



Ways Preschoolers Learn

A child's brain develops the quickest in the first five busy and exciting years of life. The stages of development during these years are formative and develop the foundation of a preschooler's future development as they build a core understanding of the world around them. It is essential for preschoolers to feel safe and secure as they navigate and learn in their first years of life in order to flourish in the later stages of their development.

Two of the most important components contributing to preschoolers' brain development are relationships and play. As they build **relationships**, preschoolers learn information about the world and the people around them. In order to facilitate growth through relationships, leaders must provide a safe and secure environment in which preschoolers can learn and relate to others. Mission Friends leaders can model healthy communication, behavior, social interactions, and many other appropriate skills.

Play is another way preschoolers are able to explore the world around them. As preschoolers play, they observe, experiment, interact, and practice solving problems in developmentally appropriate ways. Play also allows preschoolers the opportunity to form relationships and build on those they already have with their caregivers and other people who care for them. Opportunities to play that are centered around the missions areas, missionaries, and Christian concept areas help them learn about missions and God's plan for their lives.

Because preschoolers are developing a foundation in order to understand the world around them, their **curiosity** guides their fascination with all that they encounter. They ask who, what, where, why, and how questions, which may lead to activities taking a longer time than anticipated. Preschoolers learn about missions as they ask questions and use their curiosity to explore.

Their desire to understand the world around them is often the source of preschoolers' **short attention spans**. Preschoolers may jump between activities or ask questions that seem unrelated. While it may be frustrating that a preschooler in your care is easily distracted, keep in mind that he or she may still be trying to decipher what you shared five minutes ago or be thinking about something that happened at home. Despite short attention spans and being easily distracted, preschoolers' brains are primed for learning as they explore through play and interact with the people around them.

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Another important aspect of preschoolers is their growing desire for **independence**. However, even though preschoolers will often demand to do things by themselves, they may still require appropriate support and encouragement as they continue developing their abilities. Support and encouragement, especially by means of positive attention, praise, and multiple opportunities to practice new skills, will help preschoolers further develop the skills they already possess.

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