

Alexa Skill Builder's Guide

6 Tips for Building Stellar Kid Skills



Learn to Build Skills for the Next Generation

With the addition of kid skills to the [Alexa Skills Store](#), Alexa developers now have the opportunity to build for a whole new audience. You can now publish fun and educational skills for kids under the age of 13. From educational skills to fun games for the whole family, you can build a variety of kid-friendly experiences with voice. And kids can discover and interact with your creations [with parental consent](#).

Kids are quick to take to voice experiences and talk to Alexa as if to a friend. They also have their own way of interacting with Alexa that's uniquely their own. From vocabulary, style of speech, and areas of interest, there are several things to consider when building skills for kids.

Here are six tips to keep in mind when building skills for the next generation:

1. Consider the Age Range You Want to Reach
2. Foster Curiosity and Exploration
3. Guide Kids through the Interactions
4. Include Memorable Moments
5. Deliver Fresh Content
6. Polish Your Skill Name and Description

In this guide, we'll explore each tip and share how you can incorporate these suggestions into your creation. We'll also point you to additional resources and code samples to help you get started.



1

Consider the Age Range You Want to Reach

Before you start building your kid skill, define the age range you want to reach. Think about what “engaging” means for the age range you want to serve. This is important since a voice experience that proves compelling for 6-year-olds likely won’t be engaging for preteens.

Younger kids look to Alexa to be amused and entertained through quick-win skills. Given their shorter attention span, skills that engage them through short interactions fare well. Older kids look to Alexa for a wide range of activities including games, entertainment, and story-based skills. They also lean on Alexa to provide homework help in academic subjects like math, geography, and spelling.

If you want to build a skill that appeals to a broad age range, consider adding levels or a mastery system to help tier the experience. Younger kids can start with the easy-level content, then grow to move on to more advanced levels. Older kids, on the other hand, can jump straight to the advanced material. The levels will help kids find an appropriately challenging experience and also provide a sense of accomplishment as they move forward.

For an example of skill with levels, check out our [Mix Master template skill](#). This game skill uses progressive prompting and difficulty levels to enable kids to move through levels. It also uses [Amazon DynamoDB](#) to keep track of players’ progress.

Learn more: [Video: How to Choose Projects for Voice](#)

★ **Try:** [Code Sample: Add Leveling to Your Skill](#)

2

Foster Curiosity and Exploration

Kids are fearless with technology. Hand a mobile phone or a tablet to a child, and before you know it, they found a game and are playing it better than you. As adults, we may have preconceived notions of how voice commands should work. We may interact with Alexa like we would with a computer. But unlike us, kids have no technology bias. They talk to Alexa like a friend.

Keep this in mind as you design your skill. Try to account for the many ways that kids converse. Kids don't always speak the way you'd expect. For example, they may say "play" or "turn on" to invoke your skill." They may say "what" when they mean "who." Plan for variations so your skill can understand young speakers. Think about how kids speak—how they phrase things and which words they use. Build a skill that's flexible enough to handle these scenarios.

Expand your interaction model by including [custom slots](#) to diversify the range of user input. For example, you can use the Amazon.Animal slot to include a wide range of animal names in your skill without having to input them yourself. You can also build up your skill's vocabulary using [entity resolution](#) to define synonyms for the Alexa service. This feature will enable your skill to understand that when kids use the words "big," "gigantic," or "huge," they mean the same thing.

Learn more: [Documentation: Entity Resolution](#)

[Documentation: Utterances and Custom Slot Type Values](#)

★ **Try:** [Code Sample: Enable a Wide Range of Answers](#)



3

Guide Kids through the Interactions

When it comes to kid skills, voice design best practices are especially important. If kids don't know how to move past a hurdle, they may walk away from the experience and never try again.

Design your skill so that it helps kids start engaging and continue engaging with your skill. When kids first try your skill, they'll likely need guidance on how to engage, especially if they are new to voice experiences. [Set clear expectations](#) on what your skill can do and how to move forward. [Include prompts](#) in your skill to help them along. Use confirmation to make sure they were understood correctly. And if they don't answer right away, [use re-prompts](#) to provide more guidance ("I didn't quite catch that. Would you like the big animal or the small animal?")

Remember that children's attention span tends to run shorter, so design interactions that allow for quick wins. Keep Alexa's responses to 10 seconds or less. The [one-breath test](#) is especially important when building kid skills. If you can read aloud Alexa's responses at a conversational pace in one breath, the length is likely good.

If you're offering a multiple-choice question, try to keep the answers to three choices or fewer. Try to minimize interruptions by first telling kids they'll hear multiple-choice options to choose from, and by keeping your lists short.

Learn more: [How Sesame Street Designed a Kid-Friendly Skill](#)
[Voice Design Guide: How Alexa Responds](#)

★ **Try:** [Set Clear Expectations on What Your User Can Do](#)
[Use Our Code Sample to Handle Dialog Management](#)



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Include Memorable Moments

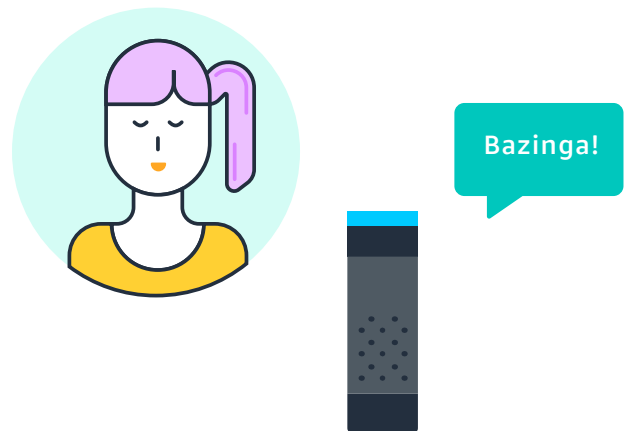
Even if your skill follows a proven educational curriculum methodology, it has to be fun and engaging. Otherwise it's just chocolate-covered broccoli. Think about how you want to surprise and delight kids. Do you want to spark imagination? Do you want to make kids laugh? Will you use expressive [speechcons](#) or sound effects like silly horns and boings? How will Alexa cheer them on? Build memorable moments that kids will want to tell their friends about at school or on the playground.

Easter eggs are a great way to surprise and delight kids. Kids like to ask Alexa silly questions in hopes of getting silly answers. Be ready to meet these expectations with kid-pleasing answers and sound effects. Another great way to introduce variety is to [vary your welcome message](#). Create a rotating list of delightful greetings to keep users coming back for more.

A bit of silliness can also keep the experience positive and fun when things aren't going well, specifically when kids guess the wrong answer. Be gentle in these moments. Consider including jokes or speechcons to help kids avoid feeling frustrated or doubtful. Find ways turn a potentially negative experience into a warm, positive one.

Learn more: [How Nickelodeon's SpongeBob Skill for Kids Handles Wrong Answers](#)
[Documentation: Speechcon Reference](#)

★ **Try:** [Code Sample: Break Up the Monotony; Vary Your Responses](#)



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Deliver Fresh Content

Once you've built your kid skill, continue to feed it with fresh content. Skills that provide fresh content drive more regular usage over time. Fresh content gives kids a reason to return to your skill over time, and when they do, they are rewarded with something new.

For example, fact skills and trivia skills that don't evolve over time to offer new facts or questions don't tend to see consistent engagement. Users may love the experience you've built, but if your skill never evolves beyond a set of limited choices, they won't have reason to keep coming back. You can build the most creative and compelling kid skill, but if you don't update it with fresh content, it will have a short shelf life.

When building your skill, establish a content workflow that enables you to quickly and easily add new content to your skill. One way to do this is to house your content in a database instead of hardcoding it into your skill to enable fast updates. Once you've set up a workflow, adhere to a schedule to make continued updates to your skill. Find ways to add fresh content and continue delighting your customers over time. And vet the source of your content to ensure your skill only serves up safe and kid-friendly content every time.

Learn more: [Tellables: Fresh Content Is Key to Building Engaging Kid Skills](#)

★ **Try:** [Code Sample: Keep Your Customers Engaged with Dynamic Content](#)



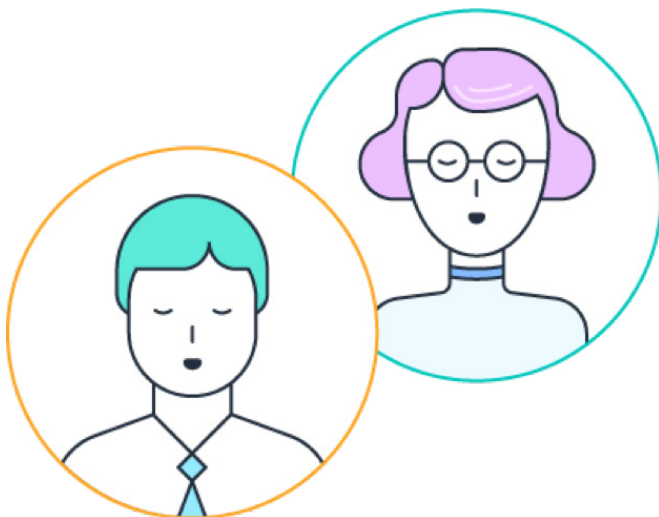
6

Polish Your Skill Name and Description

Here's a tip we stress for all Alexa skill types: take the time to give your skill a great name. Your skill name should help customers easily discover, understand, and remember your skill. Browse through the [Alexa Skills Store](#) and make sure your skill will not only be unique but also stand out in a crowd. If your skill name is longer and difficult to say, you'll risk losing users—even if your skill offers more functionality than its competitors. Remember, people prefer voice because it's our most natural form of interaction. Give your skill a name that's natural to say and easy to grasp, especially when building for a younger audience.

Even skills with more complex customer offerings can have a simple and memorable name. The [Magic Door](#) is an interactive adventure game that takes customers through a magic door into an enchanted forest. The name hints at many aspects of this sophisticated skill and is also easy for children to remember.

It's also important to present a polished skill description that not only resonates with kids but also informs their parents. Kids tend to use skills that their parents think they should use. Tell the parents about the experience and the values your skill offers. Outline your skill's key features as well as the appropriate age range of users. Include any details that parents may want to know in order to feel confident that your skill will deliver a safe, positive, and enriching experience.



Build a Stellar Kid Skill for Alexa

Think like a kid when building your kid skill. What will a kid expect your skill to do? What about the skill is important to a kid? How would a kid respond? What would a kid need help with?

Ask yourself these questions as you follow our tips and build your skill to engage, entertain, and educate kids.

Once you've built your skill, refer to our [certification tips](#) and [requirements](#) to make sure your skill is ready to be certified and published in the [Alexa Skills Store](#). For more information, check out our [frequently asked questions](#) related to kid skills.

Embrace your inner kid and start building an imaginative and fresh voice experience for kids. We can't wait to see what you build for the next generation.

Alexa Skills Kit

The [Alexa Skills Kit](#) is a collection of self-service APIs, tools, documentation, and code samples that makes it fast and easy for you to add skills to Alexa. With ASK, you can leverage Amazon's knowledge and pioneering work in the field of voice design.

Additional Resources

[Create Kid Skills for Alexa](#)

[Voice Design Guide](#)

[Documentation](#)

[Shortcut: Start a Skill Now](#)

