thing in the backyard to the next, sneakily. They do it in a way such that you don’t see them. Thus, it’s as if they pop up by magic.
- I believe they do this because life is now a continuous “reel” for them (like a movie). Objects stay persistently for them, around them and across time. They seem to be playing around with the idea that they do persist, but they can make it look like they do not persist. They are testing you, basically.

Emotional restraint, maturity, and fortitude

- Although they show no restraint in the irritable period, they show remarkable, strikingly new emotional maturity as the milestone progresses. They can get really angry or be in pain, but consciously decide how to respond.
- For instance, something gets out of hand with their sibling in an emotional way. At first, they get really upset. But then they take the leadership role to calm people down and find a solution. “Here I’ll show you how to do that.”
- They actively help calm down their younger sibling. They might offer to take their sibling on a walk to help calm them down.
- They might say something like, “Thank you for calming the baby down.”
- They are now willing to breathe to a count of four after getting really angry.
- Much more accepting of doing things with people other than their primary care giver. At bedtime if they can’t have mom, they might be like, “Oh ok. That’s just how it’s going tonight. Mom is putting brother to bed, not me.”
- Or they might be willing to sit by someone other than the primary caregiver at dinner.
- Capable of waiting for an exciting event to come up
- More willing to try new foods

They see that THEY are a player in the environment

- Now that they persistently see what is going on day after day (they have a continuous “reel,” as if they are consistently in a “movie”), they recognize better they are an actor in the play. This means they will step in and play more.
- For instance, they understand the rest of you are playing charades. They unexpectedly step in, “My turn!” They pretend to be a frog, for you to guess.
- Or they understand you are doing “Knock, Knock” jokes and they make one up. “Knock knock!” “Who’s there?” “Raspberries!” “Raspberries who?” “Raspberries are realllly tasty!”

- Or, you are playing “I Spy.” They have an idea in their head, but you can’t guess it. They sing, “I can’t tell youuuuuu!” when you ask them to say what it is in a way that has a lot of personality.
- If everyone is getting dressed up for dinner, they might put on a different shirt. They announce, “Now I am dressed up, too!”
- If they see others doing an obstacle course or having races, they very well might join in.
- If playing hide and seek and they can’t hide before the seeker counted to [x], they might stop mid-running with a look like “uh oh!” They know the time was up and they didn’t get to their hiding spot. It is thus on them, but there is little they can do. It’s cute.
- If they have earmuffs on and you ask if they can hear you, at first they say “No!” Which meant they obviously could hear you. The next time, however, they update. You ask and they play along, “What? I can’t hear you!” This is an astonishing burst of new mental ability, when you think about it.

Little Mismatched

- This is the first age I have found where they might purposely wear two different, mismatched shoes or the like. This duality grows in the next milestone.

Four Year Old Milestone 6B (4.6.1-4.6.1)—Wizardy

Starts: Shy of 4.6.1 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: It's very short and mild but new growth is apparent.

Ends: 4.6.1

Irritable Period Summary

Mostly mild behaviors:

- Fairly demanding
- Makes you come with them in the morning
- Lays on you a lot
- Runs off if someone is mad at them

With possible flare ups:

- Depending on the situation they are in, they might have some flareups. If they feel they were cheated or wrongly treated, they might get upset—and stay upset.
- This is otherwise a very short and mild milestone but in which new imaginary thinking clearly takes place.

New Abilities Summary

- Robust imaginary friends might show up.
- They have a “wizard-like” nature to them.
- They get very deliberate and creative in their play.

Imaginary friends

- Elaborate imaginary friends show up! Specifically, ones that now appear to be a lot like they are.
- For whatever reason, firstborn children are more likely to have imaginary friends.
- Otherwise, I believe imaginary friends are a child's growing intuition. It's their dearest friend—their own intuition—who will always “be there” for them. What kind of imaginary friends they have is highly unique to your child.
- Their friends might “do work” for them or “stay and protect the house” when they leave.
- The friends might build bridges with them.
- They might pretend to have races with their imaginary friend.
- The imaginary friends seem to come out when they do something new or possibly scary, like go to the pool for the first time or visit a new, exciting place.
- If they have a beloved stuffed animal or lots of older siblings, they seem less likely to have imaginary friends. The other children or stuffed animal seem to serve as the imaginary friend.
- If they've always had a beloved stuffed animal, this stuffed animal might do markedly more mature things. For instance, they might make the stuffed animal talk, as if they are the ventriloquist.
- The stuffed animal might now play with them as if they are a child, such as they put the stuffed animal on a teeter totter (a seesaw).

They like when toys “come alive”

- They like to watch something in ways that their toy comes “alive.”

- They might want a new toy, “except REAL.” I think they mean that they want the toy to come to life.
- If you put extra stuffing in one of their stuffed animals, they exclaim, “He’s ALIVE!”
- The longtime beloved stuffed animal, which is an animal, might now be a “boy.” It’s much more human.
- They, again, might talk for their stuffed animals like they are the ventriloquist—making the toy come alive.
- They’ll love to watch their toys “come alive,” such as watching a space shuttle launch while holding a toy model of the space shuttle.
- They like to cast spells, as if they are a character from Harry Potter. They might yell “EXPECTIC ARMIS” (EXPELLIARMIS) while waving a stick at a small rock. Their sister flicks it, as if the spell did something, to their delight.

Growing wizard-like inner power

- In through these milestones, they seem a bit confused about where their body ends and where a “tool” their body uses begins. For instance, if they decide to not wear shoes, they say they are “wearing their feet.” Feet/shoes are both things that can be “worn.”
- This seems to make them feel very powerful. Their feet are just as good as shoes. A wand in their hand is an extension of their very hand. They personally are very powerful. Their own body can do things. The tools they use are simply an extension of their very inner power.
- They like using a pretend wand to make things happen.
- Sticks are guaranteed to be picked up and turned into a sort of “wand.”
- If another child or adult plays along and makes their “wand” (usually a stick) actually “work,” it’s very funny to them.
- Or they might strut while carrying something on the tip of their finger, such as a shopping bag.
- Deny their ability to be a “wizard”—the person who makes things happen—at your own risk! They might, for instance, get really upset if someone else finds a child in a game of Hide and Seek, when they were supposed to be the seeker.

Still loves “big” things

- They still love “big” things. Such as houses that are normal sized.
- There are numbers attached to their ideas now. They are wildly off and yet more realistic than before. But the numbers are BIG. Your house might be able to hold “3,000 people!” Or if you have a few teaspoons of water in a bowl, they tell you, “We have GALLONS of water!”

Forward and deliberate in arranging things

- They step up and arrange things deliberately. They might:
 - Figure out how to arrange Blokus pieces (which are like Tetris pieces) in such a way that they all fit in a particular shape.
 - Play around with their hair, makeup, and jewelry.
 - Without quite saying as much yet, they like to have a “style.” They might like to get dressed up in a fancy, special outfit. Or they just really like a cute robe or fancy pajamas.
 - On their own, they set up an entire play that they want to put on (such as Cinderella). They remember exact lines and details and personalities about the play they are putting on, such as how one character might bow to say, “Good night.”

- Retell the plot of books that are fairly long, with several paragraphs per page, such as the stories by Richard Scarry.
- They “go to town” on activities. They throw themselves into it, perhaps helping you cook or cut up vegetables.

Works to accommodate others

- They see things from other’s perspectives and even try to accommodate the other, to a degree.
- In a conflict, they might recognize that there is a natural rub. You want to go outside, and they want to go inside. Although they are unlikely to come up with a mutually satisfying solution (they want their way), they recognize the inherent problem.
- They show a dramatic increase in empathy and desire to see others have fun or enjoy themselves. Their happy part of the day wasn’t when they were happy. It’s when their sister was happy.
- If you can’t find a bicycle that’s out, they might draw a line on the pavement with chalk leading you to it.
- If you tell them that it’s wearing on you to clean, because you are pregnant, they enthusiastically offer to help.
- They are very chummy with other children.

Academic

- They might love to count everything, such as how many houses you have in your neighborhood.
- They get good at reading double digit numbers.
- They enjoy working with double digit numbers, such that they get up to 100.
- They might explain how to add or subtract like it’s a story. “First we had 12 eggs. Then we took 3 away. NOW we have 9!”
- They can more easily answer a question like “What is 7 + 4?” without using their fingers to count.

Four Year Old Milestone 7 (4.6.2-4.6.3)—“I Know That I Know What’s Going On”

Starts: A few days after 4.6.2 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: A few days around 4.6.3 can see bossy, possessive, and fearful behavior

Ends: A few days after 4.6.3

Irritable Period Summary

“Sees” threats that aren’t there

- Things randomly “come alive” for them now, in their mind. This might make things seem scarier than they are.
- They don’t want to go outside, because a bush was shaking, seemingly on its own.
- They might cover their eyes like they are scared of something.
- If they aren’t in the mood to talk, this might explain why they just shut down: something seems scary to them. They might seem afraid to move, particularly when looking at something outside. They don’t move until you console them.

Growing fear of death

- They are much more aware of how things progress over time, into the future. The realization of YOUR eventual death might worry them.
- At first, they might just be a bit clingier.
- They might worry about you getting old. They offer that maybe you can brush Rapunzel’s hair, as in the movie *Tangled*, to stay forever young.
- They wonder if people can “undie.”
- They seem to understand that *other* people can die before realizing that they themselves also will die.

Highly possessive, can’t back off

- They can become highly possessive, in a way that they want all the things. Everything is “theirs,” for one reason or another.
- They might want their sibling’s basketball. They were there when you bought it, and it is, thus, theirs.
- If another child goes to play with a toy, they might dart in front of them quickly to grab all of said toys for themselves.
- They might get REALLY upset if someone is so much as working near the same workstation as them, such as on the same chalkboard.
- They can’t back off sometimes. At a doctor’s exam for their baby brother, they are super excited about it and keep getting in their brother’s personal space over it.

Sensitive to sensations on their body

- They can’t stand to be even a little bit dirty. They might ask to change slightly dirty clothes right away.
- They, as such, are more likely to hike up their shorts, if, say, wading through water, etc.
- If they feel embarrassed, they might hide their face.
- They are much more cognizant of their being!

Entrapment

- They like to hide themselves, such as under a chair or a toy bridge you have.
- They might want to build a fort, so they can hide in it.
- They might like being under umbrellas.
- They might like wrapping themselves up in a blanket, such that they look like a “snake.”

Physically Grows

- They grow tremendously.
- They are taller, heavier, and their head is bigger.

Sleep Issues

- Especially when they are telling their highly imaginative stories, they might want to stay up late at night.

New Abilities Summary

- In the last milestone, they noticed events persistently, day after day. Now they notice that they notice events day after day.
- They are more conscious of their ability to make things go exactly as they want. They are aware that they personally act in their environment and can make things successfully happen.
- Their fantasy play gets more realistic.
- They fantasize about flying.
- They start to tell some wildly imaginative stories
- They are far more independent and like to be alone more often.

A more cognizant and aggressive “player” in their environment

- In the last milestone, they started to understand where everything around them is, highly persistently, and that they also exist in that environment. In this one, there is a stronger element of acting within that environment. They are bolder and more aggressive.
- They are also aware that they are acting in their environment, and that they personally know what to do.
- They might say, while carrying items to your vehicle, “I know how much I need to carry!” They knew they needed x, y, and z things, perhaps their drink and their beloved stuffed animal. It’s neat to them that they know that’s what they needed to bring.
- They realize they can act in the environment. They might get ice cream and bring it home. They realize that if it’s melting, they personally can put it in the freezer. And when they want it, they can go get it back out of the freezer. And then again, they can put it back in the freezer when the ice cream starts to melt, like this, over and over. They get the biggest kick out of their ability to do this. Like, “Holy cow, I can do this myself.”
- They help themselves to cake that has been left out. They get the cake cutter, a plate, everything.
- They take your phone from you to time themselves doing an obstacle course. It’s very funny. But again, it’s the theme: I know that I know what’s going on and I want to see how long I take.
- With simple instructions, they can act more pointedly and aggressively. You might go to a mini-golf course. They are having an issue getting the ball into the hole, though they keep trying. You tell them to “whack it” (hit the ball hard). They do, resulting in a hole in one.
- They might be more interested in playing on a tablet and might start to get good at a game like Minecraft, in which they move around in the area, doing things, a lot.

- They might now verbally note their emotional reactions. “When my sister ripped that cardboard box earlier, I was really mad at her.” They recognize how they move in the environment.
- They might be more willing to do something that previously scared them, such as getting in the pool when they were previously scared or getting in the pool without needing a floatie anymore.
- They grow in how reasonable they are. They are ok with their Dad making a “raft” out of their blanket (spreading it out flat on the floor), whereas before they always insisted mom do it.

Helpful, Mindful

- They are more accommodating of you. You can tell them they are getting too heavy to pick up. So, they offer to get a ladder to climb up to whatever you need them to get up to.
- They become very polite and cooperative. You can tell them that water pooling on the floor will ruin a wood floor. When they go to get a washcloth wet, to use it, they are extremely mindful of this, making sure water doesn’t get on the floor. You don’t even have to tell them, “Water pooling on the floor will ruin it, so don’t do it.” They understand the problem, based on the simple explanation, and work to not do it.
- They might want to turn off all the lights in your house to enjoy your Christmas tree, but you need to change the baby and need the lights on. You tell them your concern. So, they turn off all lights except the one in the changing area. They directly tell you, “I wanted to make sure you could see!”
- If you politely decline them after they ask to play a game with you, because you are, say, doing yoga, they walk away understandingly and say, “I hope you have fun doing yoga!”
- You can ask them to do something and they probably will, such as, “Can you get the toy from upstairs?”
- They enthusiastically help clean up.
- They might work to console their crying newborn baby brother when you are too busy to get to him right away.

Sensitive to environmental cues

- They are far more sensitive to environmental cues. If thunder clouds are rolling in, they take keen notice and want to go back home. Again, “I know what’s going on.”
- If they are in a situation where it would be inappropriate to scream or cry, even if in pain, they might endure it. For example, when they are getting their hair brushed at a salon.
- They know when you are talking about them. If they hear their name or a story about them, they follow along, “Yeah! I did that!”
- They utterly melt if you praise them in front of others.
- Inversely, if something goes poorly, they are highly aware of it. If they are asking their brother to do something and he doesn’t, they ask, exasperated, “Why are you IGNORING me?”
- If they get melty over seeing, say, Cinderella in a beautiful dress, they might cover their face in embarrassment.

Stylizes themselves and their environment

- They might personally decide to wear their hair in a certain way and to pick out a certain dress. When done they proudly show off and say, “I love my style!” They specifically put things in a certain way, and they enjoy that they did that.
- They clean their room, putting every toy car they have (dozens) in a very exact spot on their shelf.
- They turn off all the lights in your house so that you can enjoy the glow of the Christmas tree.

- They might “stylize” their environment in their own sweet, little kid way. “Daddy to make this table handsome, I’d put you on it.”
- When they see a picture of the Statue of David, they decide that he needs clothes drawn on him.
- They persist longer at making things a certain way, such as covering their sister in sand.
- They might enjoy an activity where you put toy animals in their habitat, such as a shark in water; a caterpillar on leaves, etc.

More aggressive in their environment

- They are more aggressive in their environment, making things move around more forcefully and wildly.
- They might get into a highly dramatic light saber fight with their brother.
- They jokingly come up to you with a water gun, asking if you took their stuff.
- They might like a toy that projects forward in a wild way and yet can hit a target, such as a slingshot.
- They might like “bulldozer fights.” You are both bulldozers and you push each other, seeing who wins.

More realistic in pretend play

- They are more realistic in their pretend play.
- If toy vehicles are being moved around, the vehicles have to stay on the road.
- If they are pushing a truck around on a “road,” to get out, the people have to first open the door.
- They work on a particular drawing, say of the solar system, and every time they do it, it gets more and more exact and detailed.
- They more consistently calculate that $1 + 2 = 3$ and not that $1 + 2 = 12$.
- This realism is a blessing and curse. Things can get scary as they get REALLY real, as will be seen in the next milestones.

Designs, then builds

- They can plan out something better. They have a few ideas in their mind, and they want to make it a reality or otherwise see if it works. Children do this all throughout childhood, but now there is a more distinct design phase, followed by a test phase.
- They might like a game where you design something then test it out. The software game Poly Bridge is like this. They build a bridge and then see if a vehicle can safely drive over it. They might take an interest in this game now.
- Similarly, they might like a Code & Go Mouse, in which you first “program” a mouse, such that it then goes through a maze and finds cheese.
- They might wonder if they can test their creations out for REAL, such as an airplane they made out of wood blocks. Their ideas simply must take flight!
- They might have an idea in their mind that they want to test out. They all but openly wonder, “Can I design a road with blocks that have gaps in between the blocks?” They try it out.
- When making, say, a road out of wood blocks, they can eyeball what they need, “Yeah, I’ll need four of these long blocks and two of these short blocks.”
- Some children (not all) might even want to formally create designs before building. If they learn that engineers make a drawing of their design before building it, they ask to do just this. They make a racetrack on paper then build one out of toy train tracks.

- They might love to build things, based on what they have in their mind. Simply building with toothpicks and marshmallows might be a big hit now.
- They might like to truly test these designs out. Put the toothpick and marshmallow structure on jello, then shake it (like an earthquake) to see what happens!

Thinks (wrongly) well into the future

- In the last milestone, they could think of a plan that had a few steps into the future. They could make pretty good plans for things happening in the immediate future or up to a few days. They could also think months or years into the future.
- Now they want to make plans in the long term future. They are, however, a bit off in how far away things actually are.
- They are aware they are going to turn five, but they think they'll turn five today.
- They want to bake a cake for their birthday—which is months away.
- They might taunt you, “Mommy, I’ll be taller than you someday!”
- Their fear of you dying shows how far into the future they can think. They are worried about you becoming a “grandma,” with the then potential that you might die.

Thinks (or wishes) that they can “fly”

- They strikingly show an interest in “flying” at this one.
- They might love to pretend they can fly.
- They might say they want to fly.
- They might flap their arms like wings.
- They might sorrowfully wish their stuffed animal can “swing on trees.”
- They might draw pictures of a shuttle flying from the earth to the moon.
- They might think their rubber boots allow them to completely jump over rivers.
- They might love to swing on swings.
- They might like to hang on monkey bars (with help).
- They might like to send things flying, like maple seeds.
- They might set up a train track with a train on a balcony and wish they could send their train “flying” across the room.
- They might make their toys “fly,” but they do it in a way like, “Isn’t it crazy that this toy garbage truck is flying!?” They know the idea is ridiculous, but it’s also hilarious.
- Older siblings remarkably seem to accommodate younger children by carrying them, so the younger child can feel like they are flying.
- In talking with children, it seems as if they don’t necessarily think they can “fly” but rather they think they can jump a lot further than they actually can.

Far more independent, likes to be alone

- Even the most extroverted kid all of a sudden wants lots of time alone to think.
- Might swing on a swing set for a long time (an hour)
- Just sits and absorbs their surroundings
- They might go off on their own to color, which they do for a long time
- A lot more willing to do things on their own, such as get their own toy or blanket.

- Plays on their own, in a separate room, longer
- If they've always taken a lovey (typically a favorite stuffed animal or blanket) around everywhere, starting around now, they might be willing to leave it behind more.

A little mismatched

- They like doing things that are purposely mismatched. As noted, they might already be wearing shoes that are mismatched.
- Duality might show up in their creative efforts. They might color a star red and white. One side is hot and the other is cold.
- Or they purposely put the wrong color cap on markers.
- They might build a "wheel" out of something, such as out of shape magnets. They get a kick out of thinking that this "wheel" can steer something left or right and up or down.

Memory upgrade: sees and experiments with what is NOT there

- There is a memory upgrade. They can remember what is NOT there. They even actively challenge themselves to remember things that are not there.
- They might ask you to show them how to spell a word, using some kind of movable letters. They then utterly insist you put your example away, such that they can then practice spelling it, themselves.
- In their explanations, they note when there was a pause or gap. You might have made borax crystals. They describe all the steps and then announce, "Then we waited 15 MINUTES!" for the crystals to crystallize. (You waited a whole day.)
- In their pretend play, they might experiment with gaps in something. Perhaps there is a gap in a road made of wood blocks that a truck has to get over. If it's a small gap, the truck can still get over it. If it's too big, the truck cannot.
- You might point out $1 + 9$, $2 + 8$, $3 + 7$, $4 + 6$, and $5 + 5$ all add up to 10. And they say, "So does $0 + 10$." They remembered that you forgot one of the equations. They also recognize that "nothing," zero, is also a sort of "something."

Imaginative Stories

- They come up with highly imaginative stories, of which seem to be related to machines, monsters, and/or dinosaurs or the like.
- Some of these stories tell a history of something. A long time ago, people had machines, but the machines weren't very good or stable, so they had to improve them. "At first machines were just boxes then they got wheels and then they got motors."
- Or, again with the machine theme, machines are all over their room and, also, apparently drill things.
- They might ask about how vacuums or other machines work.
- They need to steal superpowers that are in a basement, but it's protected by a monster, which they have to get around and escape.
- Or, you are going to a moon in a rocket. Buckle up!

Four Year Old Milestone 8A (4.7.1-4.7.3)—Optimistic Long-Term Goals

Starts: Very mildly around or after 4.7.1 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: A few days after 4.7.1 until a few days after 4.7.2. It starts with sleep disruptions and fears.

Ends: A bit after 4.7.3 but with some potential flareups until the next one

Irritable Period Summary

Starts off mild

- This starts off with very mild behaviors, if any.
- They might just want to be by you, cuddled.
- More intense behavior starts closer to 4.7.2.

Sleep Disturbances

- This and the next milestone are marked, above all things, by sleep disturbances.
- They wake up super early or sleep in super late.
- They get up in the middle of the night and look for you.
- They might tell you they have a lot of dreams. (A sign of *major* brain growth!)

Physical Changes

- Towards the beginning of this milestone, you might see a highly noticeable head shape change in which their forehead bulges out and looks outright painful.
- These head shape changes are a sign of major new brain growth and often come with a major increase in memory. You might see them learning new words at a rapid at, for instance.
- Major growth spurt. Their legs in particular get longer.
- Won't walk very far, gets "too tired"
- They might spit or make spit bubbles. (Physical growth often coincides with increased spit.)
- Physical growth often coincides with them having more accidents and tumbles. They might climb on something, like a stool, then take a very slow-motion fall.

Sensitive

- They get unusually upset over getting hurt.
- They are also pretty sensitive to what others think of them. For instance, they don't like when someone suggests they are a criminal. If their sister jokes that she is "arresting them for being cute," they protest, upset, "No! I'm not a criminal!"
- They might get super upset, on a deep emotional level, that other children don't want to play with them.
- They also don't like when they can't get something to work. They just leave it, in frustration (although they might come back to it).

Fears

- There are still fears of death, etc., but now the fears seem to be not just of things going on but things that realistically did or might happen.
- For instance, you are going to go on a kayaking trip with them. They become worried that they are going to go over a waterfall.

- They are really upset if you throw away something they wanted, say, cake. The problem is further compounded because they thought they were saving that cake for their fifth birthday (which is months away).
- They warn you about werewolves, but they follow it up with what you can do about it: you can run away from them.

More Aggressive

- As this milestone progresses, they get more aggressive.
- With a gleam in their eye, they tell you that they will punch you.
- They might playfully hit their sibling.
- They might kick and punch you, playfully, more.
- They might have a compulsive “kick,” in which they can’t help but to kick their foot.
- They are more pointed and forceful in getting you to do what they want, such as wrap your arms around them a certain way.
- They are more forceful and pointed when, say, throwing paper airplanes.
- They might hit you if you try to help them.

Most Intense Period

- A lot of sleep disturbances. They might want to stay up late. They can also get pretty aggressive and/or whiny.

New Abilities Period

- They “game” games. They also make up rules that are to their liking.
- Duality of personalities: they like to think there are two people who are actually the same person, such as two twins with opposite personalities.
- They have some big, optimistic, almost realistic long-range goals.

“Games” things or otherwise puts themselves at an advantage

- They come up with ways to “game” things: they put themselves at a huge advantage by doing things or making rules in their favor.
- They might have races with stuffed animals. As you walk down the stairs, they throw the stuffed animal over a balcony to see who gets to the bottom first. It’s just a *bit* loaded in their favor.
- When playing Red Light/Green Light, they take HUGE steps.
- If you play any kind of “capture” game, such as Capture the Flag, at the end, they playfully take what needed to be captured. It doesn’t matter what the rules are! They got the [flag, stone, whatever]. They won! Ha ha!
- When playing a “Simon Says” game, they just pretend they are “broke.” They don’t follow after “Simon says,” because “the control is out of control!” Ha ha! They win again!
- All or any of this might be seen as “cheating” by some.
- On the other hand, they might think of ways to improve themselves, which legitimately improve themselves. They might pretend to weightlift with a barbell. Then they make a bigger one. Then a bigger one. They explain that the first barbell made them strong enough for the second, the second for the third, etc.
- Some children can now strategize better at games like Sorry! and Guess Who.

Plays practical jokes

- They start to play practical jokes on others, purposely meant to incite others.
- They come up to you, stick their butt at you and yell “FART!”
- They put their feet up, joking, “Do you want feet in your face!?”
- They tell you to “Come closer!” They then yell something in your ear. It’s funny.

Very Forward

- They are very forward now.
- They inform you they are going to read to YOU.
- Even in their imaginations, they are making plans and telling others what to do.
- They actively challenge themselves. If there is a book they think they can read, they try.

Duality of Personalities

- There is a strong duality to them at this one. It’s been growing but it’s in high gear now. There is a duality of personalities now. One is usually “out” and the other “in.”
- They might make up two imaginary friends. One, Jake, is meek and shy. The other, Joe, is full of confidence.
- They might love a movie where there are two of the same character. For instance, in *Cinderella 2*, Anastasia gets turned into Cinderella. There are now two Cinderellas!
- They might tell you that you are them. There are two of them now!
- They might like having a nickname that is a mash of two people, one of which has something to do with them and the other of which has something to do with someone else.

Subtle Congruence

- In the next milestones, they will show intense congruence. They want to make sure you and they are on the same page about everything. It starts subtly now.
- Before you leave your house, you have to wait. Daddy isn’t here yet.
- You ask them what their happiest part of the day was and they say, “Being with daddy.” Anything in particular? No, they get mad at you, just BEING with daddy.
- Their answer to, “Do you want to read a book?” is always, “Yes.”

Puts together sophisticated “chains”

- Not all children will do this but, in their play, the creations of some children (more mechanical ones probably) have more parts that flow logically from one to the next.
- When they draw, they don’t just make one drawing. They might put together several to make a book.
- They might put together a “circuit” that connects things together to “transport” something. Perhaps they use toothpicks and marshmallows to do this.
- The stories they tell and the explanations they give also show how they can put together “chains.” If the power goes out at your house, they fully explain that there are power lines that come to your house, the electricity travels across them, and you need to figure out where it broke. They have all the animation and details to go along with this explanation.
- If their tablet died, they say you need to plug it in to “fill it with electricity.”
- If you left the garage door open, they might notice and ask you to shut it “so we can be safe.”

Semi-realistic yet still overly optimistic goal

- This is the most distinctive part of this milestone, and it fairly reliably happens around 4.7.3.

- They've been dealing with big ideas across time. They can recall things from the past and project well into the future. They now develop some long-range goal of what they want to do, which is semi-doable, yet still overly optimistic.
- They might want to move your house to be near a vacation house that they went to a few months ago. They tell you that you'll need a truck and a trailer with lots of wheels to do this.
- Or perhaps that you need a "Shrink Ray" to shrink your house such that it fits in the moving truck.
- They might tell you to "pew" trees (just machine gun them down!) to get the wood to make a bridge.
- Or they might tell you where they want to go on vacation. They surprisingly want to go somewhere that they haven't been in years, such as a beach near a house you used to live in. They draw a map of how to get there. This is a longer range goal: deciding where to go on vacation. They can talk back and forth with you a bit about what plans to make.
- More "thinking" type children might want to move themselves or objects around in their environment, indeed likes houses. But a more "feeling" child might have emotional goals. Perhaps they invent "Kissibus," a superhero who fills people with joy after he or she kisses them. By the way, they are Kissibus.

Imaginative stories (or explanations) on high gear

- They start telling highly imaginative stories, which often involve a "plan" of some sort and which have some details.
- They might tell their imaginary friends (Ninja Turtles) to go save the world. Each is assigned a task. They declare, after assigning everyone a job, "This is my plan." Their imaginations involve long-term plans now.
- A highly imaginative child will tell their stories. The stories other children tell might take on different forms:
- They might draw out one of their favorite books on paper, drawing all the pictures, writing the words, everything.
- They might use props to tell their stories or be inspired by props. They start telling their stories when playing with Play-Doh. A cat you made on an island is about to rescue the lady that you also made out of Play-Doh.

Memory Upgrade

- If learning to read, they can learn new words at a rapid rate.
- They can readily keep up with the game 20 Questions, in which they have to remember something they own, as others guess what they are thinking about. They remember far more things from the past in order to do this.
- They tell you they have "lots and lots" of dreams.
- They might start going a "mile a minute" now, especially if something totally catches their attention emotionally.
- Information really sticks in their mind from this point forward. Their memory is outstanding.

Four Year Old Milestone 8B (4.8.0-4.8.1)—Into the Unknown

Starts: 4.8.0 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: Very intense from 4.8.0 until 4.8.1

Ends: A few days after 4.8.1

Irritable Period Summary

Physical Changes

- This sees yet another head shape change. Some children show a noticeable head shape change and others don't.
- As the milestone progresses, however, their head might get so much bigger that you need to get larger shirts for them.
- They might yet again get taller.

Sleep Issues

- Major sleep issues during this one
- If you cosleep, they might not let you leave the bed at any time during the night, before they get up. They are in a dreamy state, but they are aware you are trying to leave.
- If you don't cosleep, they might want to sleep with you, in your bed.
- They might wake up looking for something that they think isn't in their bed, such as a blanket or a favorite stuffed animal. They are convinced that this is missing, and they are completely distraught about it. However, said item was right there, in very plain sight.
- During the intense period, they are nearly guaranteed to stay up really late, and, at some point, to get up early, running to come find you.

Demanding, in an explicit way

- They are more explicit about what they want now. They might come up to you and say, "Mommy, I need you," by which they mean they want you to sit and cuddle with them.
- They might want you all day, and well into the night.
- They might be a bit more whiny.

Unusually Sensitive

- They are unusually upset over small and unexpected things.
- Perhaps someone puts a sticker on something they see as theirs (to find it easier, such as on a TV remote control). They are very upset by the sticker.
- Or, maybe while playing a game with a sibling, they get into an area where they shouldn't. It greatly upsets everyone involved.
- They get very upset if you say you are disappointed in them or that they are "wrong." Maybe you had to ask them to stop hitting their brother. Or maybe you, even as gently as you could, told them they read a word wrong.

Possibly Aggressive

- They might break a toy (such as a crayon) if upset.
- They might try to take things from other children.
- They might pull other children's hair.

- Not all children are this aggressive, but some might lunge at other children, extremely upset over whatever they perceive as “unfair.”
- However, when you tell them they are hurting someone or you don’t like what they are doing, they relent a lot easier.

Fears that the past might repeat itself

- They continue to have more realistic fears. Before, the realistic fears had to do with something you *might* do. Now, they remember the *past* and worry something bad that previously happened might happen again.
- For instance, they remember that you “melted” their ice cream the other day. (You put it in the microwave, as you were trying to thaw it). They get upset today, thinking you will again “melt” their ice cream.

New Abilities Summary

- They continue to tell their highly imaginative stories.
- They can actively contemplate what one random thing plus another random thing together will make or do.
- They start to guess how other people might see or feel things, as different from them.
- They continue to increase in how much they want your permission for everything (congruence).
- Towards the end, they get into “secret” things.

Imaginative stories (or explanations) on high gear

- Imaginary friends (if they have them) are alive and well. They might explain to them how to do things, like how to go to the bathroom.
- Their imaginative stories are on high gear:
- They might need to get a space suit to blast to the moon. They easily enchant other children, who want to know, “Can I come too!?”
- Or perhaps they tell a story about their house exploding, while their sibling gasps in delight over every plot twist.
- There might be a vivid superhero/villain scene in the back of your van.
- They might completely convince other children that the lot of them are going to go rescue some people in need.
- They might make up an elaborate story about how they are a spy scoping out bad guys and have to hide and pretend to be dead. “I’m the one who did this, so I have to save us,” they say, solemnly. They drive the cart (a grocery cart) and save you both. They save humanity over and over again.
- They use their hands more as they explain their stories.
- Again, the medium they use to tell stories differs from child to child. A highly imaginative child will tell their stories. Another child might write out their thoughts. And a more “in the moment” child might make these stories come to life in a more real, present way. They might build little hills out of sand and march over them, as if they are walking across mountains.

Interested in stories

- They also become more astute watchers of movies or other stories.
- They might all of a sudden become interested in a highly fantastical movie, like *Harry Potter* (whereas before they showed no interest).

- Or they become much more enthusiastic about a movie like *Beauty and the Beast*, having been explained some of the themes of the story, e.g., Gaston is rude to Belle and steps on her book, but the Beast shows her a library.

Ever Increasing Congruence

- They are very concerned about and interested in what others think.
- They start to ask your permission before doing anything.
- Before they select something, say what movie to watch, they want to make sure you like it, too.
- Directly asks you to do lessons or other things with them.
- That they so easily rope others into their stories shows just how into other's worlds they are right now.

Differing Perspectives

- They start to realize that others see things differently, from a mechanical perspective, i.e., where actual objects are what their nature is.
- They might realize that another person might think a color is red when it is actually pink.
- They recognize that if they cock their head to the side, to shake their head "no" to you, they would have to actually do what is normally "yes," and vice versa.
- When they put a mask on they think "now others can't see me." They're wrong, but they are taking a guess as to how others would see something.
- They start to individuate. They might write a list of "All The Things I Like to Do." They personally like these things. Other people, perhaps, have other interests.

Compares and investigates two otherwise random things

- They compare two things to each other more. They compare things that have some similarity between them but can also be quite different.
- They follow along with every detail of a movie and compare them to other movies, drawing unusual comparisons. Olaf "breaks into pieces" at the end of *Frozen 2*, just like the Titanic "breaks into pieces."
- They might conclude, "Farts and lessons go together sometimes." I mean. They're not wrong.
- They might compare two random colors. For instance, they notice that there is a difference between pink and red, but the colors are so similar to each other, that they might be considered red.
- They also might do "experiments" Like they take all the spices out of the spice drawer, put them on a piece of bread, and douse it with water. Boom. Science.
- They might play around with the congruence of things related to time and space.
 - They might love to do something like match their toy clock to the real clock. They like the congruence of pretend time matching real time.
 - They might love to put fruit on the produce scale at the grocery store, adding more or taking it off, seeing how the weight changes.
 - They might like following along with an instruction booklet, showing how to make a structure of some sort, making sure the instructions and the structure match.

Actively thinks about what inputs will create what outputs

- They actively think about what two things mixed might result in.

- For instance, they think about what two colors mixed will make what result. They may have memorized that yellow and blue make green. But now they ponder, “What would pink and orange make?” And they make a good guess: red.
- An incredibly analytical child might put together very sophisticated things. For instance, if you ask them what direction a plane flying overhead is going, they draw a compass on the ground, showing which way is North, East, South, and West. They then draw an arrow on the compass, which shows the direction the plane is going. They then look at the arrow drawn on the compass and correctly tell you that the plane is going “West North.”
- They draw conclusions with some paradox, ““Are we going to solve the problem? That’s the rule! The rule is you solve problems!”

They want to learn NEW things

- They might directly say they want to learn “NEW” things.
- Or they might directly ask to learn something new, such as a new language.
- Or that puzzle you picked out is way too simple. They need a harder one.
- When they hear a word that they don’t know, they might ask about it. What does “draconian” mean?

Investigates and finds secret things

- They remember a lot now and apply it, and they have a strong persistent consciousness of their 3-D surroundings now. It’s time to explore! If they remember a “secret” anything, they’ll find it.
- This might be a “secret” path to get somewhere, such as a backway to get into a restaurant. You go to this restaurant one night. They remembered it was there and go find it.
- Or it might be a “secret” in a game like Minecraft, in which they find their sibling’s secret hiding spot. This *might* upset their sibling.
- If they didn’t already have a lovey or favorite stuffed animal, they might choose a particular stuffed animal to go everywhere with them and experience what they do, such as sliding down slides. The stuffed animal might do it first, bearing the risk for them. The stuffed animal essentially goes down the “secret” paths.
- They put on a mask and tell you, “Now you can’t see me!” Their whole being is hidden in secrecy. (Secrecy—darkness—is a fun, safe launching point to try out new, bold ideas.)
- While out, they secretly wave at other people.
- They are much more likely to like blindfold activities now, where they are blindfolded and have to guess what they are holding.
- They make up stories about secret things. The window is a secret transporter to somewhere else. Or they make up a secret room to escape to. Or they imagine that they can tunnel in and out of a secret room.
- Or they make up a story involving gates, chambers, caves, or the like. These chambers or caves help hold or hide escaped refugees or people stranded after a boating accident.
- That they search for (and now confidently find) secret things might explain why they soon are going to be so curious about doors, lights, etc., which can get their curious hands into trouble! Be warned now!

Four Year Old Milestone 9 (4.8.2-4.9.0)—A Mile a Minute

Starts: 4.8.2 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: Between 4.8.2 to 4.8.3

Ends: 4.9.0 with possible flareups until the next milestone

Irritable Period Summary

Demanding

- They might get up super early in the morning wanting to play, etc.
- They might want to cuddle a lot.
- When they ask you to draw something, you have to do it exactly as envisioned in their mind, otherwise they get super upset.
- They continue to want to make sure you are agreeable to everything they do. “Shall we watch this video?” This is said about everything they do, all day.
- They might walk right next to you as you walk.

Gets Loud

- Their physical voice, everything, is louder and more dominant as they tell everyone what is good and bad or what to do. They aren’t malicious. They are actually pretty reasonable. Just loud.
- They overhear you talking about something, and they yell, upset, “GOING OUT TO A RESTAURANT IS BAD. STAYING HOME IS GOOD.”
- Or they might yell, “[SO-AND-SO]! You hit me. I am very mad about this. I am going to give you a lesson!” And they stomp off and literally do write out a lesson: they draw on a chalkboard a child hitting another child with a big “No” sign around it.
- They might be boisterous and loud in public places, like restaurants.
- They might want to be really close to you or their siblings, while also possibly being loud and boisterous.

Easily frustrated, wants things to go a certain way

- They want things to go a certain way and they get pretty easily frustrated if things don’t go that way.
- Perhaps they ripped a sticker off of something and a little bit of the sticker didn’t come up. They are completely distraught over this.
- Or, as noted, they get upset when they overhear you making plans they don’t like.
- They get super upset that they can’t get something like a paper hole punch to work.
- Or they get upset because their sibling is playing a game in a different way than they wanted to play it.
- They can just be very persnickety.
- They are more sensitive, but they are also capable of being given some expectations and following them. For instance, “I know you are upset, but I can’t get to you until I am done with your brother.”

Doesn’t like to be touched

- They are very sensitive to being hit, even if just as an accident.
- They might be more annoyed by you. Before playing around with them, tickling them, etc., made them laugh. Now they brush you off, annoyed.

- They seem to start to truly individuate now. Before, you were one—literally one while pregnant, and then “one” as they were in your arms throughout their toddler years, as they so often demanded. Previously, tickling them didn’t bother them. Now (in their mind), they are becoming a separate, individuated person, and it’s getting harder for you to play around with them in just the right way.

Sleep Issues

- During the nighttime, they are seemingly extra sensitive. They get upset easier while doing projects or working through other issues at night.
- They stay up late, often working on projects (like painting) or playing games.
- They might not be able to stay in bed. They wander all over the bed, sleep sideways, and fall off.
- Or they might incessantly walk around the bedroom, unable to make up their mind about where they want to be.
- They might want to sleep in your bed, if you don’t already cosleep.
- They might talk in their sleep.
- They might have big giggle fits in their sleep.

Highly Accident Prone

- Not at all helping with the overall frustration in the house is that they can become highly accident prone.
- They might turn lights on and off a lot, or lock and unlock doors. This curiosity can cause trouble. They are susceptible to getting themselves into situations that they can’t get out of, such as locking themselves in a public bathroom stall.
- Please be careful around all doors, such as revolving doors or in places where they can pinch themselves, like near door hinges. I recommend actively giving a lesson to not put their hands near door hinges. At all times, with young children, I recommend avoiding revolving doors.

Confusion, especially that things that might “disappear”

- They are unusually worried that physical objects are going to somehow magically get lost, disappear, or that you will throw them away.
- For instance, they have a toy. Before going to bed, they are worried the toy won’t be there in the morning, unless you put it in a super special spot.
- Or, both they and their brother received a special paper. They find their brother’s paper but can’t find theirs. They are beyond distraught that theirs is missing.

Distorted sense of size, time, and what is possible

- They have a distorted sense of size. They think they can get a LEGO toy as big as their living room.
- They get really upset if you tell them they can’t fit somewhere (and they in fact cannot).
- They have a distorted sense of what is possible. They think you can draw exactly what is in their mind, such as an airplane. When you can’t do this, they get really upset.
- They have a distorted sense of time. A small negative incident makes it the “WORSTEST DAY EVER.”
- They might all of a sudden come up to you and yell, “MOMMY, I WANT TO STOP GROWING!” In their mind, something bad will happen because of this. That long-term planning is being put into place is apparent. This causes confusion at first.
- Growing up can be scary!

Unexpected, incredibly intense emotions, directed at particular people

- They often don't like being touched, not even playfully, and definitely not maliciously. They also have a very clear idea of what is going on, at all times—and they want some say in it. This is a product of the nature of the milestone itself and not so much the irritable period. As such, you might have some BIG flareups at any time during this milestone.
- They might, totally out of character for them, scream “I HATE YOU!” This is because something didn't go their way.
- They might start kicking the back of your seat in your vehicle because you got ice cream at Dairy Queen and not Wendy's.
- When their sister says something while they are mad, they scream at her, “That just makes me MADDER!”
- They might scream “Don't do that; it makes me VERY ANGRY.”
- After another child hits them, they look at that child with more anger than you've ever seen before. It can be almost disturbing.
- They identify their own emotion and how what is going on in their environment makes them react. They verbally state they are getting madder; their anger is escalating, etc. Also, their anger is intensely aimed AT someone.
- They can stay mad for a long time now—until their problem gets resolved. Their getting mad is set to a hair trigger, and they are not easily distracted in the least.
- However, they ARE capable of more impulse control. They get angry but can calm down. They can fight any urge they have to hit others. They mostly yell and verbalize their frustration, perhaps occasionally kicking something like a seat or chair.

New Abilities Summary

- They go a mile a minute about stuff.
- They figure out a lot on their own and move within their environment in a commanding way, with personality and verve.
- Intense congruence: They REALLY care what you think, at a level that is almost relentless in how much they ask your opinion.
- They are aware of—and question—everything.

Goes a mile a minute

- There is just no other way to explain them right now than “goes a mile a minute.”
- They have ENDLESS questions. At some point in this milestone, at its most intense or as the new abilities are breaking through, they might literally have hundreds of questions per day. Why is Jerry (from Tom and Jerry) wearing a jacket? Why does that character have birds on their feet? Why did they put that road sign there? Where is that guy going? By the way, they probably already know all the answers.
- They might watch a movie and while watching it, they explain the whole thing by drawing it out, cutting something up, re-enacting it, or something similar.
- They might want you to endlessly participate in their make believe stories.
- They persist a lot longer at their creative projects. They might build an elaborate traffic scene out of train tracks, bridges, wood blocks, magnets, etc., which has roads, bridges, tunnels, buildings, and parking lots.
- They might want to do all the things, paint all the things, etc.

- Or they, perhaps, commit to making an entire pirate ship in Minecraft.
- Loves video documentaries (e.g., Wild Kratts, SciShow Kids) or other shows. Can watch them for hours.

Wants their thoughts and emotions to be congruent with yours

- They seem to enjoy the idea that your thoughts and feelings might be congruent with theirs.
- They still frequently ask your permission for many things. This might be something as simple as asking if the two of you should watch a particular movie, even though they have the freedom to pick whatever they want. They really want the two of you to be on the same page.
- They are overly ambitious in thinking that your and their thoughts can be congruent. They might think that you can draw exactly what is in their mind, such as how a boat should be drawn and look. You obviously cannot automatically do this.
- They might come up to you and ask if you are thinking what they are thinking. It's strikingly new.
- They might love to draw out lessons for others on a chalkboard. Now what they know, you know, too.
- They might draw a path on the driveway, with chalk, for you to follow.
- When they are upset, if someone reflects back to them their exact emotion, such as making an exaggerated sad face, it punches them in the gut so hard that it makes them laugh greatly, or otherwise greatly calm them down.
- After they draw something for you, they look at you waiting for your reaction, hoping so much that your reaction is over the top excited.
- They might make up a rule like "I am not going to eat this snack until everyone in the van is buckled." In looking through stories of them at this age, I think it might simply be that they want everyone on the same page.
- They would be "with you" they tell you, if you are ever hurt.
- They might get into others in a romantic way, e.g., a boy seems to find princesses pretty.
- It's hard to put into words, but they have a deeper, more knowing nod when they answer "Yes" to something, especially after something went down.
- They are very "in tune" with others. They understand the emotions and the goings on of what is happening. This deeper emotional connection does seem like an incredible advancement in intelligence itself. This furthers my theory that human consciousness is put in place largely through deep emotional relationships with others.

Commands a Room

- They go straight to what they want in a room, perhaps a puzzle that is behind a closed door.
- If they do an activity, such as one where they find something hidden inside something, they step up, do it, and promptly leave. Badda boom badda bing! Done.
- They come up to you and tell you a secret.
- They challenge themselves to do things with their eyes closed.
- As from the last milestone, they still want to learn NEW things and try NEW, harder challenges.

Full-On Personality

- They stomp into a new classroom and tell their teacher, "I'm really good at reading and LEGOs and being kind!"

- Role playing: As they pretend to drive a car, they pretend complain, “Ugh, Why do *I* always have to drive!?”
- When they read a book, they do it with ease and emotion. They are fluid with their personality as they do things.
- After they’ve read a book, they stomp around with a swagger, “I read my first book!”
- They tell you they are a “smart boy!”
- Their “style” might be more perfected. They put lipstick on accurately, as well as mascara, and get the right matching shirt.

Actively thinks about *everything*

- They start out a poem, “Roses are red. Violets are ... purple.” Because violets are purple.
- They spell things out phonetically, “mom in masr bedroom” or “do not strech rubber ban.”
- They take a strong interest in spelling things out. A child who has no interest in writing might write words, phonetically, out using sticks or the like.
- They are prone to factual explanations. If their sister is hysterical over something nonsensical, such as she thinks the balls flying around on television screen are going behind the actual television, they are prone to explain that the balls are not, in fact, going behind the television.
- Or when they talk about their mind being “blown,” they literally describe it as their mind hopping out of their head.

Figures things out on their own

- They figure out what they want to learn on their own. What does “Dad” start with? They figure it out: D. They figure out many more words and what letter they start with like this.
- They might take notice of the function of parts on objects. They intuitively notice that the wings on airplane “stabilize” it.
- They have questions like, “why do we blink”?
- They can easily do and in fact might really want to complete a Geopuzzle or a Montessori-style geography puzzle. These are puzzles in which every piece is a country or state. They might be methodical in doing it, such as lining up pieces as if they are a pipe connected.
- Similarly, they might be interested in Snapcircuits. These are kid-friendly electrical boards that snap together to build simple electrical circuits.

Notices Everything

- They have a heightened awareness of everything that goes on. They notice things on their own that no one showed them. While sitting in your vehicle, they might take notice of unusual traffic patterns or the like.
- They can pick out obscure buildings and landmarks (that they learned a long time ago) while driving. For instance, they can see a distinct water tower (an elevated platform which holds a water tank). Or they are familiar with one restaurant (say McDonalads) and they see another one while out. They can spot such buildings from a fairly good distance away, too.

Super interested in ideas of criminality and justice

- They go a mile a minute now and go on and on about just about everything, with many questions and explanations of their own. They understand what’s going on and who’s involved—not just what but the emotions and personalities of it. This gives a heightened awareness of who is “bad” and why.

- They are very interested in and even sensitive to topics about justice, e.g., how do cops know if you are a good guy or a bad guy, what is “punishment,” was something their fault or not, why does Rapunzel get taken from her Mommy, why is a child put in a dunce cap.
- They might joke about being a mischievous criminal. If you go to a farm and get fresh eggs, they bubble, “It’s like we STOLE the eggs!”
- They might “escape” from you or enjoy games where someone is taken “prisoner.”
- They might give their sibling a “lesson.” And it’s literally a lesson: they go to the chalkboard and draw out a lesson, such as “No hitting.”
- They directly confront you, asking to do something that you do for their sibling, perhaps lay out a reading lesson in the morning. It’s only fair.
- They might absolutely love a show like Tom and Jerry or Wile E Coyote where one character is constantly chasing the other and all the shenanigans that goes on. (Prepare for millions of questions and observations.)
- Their mind is very, very fast now. The speed of it, and their questions, seems to be giving them a more “elementary” like mind, where they can evaluate many, many variables in a situation and come up with more observations and conclusions.

Sensitive to if they or others are “good” or “bad”

- Being told something was their fault or they are a “criminal” might be terribly upsetting to them right now.
- They hate being told they are wrong.
- When they make up their new stories or poems, they are deeply interested in if you liked it or not.
- They might get really upset when they learn that teachers in the past used to put dunce caps on children.
- They might well up with tears when you tell them of a time you were punished unfairly in your youth. However, when they learned of the story of how you were punished unfairly, they tell you, full of tears, that that was bad, “but now, I....I would be with you.” Pulls at your heartstrings, big time.

Creative, mischievous problem solving

- They can get very inventive in solving their own problems.
- They might push a changing table over to get their toddler sister out of her crib. It acts as a ladder. They then wheel the changing table over to their bed, where there is an actual ladder for their sister to climb down. By the way, they did all this in the wee hours of the morning, before you woke up.
- They might quietly “steal” one of their sibling’s French fries at dinner. They totally know they are doing it and that they have to be quiet.
- They might use a Bobbie pin and some soap to comb their eyebrows.
- They might even impressively make clothes for their dolls, using inventive things, like scraps of paper or flower petals.
- They might put clothes pins on their clothes to make it look they have overalls on or the like.
- They can take what just happened and use it to their advantage, leveraging emotions. I don’t want to use the word “manipulative,” as I don’t intend to say they are malicious. However, if they can pull at your heart strings, they do. For instance, if their sister says she would destroy their favorite stuffed animal, which makes you very upset, they might use this. After you ask them why they are

so sad, they say sorrowfully, “[My sister] is going to destroy my Monkey!” They know full well this will help put you on their side.

- They might evaluate a scene and come up with a rule that benefits them. Their brother races them to the van and wins. They demurely advise, after they lost, “Getting to the van doesn’t have to be a race.” When they’ve made this be a race for the entire past year.

A sense of time over many years

- They develop an appreciation for about how long things take to progress over time.
- They can recognize that something happened, say, in 1912, and they seem to have a reasonable understanding that this was a considerable number of years ago.
- They might take an interest in timelines. The simplest timeline that you could do with them is of them, with pictures showing how they’ve changed since a baby.
- They also might see a history timeline and become interested in it.
- They impressively better understand time, out to several weeks. For instance, you talk about butterflies and they happily announce, “Caterpillars turn into chrysalis. After 10-14 days they become butterflies!!”

A sense of who they are, over time

- They notice who they are and what they’ve done over time. They notice patterns in their own behavior, based on past events.
- For instance, you brusquely admonished them once to stop screaming, because you were in a place where this couldn’t happen. They remember the next day when something triggers their memory. Say it happened because they were screaming to have their shoes taken off. When you go to put their shoes on the next day, they ask, nonchalantly, “Remember when I was screaming last night about my shoes?”
- If something of theirs gets destroyed, they might notice a very similar thing happened in the past, months ago. The emotions involved were the same: something got destroyed, people were upset.
- Or, if you are listing off reasons that they are admirable, they remember additional things to support what you said. If you said they are helpful, they remember that time when they were three, and they helped a mom pick up something she dropped.
- They are aware they “aren’t a baby” anymore.
- They have a somewhat distorted view of how things grow, however.
- They confidently tell you they were born on a cruise ship. They weren’t.
- They think of how a person grows from a baby to who they are now, and they think it’s by becoming a sort of elongated baby. They are off in how they think it progresses, but they are thinking of the progression of age itself.
- Or, again with the twisted idea of how things progress across time, you might show them pictures of them as they were little and they rebuke you instantly, “I don’t want to be a baby again! I’m almost 5!”
- They might ask more about topics related to death and what happens when a person dies. Their understanding of this is probably still off.

Fine Motor Skills

- They have an increase in fine motor skills. They can use an object that is elongated and thin (like a pencil) more handily.
- They might like to paint with a paintbrush.

- They might be able to put mascara on.
- They might challenge themselves to put their shoes on with their eyes closed.

A peek into their older self

- There is something about them now that reveals how they might be as an adult and/or how they will likely behave over the next several years. The previously described behaviors seem very bold and confident, and they are. But they really are fresh emerging skills underneath what is still a very “preschooler”-ish child.
- It could be something like how they respond to conflict or criticism. You might say that when they did something, they hurt someone. They can completely intellectualize such things now. Their response is reasoned, deliberate, and authentic. They might burst into tears, “IT WAS MY FAULT.” You can expect a similar reaction from them in similar situations, probably for the rest of their life.
- They can be extremely demure/deliberate in how they carry themselves. Or they can be mischievous yet kind. Or they might walk into a room and know exactly what they want to get or do. They really just start to seem more like an “elementary” aged child than a “toddler” or “preschooler.”
- Their legs are longer; their hair silkier. They just plain seem older.

Four Year Old Milestone 10 (4.9.2-4.9.3)—Full Realization of Self

Starts: A little bit before 4.9.2 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: It's short but jealousy and late night fears are clearly present.

Ends: 4.9.3

Irritable Period Summary

Jealousy

- They show jealousy if you spend time with another child.
- They might attack you if you spend time with other children.

Possessive of you

- They directly ask you for your time and attention.
- They engineer ways for you to be close to them. Dad can do the chores. You stay near them.
- Directly orders you to spend time with them and not their siblings, "Come to ME."
- Demands you be with them, very close, for a length of time
- When they get up to do something and come back, they get just as close as they were to you, right away.

Very afraid of potential real threats, especially to their house

- They are worried that some real existential threat will happen to, typically, their house.
- They might be worried that robbers might come in and steal everything in their house.
- Or that bombs are all over their house and will explode
- They seem to be afraid of things possibly in hidden or secret spots in your house, such as the very back of a closet.
- They might stay up late at night or want you to stay with them at night. This is, perhaps, because of these fears.
- These fears (and related behavior) are probably the only real reason this short milestone even is a milestone.

New Abilities Summary

- Very aware of their physical essence
- Very aware of their own solutions to problems and proud that they can come up with them
- A bit of a practical jokester
- Intensely aware when they are the object of attention
- They can delay gratification, on their own initiative.

Fascinated by the functions of their own body and mind

- They notice all the parts of their body, how they work, and how they use them.
- They might notice their brain is in their head.
- Or that their arms, when straight out, help stabilize their body.
- They might especially note that they blink. They play around with it, by blinking fast.
- They might notice how they can roll their tongue into different shapes.
- They notice themselves doing this as well. When you notice that they can roll their tongue, they ham it up big time.

- They might, rather hilariously, try to whistle by simply blowing air out of their lips, with their lips in a semi-circle.
- They find it funny to give and get neck rubs.
- They put their body into particular positions, making them appear much more demure, deliberate, and adult-like. They might cross their legs, in which they look like a college professor, for instance.
- They might notice attributes about animals, too. They notice a cat they saw had white whiskers, when they thought all cats had black whiskers.
- Things are very real now in their mind. It's like they metaphorically (and perhaps literally) put their hand on their head and trace down their whole body and go, "Wow! My body is here! I exist and I do neat things!"

Very aware of their own solutions to problems and their own skills and personality in doing that

- They come up with solutions to their problems that they are proud of.
- They put the large lid of an ice cream cup under the actual cup, such that it takes up less room and prevents some of the ice cream from dripping on the table. It's that they are so proud of their solution that is of note.
- They take delight in then realizing that they can type in words into an online search, in order to get their favorite video. They love realizing they can use this skill to figure out a real life problem.
- When they personally do something mischievous, they notice it. "It's like I STOLE Daddy's seat!"
- They might bubble, noticing that, "When I take care of myself, I am healthy and have the energy to do the things I want!" They exist! They can problem solve! They can take care of themselves!
- They notice what they are "learning" about. A family with a cat visited them for a while. They'll be sad when the cat leaves because they were LEARNING (their word) about cats.
- Being aware that you yourself are "learning" about something, one of your own cognitive functions, is pretty big. I consider them to be individuated at this milestone: they exist, as identified in their own mind. They now recognize that their consciousness is different from others.

Gets jokes better and plays jokes

- They get more adult jokes. They might even find humor where you don't. Their Dad mentions the dark side of the moon. They laugh, "The dark side of the moon, Hahahaha!" The dark side of the moon. Hilarious.
- They love to pull jokes on other people, in a more deliberate, planned way.
- They come up to you with a can of Play-Doh with an orange lid. They tell you, "Mommy, it's orange!" You open it up. It's blue.
- They might chat you up nonchalantly, purposely distracting you. They then look away, put sunglasses on, and surprise you by turning around. Surprise! It's them. With sunglasses.
- They might keep popping up from behind a chair, playing jokes on you.
- They have a great exuberance now. They are prone to big laughs and big smiles, which go along with their inventive solutions and practical jokes. They still especially like being chums with other children, adults, or even engaging in silly fun with, say, puppets.

Intensely senses when they are the object of attention

- They are highly aware that others notice them.

- When you pretend to ask to marry them, as you are re-enacting what you just read in a book, they fall over, dying of laughter, slightly embarrassed but highly entertained. So. Much. Attention. On. Them.
- They might say “Who me?” You’re talking about them? Yes, you.
- They might get a kick out of taking a selfie of themselves. They want to angle the camera a certain way to capture exactly what they want capture. This is perhaps what’s on their shirt, their foot, them looking happy, etc.
- They notice when you’re trying too hard. If you’re trying to get them to smile or whatever, they belligerently not smile.
- Or, you have to dig to get them to have fun and laugh, when, say, putting on a puppet show.
- They might start wondering where they can hide things so potential robbers can’t find it. They are, again, worried about being the object of attention (in this case, of envy or aggression).

Very aware of themselves and their personality

- A very robust personality grows within them. They have a much more distinct personality, of which they are readily aware of and confident about.
- They might “pop” their shoulders in a more pointed way as they dance at their seat, listening to upbeat Salsa music.
- They then lean back on their chair, with their hands on their head, chilling, thinking about something.
- They might LOVE an emotionally provocative song, like “Iron Man” by Black Sabbath.
- They might belt out a very sultry “A Cover is Not the Book” from *Mary Poppins Returns*.
- They might lean over and tell somebody something, talking out of the corner of their mouth, like they’re Popeye.
- When they step up to do something surprising, you note it and they give a little shoulder shrug, knowing you are watching them like, “Yeah, I did that.”

Accepts a change in plans, can delay gratification

- They can plan a few steps into the future, and it’s much more cognitive in nature. They have more robust “what if” thinking in which they can intellectually plan and organize into the future. There is an A then B nature to it.
- They can delay gratification, on their own initiative. So, if you ask them to wash their hands, they say, that’s fine, but they want to play a certain game afterwards. Typically, before this, you had to play the game before or while washing their hands. Now they are ok with delaying this fun thing (the game) while doing the not fun thing (washing their hands) first. They even offer to do it this way themselves.
- They are accepting of your delays as well. If they expected to go to the grocery store and you can’t or you are just temporarily delayed, you can explain it to them, and they are more accepting of it.
- They might say “I guess!” now. “Would you like some milk?” “I guess!” Like, “I guess! Sure. It could go one way or another. Milk, juice, whatever.”
- They are a lot more cooperative. You don’t have to fight them as much to get out the door. They willingly put on their new clothes, shoes, whatever, to go.

Four Year Old Milestone 11A (4.9.4-4.10.2)—Changing Perspectives

Starts: 4.9.4 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: 4.9.4 until a few days after 4.10.0

Ends: Bleeds into the next one, around 4.10.2

Irritable Period Summary

Sleep Issues

- You might notice this one starting when they fall asleep in the middle of the day.
- Up late at night (intense fears cause this)
- Gets up early (and wants you)

Demanding

- They might want you to be by them, all morning.
- Upon waking up, if you aren't there right away, they desperately come find you.
- They demand you, in a close, constant, physical way.
- They might be snuggled right into your side a lot. As you shift to change positions, they move to stay exactly with you.
- They put your arm where they want it to be around them.
- Or they might just be in your face a lot. Their anger and emotions seem more often to be aimed at a same sex adult.

White Lies

- They purposely and jokingly blame others for something they obviously did, e.g., "No, you farted."
- Tells other little white lies like "My iPad is dead," when it's not.

Territorial

- They are territorial. You will not touch or move their creations.
- They keep their creations all over the house, or they arrange parts of the house, like chairs or pillows, to their liking. They hate when people move any of this.
- No, you will not take down their pillow fort.
- No, you will not disassemble their LEGOs, in order to put them away.
- After you make cupcakes, you cannot eat them, because they are for their birthday. Which is two months away.
- Their stuff is SO BEAUTIFUL. Why would you ever take it down?
- A loss of something deeply personal and memorable, say a special book made for them, will be doubly emotional for them.
- They also openly wonder where they can hide their stuff—so robbers can't get it.

Highly Afraid of Death

- They are now officially highly afraid of death.
- They might ask, in a distraught way, "WHY DO WE HAVE TO DIE?"
- They might repeatedly ask you if you'll die someday.
- Or they might tell you simply that they are "sad and scared." You ask if they are afraid of monsters, fires, tornadoes, etc., and they answer yes, yes, and yes.

- They continue to wonder what they can do if robbers come to their house or other bad things happen.
- They did just get out of the milestone, “Full Realization of Self.” They fully exist—as in their own mind. With this realization is also a realization that they can die.
- The only thing that seems to calm them down is to lie down with them or cuddle with them and assure them that you will protect them and that death doesn’t hurt.

Most Intense Period

- They are territorial: they don’t want any the stuff they created moved or taken down. They are also highly afraid of death. Long-term planning is setting (or has set) into place, and this comes with many weird and also scary feelings at first.

New Abilities Period

- They just got done realizing that their own mind can think and learn. Now they will add gradient to this.
- They notice how objects look different to them as they get further away or closer.
- They can appreciate that one thing or material works in context for some things and not others.

Changing Perspective

- They notice how the same object looks different to them, based on some change in criteria.
- They might marvel that a truck driving down the street, moving further and further away from them, continues to look smaller and smaller.
- Or, as they move around in, say, Minecraft, they notice that as they scroll down a tree, it makes the tree look like it’s going up, but scrolling up the tree makes the tree look like it’s going down.

Ponders the nature of objects and why one works and another doesn’t

- Similar to change perspectives, they wonder about the context of physical materials. Why do we use one material in one case and not another?
- They are fascinated by why objects are made of what material, how things work, or in general why things are the way they are.
 - Why is a particular mallet made of wood?
 - What is the middle of the earth made of?
 - Why do we have TWO eyes?
 - Why is it called “ear”? Like why “ear”?
 - They openly wonder what it would be like if humans were made of glass.
- They might want to know where stories come from or how the grocery store is always stocked with food
- They ponder the nature of something, based on its nature. What type of clouds are they looking at? The thinnest, wispiest of gray clouds floats by. They conclude, purely cognitively, that it must mean rain. You should definitely get inside.
- They size up the world: they have short hair and you have long hair.
- They might ponder more emotional characteristics, too. What type of person should you marry? Nice or mean?

Uses different materials appropriately

- With their knowledge of the context that materials are used in, they play around with it.

- On their own, they come up with the idea that metal power poles would withstand a tree falling on them better than wooden ones.
- They've been concerned about sunken ships for a while now. Now they think: maybe *air* balloons can work to raise the sunken ship. In other words, a different solution, with a different material, might work.
- They might love to use different tools to accomplish the same task, seeing which one works and which one doesn't.
- On their own, after doing an experiment and working with materials, they realize, "Oh! Ships are hard to raise because they are so heavy!" The world now has "weight" to them. (Things mostly floated around magically before.)
- Their imaginative play might also have some more creative twists, using objects not as originally intended. A castle they made out of LEGOs might have a bed that you get out of using a slide.

Contrasting Variables

- All of the aforementioned involved contrasting variables. Why would a metal telephone pole work—as against a thunderstorm? One thing has to counter or be balanced against another. The following, however, emphasize how they can think of contrasting variables.
- They can understand that a light color on a dark color looks different than a light color on a light color.
- They can understand that in order to lift something in the air, you have to overcome gravity.
- They can think of how tall or short they are—as compared to—how tall or short you have to be to ride a ride.
- They can read a compass, as they walk or drive around. They can see that north always points north, even as you drive around and change directions. "Yup!" they say as they watch the compass while in your van, by which they mean, "north is still north!"
- They can get into a silly "No, I won!" argument with you. "I won!" "No, I won!" Then you switch it up on them, "No, YOU won!" And they instinctively response, "No, YOU won!" You joke, "Thank you. I did win." They get all of it, but then correct you, "You're supposed to say, 'No, I won!'"

Notices how others would perceive them

- Before, they noticed *that* others were noticing them. Now they see how the other might actually see them.
- They might tell you to look to your left, while they dart to your right. They then tell you to look right, while they dart to your left. They get a big kick out of this.
- They might notice that others are looking at them as they walk in public. They might say they are "famous" because of it.
- They might say something like, "I want to wear a skirt, so others know I'm a girl."
- They also, as noted, notice if they are tall or short enough for a ride. They notice how their physical being fits in with the outer world. How do they all but literally measure up?
- Before they saw how someone might see a simple object differently than they do. Now they see how others see THEM, their very personhood. This is pretty big.
- This is actually a potentially scary new advancement. Imagine you are on stage, doing a dress rehearsal for a play. Then someone shines a huge spotlight on you, and you realize you are performing for a live audience. This seems to be what they go through.

- They as such might be scared to go into a new social situation “because people will see me.” One way to handle this is to “hide” them or make them “invisible” as they go into the new situation. This provides relief from all this intense new awareness that people see them—and might be judging, etc.
- You might intuitively find yourself telling them not to let others tell them they are ugly, inferior, etc. I find people often intuitively give children what they need at the right developmental stage.
- That they sense how you see them might also be why they have fun telling white lies.

Accepts much more responsibility

- They become more responsible about long term things, even if a bit wonky about it. They might want to make a cake now, for their birthday (which is again two months away).
- They might want to carry their stuff when leaving, say, a restaurant.
- When they clean up their own spills, they might show that they are going out of their way to make sure their spill doesn’t affect anyone.
- They might start an activity or project and tell you to go away. They have work to do.
- If they had to go to bed every night with a particular lovey or blanket, they don’t demand it as much anymore. They are more stable and independent without the need for emotionally comforting items as much.
- They have individuated by the milestone—they realized they are a separate person from everyone else. Now, they take more responsibility over their own actions.

Four Year Old Milestone 11B (4.10.2-4.10.3)—Reality is Real

Starts: Bleeds from the last one, around 4.10.2 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: 4.10.2 until 4.10.3

Ends: 4.10.3 or a bit after

Irritable Period Summary

Anger and Aggression

- Shows incomprehensible aggression, physical or verbal, often towards an adult who is the same sex as them.
- A boy might inexplicably start hitting his dad.
- A daughter might tell her mother, “If my nail polish wears off, I am going to be mad at YOU!”
- Their anger is often directed at a particular person, even though the person had nothing to do with what made them mad.
- They might show aggression towards their siblings.
- When they attack someone, if you tell them a part of someone is particularly vulnerable, they might actually go after that part harder.

Still demanding and territorial

- As seen in the last milestone, they can still be demanding and territorial, in which they get upset if you try to put away their creations.
- They are also demanding. In the morning, they come find you, to be by you, every morning.
- They might be a bit clingy.

Increasingly Bossy

- They want to control a lot of things. They want to control if they win or lose a game (and sometimes they purposely lose!). Or they want to control who opens the door, etc.
- They are more forward about getting what they want. If they want something and you don’t do it right away, they come up and playfully punch you.
- They are very direct about what they want. “Daddy, play LEGOs with me!”
- They might occasionally become hysterical and inconsolable when things don’t go how they want them to go, perhaps when playing a game.

New Abilities Summary

- They intellectually notice patterns between two things that persist across a bit of time.
- They become genuinely interested in others, such as how their day went.
- The previous two things drive a more permanent object constancy. Both other people’s perceptions and how things change over time become “stable” to them, as identified within their own mind.
- They can come up with theoretical outcomes, in which there are two, competing outcomes.
- They can get a bit “romantic” at times and they also get the “vibe” of a situation better. They sense risk, love, and emotions better.

Notices patterns between things that persist across a bit of time

- Whereas before they were noticing patterns about themselves as across time, now they notice patterns in the outside world.

- They impressively compare themes in stories that they know. Perhaps they notice that Mother Gothel in Rapunzel, who couldn't contain her anger, is just like how Elsa's parents were worried she couldn't contain her anger.
- They can also compare events that persist across a bit of time on their own.
- Say they put on episodes of their favorite show, of which they can pick from a menu on TV, which lists ten shows of Season One of something. They put on the first show. After the first show is done, it then automatically starts playing the second show. They say, "Hey, wait a minute! Mommy, look. They are playing the shows in order." And they go back to the original menu to show you.
- They understand the plans about to go down. When it deviates, they think you're a bit crazy. You might ask, "Do you want to [do a favorite thing of theirs]?" And then you get distracted and come back to them. You then ask what they want to do. They shrug, look at you like you're a bit crazy, and tell you, essentially, "The thing you said we were going to do."
- Very aware when plans get canceled. If you promised them something, say to see a neat dam, but then couldn't, they are aware you didn't go. They are accepting, however, of the understandable reasons of why you couldn't go.
- That they notice patterns might explain why they get so upset when things don't match. Perhaps they have a model, costume, or action figure from a story or movie. There is a chance they want everything to match to the real story/movie of this, down to the smallest detail.

Objects persist over time

- As they compare things that persist across time, they realize the permanent nature of objects better.
- They can hold onto the idea that the same child who grows up to be an adult remains the same person. They can understand that in *The Lion King* Simba was a cub, then an adolescent, then an adult, and that it's the same character throughout. Before, they would have thought the adult Simba was Mufasa.
- They are aware of the progression of their own growth: they are a baby, then a child, then a teenager, then an adult, then a "Grandma." And when they are 16, they'll be different. At 16, they'll be "smart" (or savvy or cool or whatever). They'll be the same person, but different.
- Their wild ideas of how things progress calm down. They no longer think they were born on a cruise ship. They know they were born in a hospital.
- They might like to have a bit of control over time itself. They might love to pause, rewind, and fast forward a movie or video, going to exactly where they want, at a very particular point in a movie.

Interested in other's perceptions and experiences

- They take a keen interest in other people's experiences and perspective.
- When they overhear how your day went, they become intensely interested in hearing all about it.
- Or they hear about how you got caught in a traffic jam, and they want to know all about it. They offer some solutions to help deal with the traffic.
- They might even ask, on their own initiative, "Daddy, what happened at work today?"
- They might become very, very concerned for other people, such as someone has to have a cast on their arm. They want to know all about what happened.
- They might become interested in how and why others were angry and what they did to resolve it.
- They might become very interested in knowing what makes you happy, so they can provide it.

Dual Perspectives

- They also notice how two people see the same thing differently, based on their perspective.
- They notice that their baby brother would see them as big, but Mom sees their baby brother as small.
- They understand that your left is different than their left.
- They might love the juxtaposition of them being an older child yet acting like a baby and how silly that ends up looking.
- Someone might ask them if something was funny and they say, “Um, yeah, but not enough to make me laugh.” You thought it was funny. They weren’t as impressed. They can handle these dueling perspectives like this now: what you thought versus they thought.
- They might say “OhhhHHHHhhhhHHH!” a lot. It’s as if they are emphasizing to you that they got what was said.
- If you spin them on a chair, they might know that they are spinning now, and not the room. Before, they definitely thought the room was spinning.
- The outside world, including reality itself and other people’s perspectives, is getting much more real and stable for them.

Dual Outcomes

- They can develop a plot of two potential outcomes in their mind, along with some detail and nuance within the two potential outcomes. They can develop a 2x2 matrix about future outcomes now.
- If they win a game, they would smile and their dad would frown. If dad wins, he would smile and they would frown.
- Or they might play around with their thumbs, where one gives a thumbs up sign and the other gives a thumbs down sign. They ask you to match them, sometimes doing the opposite of what they do.
- They might tell you one hand is “good” and the other is “bad.” Or that one hand is “good,” and the other is “tired.” They might openly wonder which hand is better to use for whatever task is at hand.
- They might notice that food makes poop and liquid makes pee.
- They might say something like, “My older brother is white. My sister is blue. I am yellow!” It’s deeply satisfying to them to think that one person is X color or symbol; another is another; etc. Think of how fun something like the Power Rangers is to them: one is pink, one is blue, etc.

Strong, Persistent Memory

- They remember an astounding amount of detail from the past (and then use it).
- They can remarkably remember things from the past with detail. On the day you did a particular activity with them, you also watched a particular movie. When you recall the activity, they mention the movie.
- They can verbally spell out words, without looking at the word at all previously. They would need a much stronger memory to be able to do this. They don’t need any props or help at all to do it—and they seem proud of this very fact.
- They can play a game like 20 questions with more advanced challenges, like, “It’s not on earth and not a planet.” They reply, with confidence, “Oh, it must be Pluto” To do this, they would have to be able to hold on to a lot in their mind, while they compare it to the current situation.

Growing creativity and flexibility

- They can take completely random LEGO pieces and build something with them. They might take disparate LEGO pieces to make a pink coffee maker, a chandelier, or a washing machine that can turn into a mirror.
- They follow the rules to board games far better. They can handle many different rules about it and follow them. When playing Sorry!, they can handle that they go only a certain amount when they get a certain card; that they can't "slide" unless they land on the start of the slide; that "Sorry" means Sorry, and so on. They actually understand and commit to these many rules.
- They are much more nonchalant and blasé about how things go down. They aren't as picky about what movie to watch. They might actively encourage you to pick one for them. This agreeableness grows greatly in the next milestones.
- Perhaps the stable nature of time, the recognition that others have their own perspectives, and the ability to accept more than one outcome gives them this more nonchalant attitude.

More "Romantic"

- Their interactions with people are more gender-related and "romantic."
- They might pretend to kiss their mother in a romantic way.
- They might love to be with their mom, perhaps putting makeup on her to make her "beautiful."
- Or they hug their sibling in a very hearty way.
- They might make "Love Coffee." A special pink coffee maker they made out of LEGO bricks makes love coffee. Whoever drinks it will be kind to animals.
- They wonder where they should spray perfume.
- Rough-and-tough jokes and play between boys and adult men might be more aggressive, boisterous, and heartier.
- You might find yourself making jokes about who is your kids' "boyfriend" or "girlfriend." This is because it makes them laugh.
- They very strongly want to be around friends or, if already around a lot of children, they adopt a newfound hero worship for older children.
- This rather sultry side of them will grow in the next milestones.

Gets the "vibe" of a situation better

- They notice the overall "vibe" of a situation better. They play along happily.
- If you are playing a game with risk, say Jenga, they might add to the drama. As you pull a block out, they wait in anticipation, "What's gonna happen!? What's gonna happen!?"
- They get into movies far more enthusiastically. They are besides themselves, enjoying emotionally provocative scenes.
- They might like books with a distinct emotional vibe, perhaps a book about the exhilarating trials people went through to make airplanes that work.
- When running around outside in the wind, they might try to get the wind to pick them up.
- They ham up their role in anything big time. If playing hide and seek, they walk around like "the man" as they try to find other kids.
- They might say "what the heck!?" more. Like, they are passing their little kid judgment on the situation—you all are silly—and they take pride in knowing that they can pass this fun judgment on everyone.

- They have moments of pure joy. Maybe they hang on some monkey bars, leaning back, just enjoying it. Or maybe they get excited, with their whole body, as they watch something fun.

Super into secret and invisible things

- They are fascinated by things that become invisible. They might see “invisible ink” in a cartoon and think it’s the greatest.
- They might hide their hands behind their back. Where did they go!?
- They love to be behind you, where you can’t see them.
- The world is actually very stable for them now. Perhaps it is just insanely funny to them that things can still “disappear.”

Four Year Old Milestone 12A (4.11.0-4.11.1)—Imagination is Imagination

Starts: A few days shy of 4.11.0 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: It's pretty short but they do get a bit clingy, have fears and sleep disruptions, and are more prone to illness.

Ends: 4.11.1

Irritable Period Summary

Clingier

- Comes up to you and just wants a hug
- Might really need a particular adult (needs their Dad or Mom)

Sleep and Physical Issues

- This milestone is definitively marked by sleep issues.
- They might be up late at night for a few days.
- They might come into your room at 3 or 4 in the morning.
- They might insist on co-sleeping with you.
- There is also a stronger propensity that they will become ill.

When reminded, still frightened about death

- When actual reminders of death happen, they get scared.
- They might get very upset when passing by graveyards.
- They are very upset by things like tornado warnings. They readily participate in all emergency preparedness for them.
- They might have a million questions about death (suggesting what is underneath all this fear at night).
- A less verbal child might just sit and get sad for seeming no reason (which might be this fear of death).

Growing Bossiness

- If something doesn't go their way, they might yell "I HATE THIS" or something similar.
- They tell YOU when you are leaving. "Mommy, one more fun thing and we're going!"

New Abilities Summary

- They willfully imagine huge things, but they are aware it's just imagination, which in and of itself is neat to them.
- They are very flexible in what solutions can be used. They are ok with substituting one solution for another, when the first doesn't work.

Aware of Their Own Imagination

- They can identify imagination itself as imagination now. Imagination is no longer a thing that just happens to them. They have control over it.
- If they can't find something they need, say a particular toy to be in a play they are putting on, they say, a bit haughtily, "Well, we will just have to use our IMAGINATION!"
- They love to make highly realistic models of things, such as using Play-Doh to make creations that look like something real, such as real food. "Mommy, it's not real but it's REAL!"

- Models (toys) aren't here for silly imaginative play anymore! They are here to help them solve REAL problems!

Huge Imagination

- They like to think of something BIG. Like:
 - What if our whole house was filled with SNOW!
 - Or, "Want to hear a joke!? The whole world is PURPLE!"
 - Or, what if there was a ROLLER COASTER in your house!?
 - Or they make up a story about you and who you dated before you got married. None of it is true, but they like thinking about it.
- They have a big imagination now and still think of fantastical things. But now they know those things are fantastical, which in and of itself is funny to them.

Flexible in what solution will work, accepts substitutions

- You can give them general requests, without specifics, and they come up with their own solution.
- For instance, "We need something to play trolls in our play, but we don't have any." They think about it and bring back a different but similar figurine to be the "trolls."
- With their flexibility, they are much more accepting of "substitutions" when need be. For instance, they now accept that a pair of black socks can work with their baseball uniform, when previously they had only worn blue socks. (Previously, not having the blue socks would have been meltdown material.)
- They are surprisingly agreeable to going upstairs, which is not where they usually hang out, when the cleaning ladies come. I mean, they have to clean, right?
- They directly say things now like, "That's OK. We can figure something else out."

Initiates Complex Projects

- They have an intense willingness to take totally random parts and put them together to make something useful or attractive. They initiate these projects themselves.
- They might ask to go fishing, but first they want to make their own fishing rod, perhaps out of yarn and food. When one hook doesn't work, they want a different one, but this time made of metal. They put together the bigger thing (the fishing rod) out of disparate parts (the yarn and food), mixing and matching pieces until one works.
- They might plan a new outfit, from top to bottom. They get the right dress, shoes, and the perfect hairstyle. They then, of course, make a dramatic pose in it, for a picture.

Application of Gradient in Perception

- Before they realized that something perceptually looks different to them based on how far away it is in space. Now they have gradient to this.
- They openly wonder if they should go to a bathroom that is near or far.
- If doing an experiment with rolling things down a ramp, they can position things exactly right to either stop or catch the marbles.
- They have better details about both the past and future, sprawling over a few days. They might ask you to charge their tablet for them. They know they'll need this for tomorrow. This precise planning for the day ahead is strikingly new.

Interested in death in a practical way

- They have an overall more realistic sense of the outer world and how things slide over time. They still have lots of questions and concerns about death, but it's more rational and practical.
- They are more realistic about their fears. They might say, "I no longer fear vampires because they are not real. Just heights."
- They note, rather plainly, that people are put in graveyards when they die.
- They are very willing to do practical things about death, such as participate in a fire or tornado drill
- An imaginary friend might show up who kills bad guys and robbers for them. Children very often come up with imaginary friends like this to slay their fears.
- Or there might be another one of them. There is "Your Child" and "Your Child #2." The second child is very powerful. They own their own pirate ship, etc.
- Before, things seem to extend into infinity for them. This perhaps is why they were so distraught about death: does the pain of death last forever? Will they die now? Now there is gradient to how far things can go, in distance and time, and their fear of death also calms down.

Precise in giving the impression they want to give to others

- They know how you would perceive them, and they are good at taking control over that.
- They are super stars in the game Statue. In this, several children pretend they are a statue and one is not. As the one moves around and looks away, the "statues" move to a new position. When the one looks at them, the statues have to freeze again. If one doesn't freeze in time, they are out. They are super good at being a statue. They get the perfect pose and look at you, daringly, to see if you know they are faking it or not.
- They might copy a piece of artwork, such as "Flaming June" by Frederic Leighton, with superior, devastating detail.
- With their new dress on, which they planned out, they strike a daring pose for a photo.
- Or they might pose for pictures in a specific away, for fun, repeatedly, well into the night.

Four Year Old Milestone 12B (4.11.3-5.0.1)—Short-Term Risk

Starts: 4.11.3 [y.m.w]

Most Intense: 4.11.3 until 5.0.0

Ends: 5.0.1

Irritable Period Summary

Supremely Bossy

- They very much know what is going on and even have the ability to realistically plan into the future a bit. They seem to want quite a bit of control over this, and they become very, very bossy.
- If you are going somewhere, say to the store, they might come up to you and kick you in the shin, demanding to go and demanding who should go with them.
- They can be bossy towards other children about what the rules are. They tell other children that they aren't allowed to go "too far away," other children aren't allowed to open the door yet, etc.
- Wanting control over future outcomes, they might cheat at games.
- They yell at you if you forget something, say you forgot to pack something for a trip.
- They are very bold. If you ask them if they are ok with something, they confidently put a thumb up in the air.
- Pro Tip: They get very bossy and stubborn now, but it isn't always about "winning" for them. They are actually very ok with losing, at times. It's about knowing what's going on. They don't like being confused or unsure about what is about to happen. Clear instructions, explanations about what is going to happen, and assuring them they can have a bit of choice when they get somewhere (say where to sit at a restaurant table) will help situations greatly.

Entitled

- They seem to purposely antagonize people in order to make the other person do work for them.
- They throw their cup on the ground and insist you get it.
- Or, though they normally carry their own food to the dining room table, they insist you do it now.

Taunts, Takes

- They take other people's stuff, especially other siblings.
- They might purposely take something of their siblings, such that their sibling will chase them. They even tell you that they do this on purpose.
- They might sneakily take a bit of their sibling's food at dinner. They directly tell you they were sly and quiet about it, so their sibling wouldn't see.
- They might make up imaginary scenarios where the two of you fight (maybe with guns or battleships) and then taunt you that they won.

Scary dreams, feels vulnerable

- About a week into the milestone, around 5.0.0, perhaps a little before or after, they very clearly have scary dreams at night.
- They might wake up every hour or so.
- They might be distraught about going to bed.
- They might tell you that they'll die in their sleep.

- If they can verbalize their dreams, they might tell you that in their dreams, someone, maybe another child, is trying to steal all their stuff.
- They might directly ask you to protect them more.

Wants you by them

- They really like when you are by them.
- They ask for you to be by them.
- They might draw a large chair, in Minecraft or on paper, which is “large enough so an adult can read to me.”

Physical and Sleep Issues

- They stay up late. At first, this is because they have problems to solve and things to do!
- But then it becomes because they are scared to go to sleep or can’t sleep. They seem genuinely awake—not tired at all. This can last for weeks.
- On one particular day, towards the beginning, they might have a slight fever with no other symptoms of the flu, or they might have a stronger propensity to get sick.

New Abilities Summary

- This one shows a strong interest in risk, probability, and blame. They can recognize that things will go one way or another into the future—how do you control how it goes or if it goes well? And who is at fault?

Accepts a huge amount of responsibility

- They are aware that things can go well or poorly into the future. They accept their own role in this and show a lot of responsibility.
- They show jaw dropping responsibility. They might want to carry their own baseball equipment to and from practice.
- They impressively take responsibility for what they did. After they take a hard fall, they get up, with lips quivering, “I got really hurt when I did that ... but it was my fault.”
- Or they take impeccable care of some of their toys. They make sure each object is where it should be in, say, a stamp kit with ink, paper, etc.
- They enthusiastically help clean, especially if it’s for someone else’s benefit.

An awareness of risk and probability

- They might ask how babies are made. I think they are asking, “How do you have control over that?” How do you make it happen? Can you control if it’s a boy or girl?
- They decide their own level risk. As they are running around, you warn them that they might fall, like they did last time. They tell you they know that, but they are ok with and will deal with it if it happens.
- They are aware that they have, say, \$20, and need to buy something that costs less than this. After they pay for something, they notice, “Mommy, I have less money now.” Opportunity cost, right?
- They might be bold and funny about this. If they put on an oven mitt to handle a hot pan, they yell, joking, “You don’t handle me, heat! I handle you!”
- They like watching shows with riddles, where you have three options.

Short-term plans and problem solving

- When you make small plans with them, they stick to them. If you tell them they can ask three questions, once they get to three, they go to do a fourth, but realize it’s past three, and stop.

- They can do things based on short-term plans. If going to a party, they dress up in a very particular way—in their party attire, of course.
- When they draw a large chair “so adults can read to me” they are also solving their own problems into the short-term future.

Who is to blame?

- They take a lot of notice of who is to blame for situations and why.
- As noted in the Irritable Period, they have a lot of questions and concerns about how things go down in the short term and are supremely bossy.
- If going on vacation, will the proper stuff get packed? Someone is responsible for this. They are naturally suspicious and get mad at you or bossy with you about such decisions.
- If you state that you someone blamed you for something, they are intensely interested in why.
- They notice when other people break the rules, e.g., “Daddy. I see that you are eating on the couch.”

Nonchalant about death

- They are extremely accepting of death now.
- They might happily tell a story about how their favorite beloved stuffed animal died but was reborn.
- They might matter-of-factly describe a theoretical intruder in their house that they killed.
- They happily tell you that tornadoes will never come to your region again.
- They might even watch a gory or violent scene on TV like it isn’t a thing.

Comes up with plans to avoid death

- They come up with plans to evade death or violence.
- They will keep their money in the toilet so robbers can’t find it.
- A fast car can outrun a tornado
- They’ll pack a toy gun on vacation in case of zombies.
- They need a hose to put out an erupting volcano.

Stays in character

- If they, say, have a blindfold on, they might turn into a “zombie” and adorably stay in character like this. They go over and scare their dad.
- They are aware they need to try to stay in character if putting on a play. They adorably find this task difficult.

Likes sequential progressions

- They like to learn things such as in a way that they progress logically or otherwise in sequence.
- When they add, they like to do it like, “What’s 1 + 1? Now 1 + 2? Now 1 + 3?”
- If writing, they might even like to fill out a grid with equations lined sequentially.
- They might get excited that their younger sibling is learning, “and soon they will know that you can add like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10!”