



Communication

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler is learning language very quickly and will imitate what he hears, good or bad. He is using different types of words and putting them together in short phrases. Most of his words are understandable. He is starting to sing simple songs.

Sock Puppet Put your hand in a clean sock and make it talk. "Hi, my name is Joe. I am visiting you. What is your name?" Your child might say something or want to touch the puppet. Keep the conversation going.

Construction Time Collect materials to make a pretend airport, street, or neighborhood. Masking tape can be the runway or the road. Oatmeal containers can be tunnels. Cereal boxes can be buildings. Cardboard can make a ramp for cars to go up and down. Toy cars can go through the tunnel, under the bridge, or down a ramp. Use new words while your child plays.

Following Directions As you talk to your child, begin to give simple directions such as "Bring me the blue sock," or "Put your doll on the chair." At first, you might have to show your child what is blue or what "on the chair" means. Offer a lot of praise. Another game you can play is Show Me. You say, "Show me the door," and your child touches the door. Good job!

Fun with Books Find large picture books and/or magazines to look at with your child. Point to pictures and talk about what you see. Ask him, "Where's the doggie?" and have him point to a picture. Let your child "read" to someone else, like Grandpa. If your child is beginning to learn about using the toilet, this is a good time to put a small basket of potty-related books in the bathroom for him to "read."

Field Trips Your toddler will enjoy going to new places, even to a new store. This is a great time to learn new words. Talk to her about what you are seeing. "Look, that fruit is called a kiwi." "Look at that big fountain."

Sing a Song Your child will love learning simple songs such as Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. Teach your child this song or a simple song you remember from childhood. Enjoy singing together. Later, ask your child to sing for someone else in the family.



20–24 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler is busy and fast! She is running and learning to kick and jump. Her leg muscles are getting stronger, and she can walk up and down stairs holding on to your hand or a railing. She really enjoys moving her body and learning new skills.

Froggie Jump Hold your child's hands and help him jump off a low step. Then let him try it by himself. Once he can do this, show your child how to jump over something such as a small milk carton. Encourage your child: "Wow! You can jump just like a froggie."

Bowling Adventure Show your child how to roll a large ball toward "pins" to knock them down. Balls can be made from large wads of newspaper taped all around. Empty milk cartons or plastic soda bottles can be used for "pins." When your child gets tired of bowling, you can play kickball.

Balancing Act Assist your child by holding her hand, and ask her to stand on one foot. Then ask her to stand on the other foot. Now see if she can stand without holding your hand. Count how many seconds she can balance. Keep practicing.

Let's Go for a Ride Give your child a riding toy with pedals. It will help him control the movement of the toy and strengthen his legs. Later he will enjoy riding a tricycle with pedals.

Dance Party Play different kinds of music: rock and roll, country, classical, and ethnic music—any that you and your child enjoy. Dance and move to the music with your child. Allow her to move freely as she listens. Sometimes pick her up so she can feel you move. Mostly, let her dance and move by herself. She may enjoy dancing with scarves or ribbons.

Trip to the Playground Find a playground in your neighborhood, and have some fun! Run, swing, and climb. As you walk to the playground, practice stepping up or down street curbs holding your child's hand. Encourage him to walk up stairs by holding on to the railing.



20–24 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your busy toddler enjoys quiet activities that build small muscles. He can stack and build with small toys. He is learning how to hold a crayon with his thumb and fingers and how to make circular and horizontal scribbles. He is becoming more skillful at stringing beads and doing other activities that require working with two hands.

- Stack it Up** Your child will have fun stacking small things and knocking them down. Use blocks, film containers, spools of thread, or anything stackable. Count how many things your child can stack. See how high she can go!
- String Fling** String beads, macaroni, or large cereal, and help your child practice using two hands at one time. A shoelace or string with some tape on the end will work well for stringing. Make necklaces and bracelets.
- Family Book** Make a small picture album for your toddler. Include pictures of family members, friends, and pets. Look through the album and talk about each person. Have him turn pages and tell you about the pictures. Have him share his special book with visitors.
- Beginning Puzzles** Show baby how to put beginning puzzles together. You can make a puzzle by cutting the front of a cereal box into two or three wide strips. Help her turn the piece if she needs help. Praise her for trying. Tell her, "Good for you! You can do it!"
- Letters and Shopping Lists** When you make out your shopping list or write letters, have paper and a pen or crayon for your child to write along with you. "I'm writing a letter to Grandma. You can write one, too." Send the letters in the mail. Grandma may write back!
- Make Fruit Salad** Let your child use a Popsicle stick or a plastic picnic knife to help you cut bits of fruit such as banana or peaches. He can help scoop yogurt, sprinkle in nuts or raisins, and stir everything together. Don't forget to tell the family who made the salad.
- PB and J** Your child will enjoy making her own snack. She can help twist open lids on jars, open containers, spread peanut butter or jelly, scoop out applesauce, and more. The more she can do herself (with your supervision), the faster she will learn and the more skilled she will become.



20–24 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler is curious about body parts and what they do. She understands more about how things go together, such as where items belong. She knows that a picture of a cat represents a real cat, and she is learning what objects are used for. Her busy mind is trying to make sense of what she sees and experiences.

Scoop and Pour Let your child experience pouring and filling. Provide a lot of recycled materials such as clean milk cartons, yogurt cups, detergent scoops, film containers, and plastic soda bottles for playing in the sand. At home, use uncooked rice or popcorn in a large tray or box and provide scoops and containers. Talk about what your child is doing and use new words such as “empty,” “full,” “pouring,” and “scooping.”

Pretending with Household Objects For pretend play, make a box with household tools—such as a flashlight, paintbrushes, a small shovel, or a broom—for your child. Your child can pretend to paint the walls, dig in the garden, or clean up the house. Talk about the purpose of the items: “Flashlights help us see things in the dark.”

I Can Do, Can You? During bath time or lap time with your child, play I Can Do, Can You? “My eyes blink; can your eyes blink?” “My nose can sniff; can your nose sniff?” “I can clap my hands. Show me you can clap, too.” Do something silly. This game is a lot of fun.

Make-Believe Play Make a cooking box with an apron, pots, spoons, and bowls, or make a doctor bag using a makeup bag with a play stethoscope (old earphones are good), bandages, Popsicle sticks for tongue depressors, a clipboard and/or file folders, and a white dress shirt. Take these out for some special make-believe play. Have a mirror nearby.

Topsy Turvy Turn things (books, cups, a box of cereal) upside down and see if your child notices and turns them back the right way. Have fun with this silly game.

Railroad Tracks While your child is watching, draw two long horizontal lines about 4 inches apart on a large sheet of paper. Then, show your child how to draw vertical lines from one to the other. Encourage him to make a lot of these vertical lines. The design will look like a railroad track. Bring out the trains or cars to play on the railroad track.



20–24 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler is beginning to exercise his newly found independence. He will want to do everything by himself, even if he cannot. He wants things now and quickly becomes frustrated if that doesn't happen. He will enjoy playing alongside other children even though he is not really able to share just yet. He likes to imitate simple household tasks and can put some of his toys away with some help from you.

Baby Bear Beds Make a little bed for your child's doll or a stuffed animal from a shoebox. A small piece of cloth or a dishtowel makes a blanket or a pillow. Your child can help her baby go to bed at night. She can read a story and tuck him into his new bed. Don't forget a kiss.

Play Dates Your child will need your help in playing with others but enjoys being with other children. Stay close by when he is with other children. Having a lot of the same kinds of toys helps the children cooperate. Several trucks, cars, and dolls are easier to share than one of each kind. Praise children for playing well together.

Dress-Up Make a box with dress-up clothing. Your child will have a lot of fun pretending. Have a bag or box with dress-up items: hats, scarves, shoes, old jewelry, and a wallet. Add clothing with large buttons and zippers to practice buttoning and zipping. Your child will need some help, but soon she will be able to get dressed all by herself. Give her a lot of praise for her efforts. Don't forget to let her look in the mirror.

Playing House Place a plastic dishpan on a low table for doing dishes. Add a doll, plastic plates, cups, and some cooking utensils. Make playhouse furniture for your child. Turn a box over, and draw the burners to make a stove. Follow your child's lead; talk and have fun.

Picnic Outing Find a place to have a picnic with your child. A park or the playground is a fun place, but your child will have fun even if the picnic is just in the living room. Let your child help prepare some simple food and drinks for the picnic. Maybe the stuffed animals would like to join you. Let your child practice eating all by himself.



20–24 months