



Communication

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler enjoys being with you and is learning new words very quickly. She is using her language more often to let you know her wants, needs, and ideas. She can carry on a simple conversation and may talk to herself or pretend to have a conversation with a stuffed animal. She can follow simple directions and loves to read books. She likes to hear the same book read over and over!

I Spy In the car or on the bus, you can play "I Spy." You say, "I spy with my eye a green truck." Then your child tries to find what you spied. Now it is his turn to spy something. Remember to "spy" things your child can see from his car seat. You might also try "I hear with my ear." Listen for sounds such as a motorcycle, a car horn, a bird singing, a dog barking, or a radio.

Picture Album Make a little picture album with pictures of your child and people and pets he knows. Have your child talk about the pictures and name the people and pets. Ask your child, "Who's that?" "What are they doing?" Look at this book over and over. Help your child learn to say her first and last name.

When You Were Little Tell your child stories about when he was little: "When you were first born..." or "When you were a little baby..." Your child will love to hear these stories again and again.

Dinner Report At the end of a busy day, let everyone talk about his or her day. Ask your child to tell others in the family what she did during the day. Let her take her time. You might remind her if she forgets some events. Soon she will learn to tell what happened in the right order. Praise her for remembering so much.

Washing a Baby Let your child wash a baby doll in a plastic tub, or bring a baby doll into his bath with him. Name the doll's body parts as he washes the baby: "You're washing the baby's feet." Praise your child for taking such good care of his baby.

What's that Sound? Turn off the TV and radio, and listen with your child to sounds around the house. Listen to the refrigerator motor, wind chimes, a clock ticking, or people talking. Ask your child to tell you what she hears. Try this at night. Listen for the night sounds of crickets and frogs.



24–30 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



The word “active” still best describes your toddler. His muscles are getting stronger. He is gaining more confidence with his abilities. Allow your toddler to continue physical activities he enjoys, such as kicking balls, riding toys, climbing jungle gyms, swinging, running, jumping, and balancing.

Copy Cat Stand on one foot. Ask your child “Can you do this?” If your child stands only for one second, praise her. Pretend to be an airplane flying with your arms out across the room. Try other movements: jump, crawl, gallop, and tiptoe around the house. Let your child be the leader and copy her. Play with the whole family.

Jumping Frog Contest Pretend you and your child are frogs or kangaroos and jump with both feet together. Show your child how to jump with both feet together, and then jump over a chalk line or a small object such as a washcloth. Make marks with the chalk to measure how far he can jump with both feet together. Comment to your child, “Wow, look how far the frog jumped that time!”

Soccer Star Play “soccer” with your child. Use a medium-size ball (8–10 inches) and set up a goal with two empty milk cartons or a large cardboard box turned on its side. Encourage your child to kick the ball through the cartons or into the box. Great goal!

Playground Fun Just about every day is a good day to spend some time outside in the yard or on a playground. Encourage your child to run, swing, and climb up play structures and slide down slides. Join your child in these activities. If you walk to the playground, jump over cracks or sticks on the way. Help your child to practice stepping up and down stairs or jumping down from short steps. Meet other children and parents. Have a great time!

Basketball Hoops Practice bouncing, catching, and throwing a medium-size ball. You can use a garbage can or laundry basket for a target and can celebrate when your child “makes a basket.” Help your child learn how to catch by showing her how to hold out her hands to catch the ball. Start by standing really close together so that she can have more success.

Horsing Around Play Ride the Horse and bounce your toddler on your knees or hold his hands as he straddles your foot and let him ride your foot. (Crossing your legs makes it less tiring to bounce him.) Stop bouncing every now and then, and wait for him to bounce or ask for more. Ask your child, “More? You want to ride some more?”



24–30 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler's eyes and hands are working together well. He enjoys taking apart and putting small things together. He loves using any kind of "writing" or drawing tool. Enjoy the time together by providing plenty of scratch paper, washable crayons and marking pens, and so forth. Allow writing and drawing to take place at a table while you supervise so that your artist will not draw on walls or furniture. Provide puzzles, blocks, and other safe small toys and plenty of conversation.

Flipping Pancakes Trim the corners from an ordinary household sponge to form a "pancake." Give your child a small skillet and a spatula. Show him how to flip the pancake.

Macaroni String String a necklace out of macaroni (tube-shape pasta, such as rigatoni, works really well). Your child can paint the pasta before or after stringing it. Make sure she has a string with a stiff tip, such as a shoelace. You can use yarn, but tape the ends so that it is easy to string.

Homemade Orange Juice Make orange juice or lemonade with your toddler. Have him help squeeze the fruit using a handheld juicer. To make lemonade, you will need to add some sugar and water. Show your toddler how to twist the fruit back and forth on the squeezer to get the juice out. Cheers!

Copy Me Have your child copy a line that you draw, up and down and side to side. You take a turn and then your child takes a turn. Try zigzag patterns, then spirals. Use a crayon and paper, a stick in the sand, markers on newspaper, or your fingers on a steamy bathroom mirror.

Bath-Time Fun While bathing your toddler, let her play with things to squeeze, such as a sponge, a washcloth, or a squeeze toy. Squeezing really helps strengthen the muscles in her hands and fingers. Besides, it makes bath time more fun!

My Favorite Things Your child can make a book about all of his favorite things. Clip or staple a few pieces of paper together for him. (Let him choose his favorite color.) Help him use safety scissors to cut pictures out of magazines and glue them on the pages. He can use markers or crayons to decorate pages and to try to write his name. Write down what he says about each page. Stickers can be fun to put in this book, too.

Sorting Objects Find a divided plate (e.g., a TV dinner tray). Into a plastic bowl, put some common objects such as nuts, shells, and coins. Let your toddler use a spoon or tongs to pick up the objects and put them in different sections of the plate. Make sure you watch your child with small objects to make sure she doesn't put them in her mouth.



24–30 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Doing things all by herself is very important for your toddler. Be patient and enjoy this time of growing independence, even though it may sometimes be frustrating. Give your child plenty of time and chances to figure out and do things by herself. Make-believe is also an important part of your toddler's growth; real and make-believe can be confusing. Help your child learn about the difference, especially when watching TV.

Paper Bag Matching Game Gather at least two of several household objects. Use two paper bags with the same things in each bag. Pull one item out and ask your child to reach in and find one in his bag. Remind your child, "No peeking, just feeling!"

Helping Around the House Ask your toddler to help with the laundry. Sort things by color, or gather only white things. Maybe all of the baby clothes go in one place. Let your child help you put all of the socks in one pile and all of the shirts in another. She can line up the shoes and boots in the right place, and you can help her make sure they are in pairs.

Snack-Time Roundup When giving a snack to your child, teach him how to line up pieces of fruit, small crackers, or cereal loops. You can make a line of four things, and have him copy you. You can help your toddler count the food pieces and then eat them up.

Building with Boxes Gather up several small and medium-size boxes to use as building blocks. You can use shoe boxes, cereal boxes, clean milk cartons, and so forth. Encourage your child to build with the boxes. Ask her, "What are you making?" "Is that a house?" "Is it a wall?" Add toy cars or animals for more fun.

Where Is it? Using any object in your house, play Where Is It? with your toddler. For example, hide a stuffed bear under the pillow. Give your toddler clues to find the bear: "Where's bear? Can you find her? She's under something green," or "She is behind something soft." Give your toddler help as needed, and then let him hide things and give you some clues.



24-30 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler is still working on doing things for himself and wants very much to please adults. He enjoys feeding himself and dressing himself without your help. Since toddlers love to imitate, you can let him help around the house with simple tasks, such as wiping up spills. Your extra support and patience will make life easier for both of you, especially if there's a new baby at home.

Dapper Dresser Taking off clothing is probably easy for your child. Now begin having her put on her own clothes. Start with loose-fitting shorts. Have her sit on the floor, put both legs in the shorts, stand up, and then pull up shorts. Tell your child, "Wow! You put those on all by yourself!" Let her look at herself in a mirror. Now practice putting on a T-shirt: head first ("Boo!"), then one arm, and then the other arm. "What an excellent dresser you are!"

Playmates Invite a one of your child's friends over to play for a short period of time, or take your child to a relative's house where there is someone his age. Make sure there are enough toys to play with to share easily. Later, let him tell you all about his experience.

First Feelings Help your child name feelings when they happen. When your child is worried, you can help her understand the feeling by telling her, "You look worried. Can you tell me about it?" If you know your child is frustrated, use the words: "I know you are really frustrated, but you can have a turn in a minute." When your child learns that feelings have names, she will be able to handle them more easily.

Holding a Baby Let your child hold a baby, either a sibling or a relative or neighbor's baby (with their permission). Supervise your child as he holds the baby, and help him sit steadily and hold his arms appropriately for support. Talk about how babies must be handled gently. Tell him what a good friend he is to baby and how baby likes him.

All by Myself Enjoy a meal during which your little one feeds herself using a fork. Mashed potatoes will be a little easier than peas, but soon your little one will have mastered peas, too! Show her how to twist noodles. Better have an extra napkin on hand!

Big Little Parent When your toddler plays with a doll or teddy bear, give him a small plastic dish, a spoon, and a cup. He may also need a baby blanket and maybe a hairbrush and toothbrush. Now he can really take care of that baby bear!



24-30 months