

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

You can play this in the car, on the bus, or on a walk. Say, "I spy with my little eye a green truck." Your child tries to find what you spied. Then it is his turn to spy something. Remember to spy things your child can see. You can also say, "I hear with my little 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 album with pictures of your child and the 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 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. Say, "Thanks for telling us about your day!"

Washing a Baby

Let your child wash a baby doll in a plastic tub, or bring a baby doll into his bath. Name the doll's body parts as he washes the baby: "You're washing the baby's hands." Let your child know what a good job he is doing taking care of the baby.

What's that Sound?

Turn off the television and other electronics, and listen with your child to sounds around your home. 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, frogs, or cars beeping. Whisper to each other about what you hear.

Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety.

Gross Motor

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

Can You Do This?

Stand on one foot. Ask your child, "Can you do this?" Even if your child stands only for 1 second, praise her. Pretend to be an airplane flying with your arms out across the room. 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 rabbits, and show your child how to jump with both feet together. Then jump over a chalk line, crack in the sidewalk, or small object. Make marks with chalk to measure how far he can jump with both feet together: "Wow, look how far the frog jumped that time!"

Soccer Star

Use a medium-size ball (8–10 inches) to play soccer with your child. Set up a goal with two empty milk cartons or turn a large cardboard box 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 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. Jump over cracks or sticks on the way to the playground. Help your child practice stepping up and down stairs or jumping down from short steps. Meet other children and parents. Have a great time!

Basketball Hoops

Stand in front of your child and hold out your arms in a circle. You are the "hoop." Encourage your child to toss a soft ball into your "basket." You can also use a garbage can or laundry basket for a target. Celebrate when your child makes a basket!

Horsing Around

Bounce your toddler on your knees or hold his hands and let him straddle and ride your foot. If you cross your legs, it is less tiring to bounce him. Stop bouncing and wait for him to bounce or ask for more. Ask your child, "More? Do you want to ride some more?"

Stair-Stepping Solo

When you climb stairs, let your toddler hold on to only one of your fingers. You may have to slow down, but let her climb the stairs with little support or all by herself. Show her the stair rail and encourage her to hold it for support. When your child climbs all by herself, give her a big hug!

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Fine Motor

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Your toddler's eyes and hands are working together well. He enjoys taking apart and putting together small things. He loves using any kind of writing or drawing tool. Provide scrap paper, washable crayons, or markers. You can also try puzzles, blocks, and other safe small toys. Talk and enjoy the time together. When writing or drawing, set up clear rules: "We draw *only on the paper*, and *only on the table*. I will help you remember."

Flipping Pancakes

Trim the corners from a simple sponge to form a "pancake." Give your child a small frying pan and a spatula. Show him how to flip the pancake.

Macaroni String

String a necklace out of dried pasta with big holes. Tube-shaped 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 also tape the ends of a piece of yarn 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. Show him how to twist the fruit back and forth to get the juice out. To make lemonade, you will need to add some sugar and water. Let him help you stir it all up. Cheers!

Draw What I Draw

Have your child copy a line that you draw, up and down and side to side. You take a turn. Then your child takes a turn. Try zigzag patterns and 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

At bath time, let your toddler 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. Plus 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. He can choose his favorite color. Let him show you what pictures to cut from magazines. He may even try cutting all by himself. Glue pictures on the pages. Your child can use markers or crayons to decorate pages. Stickers can be fun, too. You can write down what he says about each page. Let him "write" his own name. It may only be a mark, but that's a start!

Sorting Objects

Find an egg carton or muffin pan. Put some common objects such as nuts, shells, or cotton balls into a plastic bowl. Let your toddler use a little spoon or tongs to pick up the objects and put them in different sections of the egg carton. Give her a little hug when she has success!

Notes:



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Problem Solving

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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. Although make-believe is an important part of your toddler's growth, real and make-believe can be confusing. Help your child learn the difference especially if she sees something on television or in a movie.

Paper Bag Matching Game

Gather 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 by color or put similar things 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 shoes and boots in the right place, and you can help her make sure they are in pairs.

Snack-Time Roundup

Give your child a snack with many pieces, such as cut-up fruit, small crackers, or cereal loops. Make a line of four things and count them as you put them in front of him. Give him four pieces and see if he can make a line, too. 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. Make comments or ask questions: "You are making that so tall. 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 a hiding game with your toddler. For example, hide a teddy bear under a 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. Then let him hide things and give you some clues.

Bring Me Something

Make a game of asking your child to bring you certain types of objects. Teach her about texture by asking her to bring soft or hard things. Help your child learn colors by asking for items of a certain shade. Talk about what she brings you: "Is your toy train hard or soft?"

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Personal-Social

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24-30 months

Your toddler is still learning to do things for himself and wants very much to please adults. He enjoys feeding and dressing himself without your help. Toddlers love to imitate, so you can let him help around the house with simple tasks, such as wiping 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 easy! Now have your toddler put on her own clothes. Start with loose shorts. Have her sit on the floor, put both legs in the shorts, stand up, and pull up the shorts. Tell your child, "Wow! You put those on all by yourself!" Let her look at herself in a mirror. Practice putting on a T-shirt, with her head first ("Boo!"), then one arm, and then the other arm. Say, "What an excellent dresser you are!"

Playmates

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

First Feelings

Help your child name feelings when they happen. You can help her understand feeling *worried* 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 sibling or cousin. Help your child as he holds the baby so that he can sit steadily and use his arms to support the baby. Talk about how babies must be handled gently. Tell him what a good friend he is to the baby and how baby likes him.

All by Myself

During a meal, let your little one feed herself using a fork, spoon, or other utensil. Mashed potatoes will be a little easier than peas, but soon she will master peas, too! Show her how to twist noodles with a fork. Have an extra napkin and sponge on hand!

Big Little Parent

When your toddler plays with a doll or stuffed animal, 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!

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