



Communication

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler is beginning to enjoy language and words. She has many new words now and is beginning to put two words together for simple sentences. She looks at you when you are talking to her, says “hi” and “bye,” and points to things she wants. She also enjoys singing and will try to imitate singing favorite songs.

Chatter Stretchers Your toddler may use single words for requests, such as “juice” when he wants a drink. Help him stretch his sentence by saying it for him: “Would you like some juice?” “Say, I want juice, please.” Praise him when he attempts to make the sentence longer.

What Happened Today? When you get home from an outing, ask your toddler to tell someone else about what happened or what the two of you saw. “Tell Grandpa about the horse we saw.” Help her if you need to, but let her tell as much as she can.

“Help Me” Game Ask your toddler to help you by giving simple directions such as “Help Daddy. Can you get my shoe?” or “It’s time to change your diaper. Can you get me a diaper?” You may need to point with your finger to help him in the beginning. Be sure to say, “Thank you. You’re such a big help” when he helps.

Animal Sounds Teach your toddler the sounds that animals such as cats, dogs, and cows make. Read books about baby animals, and play with your toddler by making the baby animal sounds. Later, pretend you are the animal’s parent and your toddler is the baby animal. Call each other with animal sounds. This game can be a lot of silly fun.

Read, Read, Read Find times to “read” throughout the day. At this age, you can point to pictures and words and your child will begin to learn what words are about. At the grocery store, point to and read signs to your child. At a restaurant, let your child “read” a menu. At home, help her “read” magazines by looking at pictures.

Junk Box Put together a junk box of safe, everyday items that are interesting to explore and feel. Examples of things to put in the box are plastic cups, a soft sock, a scoop from a detergent box, a sponge, and a small shoe. When your child pulls something out of the box, say, “Look, you found a soft blue sock,” or “That sponge is squishy.” Use new language for your child, and change items in the box every few days.



16–20 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



By now your active toddler is attempting to run. He can carry large items and toys and loves to push and pull big things such as boxes around on the floor. He's learning how to walk upstairs with one hand held by you and is getting better at walking down stairs. He may climb up into a chair to see and reach new things. Your watchful eye is important.

- Swinging** Take your child to a park to swing. Be sure the swing is safe and has a seat belt. Show your child how to push her feet out when swinging forward. Push gently so you know baby will hold on. Chant in rhythm while you push: "Up you go, and up you go!"
- Climbing the Stairs** Hold baby's hand while you climb up steps or a few stairs. Be patient; stairs are very high for little legs. Don't expect much luck with climbing down just yet. If you don't have any stairs in your house or yard, a playground will have places to practice, such as a small slide or a jungle gym platform.
- Balance Beam** Put a 2-inch wide strip of masking tape on the floor or sidewalk. Let your child walk along the tape, placing one foot in front of the other. Praise your child. Tell him, "You really know how to balance!"
- Chasing** Your toddler is beginning to run now. In a grassy part of your yard or a safe park, play chase with your little one. Most toddlers love to be chased, and they love to be caught and hugged. Your toddler will love doing this over and over! It's good exercise.
- Moving Day** Give your child a small wagon or a box with a pull string for hauling toys around. Your child can load the wagon and unload at a different place. Maybe the teddy bear wants to ride!
- Playing Music** Your toddler will love making and moving to music. A small keyboard or a little tambourine is fun to play with. You can make a drum with an oatmeal container, large plastic containers, and wooden spoons or chopsticks. Join her for a little music making. Take turns making music and dancing and moving to different rhythms.
- Kickball** Give your child a medium-size ball (6 inches), and show him how to kick it. You can also make a ball from a wad of newspaper taped all around. See how far he can make it go. Kick it and chase it!



16–20 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler is becoming more skillful with hands and fingers. She can play with and use toys in many ways, including stacking, poking, pushing, and pulling. She is also gaining skill at holding and using crayons or felt-tip pens. She knows how to take pieces out of a simple puzzle and will try to put the pieces back together.

- Tear it Up** After you each wash your hands, show your child how to tear lettuce or spinach leaves into a bowl. Be sure to tell the family who made the salad. (Your child may also like tearing strips of newspaper. Stuff them in a paper bag, tape it up, and make a kick ball.)
- Aim and Drop** Show your little one how to drop a clothespin or spoon into an open milk carton or other plastic container with a large opening. Play the game as long as your toddler enjoys it. Let him shake the container and enjoy the sound.
- Stacking Blocks** Let your little one play with wooden cubes or blocks. Show her how to stack them one on top of another. Build a tower. Count aloud as you stack the blocks so that she begins to hear the sound of numbers. She'll love knocking down the tower. Little plastic containers can be washed out and stacked, too.
- String-a-Snack** Give your toddler a small container of Cheerios or other round cereal and a clean shoelace or a piece of string with tape around the end to make it stiff. Show him how to string the Cheerios. Then eat the Cheerios!
- Place Mats** Make sure your toddler gets plenty of chances to practice writing and drawing. You might keep paper and washable crayons in the kitchen so you can supervise while getting dinner ready. Use her drawings for place mats for the family. Make sure your little writer knows that writing only happens on the paper.
- Snack Helper** Let your toddler help make a snack. With your help and supervision, he can unscrew lids from containers such as applesauce or peanut butter. He can help scoop and spread with a plastic knife. He can also help eat. Yummy!



16–20 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your busy learner now recognizes animal pictures and other types of pictures, such as photographs of family members. He enjoys a lot of new activities with your help, such as painting and playing with playdough. He is beginning to understand about things that are similar or that go together in some way. He is very curious about how things work.

Copy Cat On a large piece of paper, draw and scribble together with your toddler. Take turns. You scribble, and then let her scribble. You draw a line, and then let her draw a line. Let her take a turn, and then you copy her scribbles.

Making Things Fit Allow your child a chance to play with puzzles or toys that fit together or inside each other. Plastic containers that “nest” are also fun. Use the word “fit” when you can: “That piece fits in the puzzle.”

Tool Time Let your child play games or do tasks in which tools are used. For example, use a sponge to wipe off a chair. Use a strainer to play in the sand. Use measuring cups to fill up containers in the bathtub.

Match the Socks When you fold laundry, set aside some of the socks, both large and small. Show your toddler one sock of a pair, and let him find the other. Show him how to match the socks if he needs help. Ask him, “Whose big blue socks are these?” “Whose little green socks are these?”

Nature Walk Go on a walk in your neighborhood, and collect little things such as rocks and leaves in a small pail or plastic tub. When you get home, try to put things together into different groups. For example, help your child sort big and little rocks, rocks from leaves, or black rocks from white rocks, making sure your toddler doesn’t put anything in her mouth. Your child will learn about grouping things.

Matching Pictures Cut out pictures of toys, food, and other familiar objects, and glue them on cards. Have your child try to match cards to actual objects or vice versa. Show your child a picture of a toothbrush. Ask him, “Where is a toothbrush like this?” Then show him a picture of a chair. “Can you find something like this?”



16–20 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your toddler is gaining more independence every day. She may show jealousy of others who get attention, especially siblings. She is very interested in other children. She likes to do things by herself and may become a little bossy and resist your suggestions. Your good humor will go far in seeing you both through the coming months.

Big Time Mealtime Let your toddler join the family at the table for meals and eat with his own spoon and fork. He may need a booster seat to be right at the table. He can begin to drink from a small plastic cup (just don't fill it to the top). He can even help you set a place at the table. Talk about what a big boy and good helper he is.

Family Dancing Show your toddler how to dance. Play music, and show her how to imitate you or dance with you. Invite other family members to dance along. Pick up your toddler and dance with her. Praise your little one. Give her a hug.

Storytime This is a good time to establish the habit of reading stories every night before bed. After brushing teeth and getting ready for bed, cuddle up and enjoy a favorite book. It is especially good to read with the TV turned off. This might also be a special time for another member of the family to share with your toddler.

Comfort Me Because your toddler is so busy and is often frustrated, he will need a lot of comfort and reassurance. He responds to what he's feeling right now and cannot really understand that he will feel better in just a little while. He will need your warm voice, a hug, and comfort.

Tickles and Kisses While getting your toddler ready for bed, say goodnight with a little tickle or kiss to different parts of baby: "Goodnight little nose (tickle), goodnight little foot (tickle), goodnight little ear (tickle)." Ask your baby what part needs a goodnight tickle or a goodnight kiss.



16–20 months