

Play and toys for toddlers

PLAY
IDEAS 3

ABOUT
TODDLER
PLAY

18 months - 3 years



Play promotes learning, development, growth and health. Movement skills, thinking skills, language, social interaction and emotional development all happen best when your child is actively involved in an activity - when they are having fun - when they are playing! As a parent you are their first teacher and best playmate. You can help choose toys and activities that motivate your child to play, explore and learn about themselves and their environment. But most importantly take time to play and learn with them.

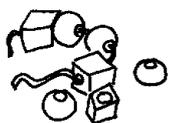
TODDLER PLAY AND DEVELOPMENT

Social and emotional



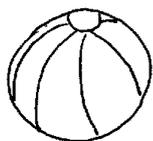
Toddlers spend some of their time wandering off to explore and then coming back to show you what they've found or done. They generally don't like to stray too far from you. Toddlers begin to show a real interest in other children but don't share well yet, so be on hand to settle disputes. They also love to do everything themselves: "Me do it!" There will be fewer tantrums if you let them "have a go" and praise their efforts.

Communication



Language is developing rapidly. Toddlers can generally point to things when asked and carry out little tasks for you, eg "Go to your room and find your boots"; "Give this to Daddy, he's outside". Most toddlers can put 2 words together by around age 2 years. They can use short sentences and ask questions ("What's that? Why?") by around 3 years. They have a large vocabulary (around 200 words), can name food items and body parts and are learning numbers, colours, shapes and concepts such as big/little.

Physical skills



Toddlers are very active. They become more skilful walking and running and can usually walk on tiptoe, throw and kick a ball, walk up and down stairs slowly, climb, jump and usually peddle a trike by the time they are 3 years. Toddlers are also learning to use their hands skilfully. They can build tall block towers, turn pages of a book one at a time, snip with scissors, thread beads, complete simple 3-4 piece puzzles, scribble and copy lines.



P.A.L. PLAY AND LEARNING PROGRAM
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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Be available!** Find frequent, small amounts of time each day to be available to your toddler. Toddlers love to show or tell you something. Respond to them, listen to them, cuddle them, follow their lead and have fun together.
- Respond to toddlers warmly and lovingly. "Separation anxiety" is a normal part of a toddler's development and strongest around 18-24 months.
- Toddlers want to do everything themselves. Do a "safety check" and make sure your home is safe and interesting for your toddler to actively explore.
- Join a toy library. They are a great source of new toys and games.
- Join a playgroup. Playgroups are a great way for you and your toddler to make new friends.
- Plan your toy storage. Children (and parents!) find it easier if toys are stored neatly. Try hanging toys in canvas bags on hooks, stacking them on low shelves in a cupboard, using colour coded crates/stacking units or putting dress-ups in an old suitcase.
- Recycle toys and books, changing items every few months. Too much choice can be overwhelming, and after a few months old toys seem new again.
- Share books with your toddler often during the day. If your child is upset or cannot settle, or if you're waiting for an appointment together - share a book!

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Supervise toddlers closely at all times, especially around water and climbing equipment. Be on hand to settle disputes if several toddlers are playing together.
- Check toys regularly to make sure they are still safe: no sharp or jagged edges, no loose small parts. Be aware of choking hazards, flammable and toxic materials.

SOME ACTIVITIES TO TRY

- **Creative play** Show your toddler how to play with dolls, teddies, teasetts, telephone, and clothes for dress-ups. Sand and water play are great for creative play and so is playdough, cubbies and boxes, trucks and cars with "people", simple train sets and farm/zoo sets.
- **Help around the house** Let your toddler help you with real or child-size equipment. Toddlers love to use brooms and mops, help you wash up plastic dishes or rinse out socks. They also like to use tools and help in the garden.
- **Home made toys** You can make a stove from a cardboard box; set up empty grocery boxes to play shops; a tennis ball in the end of a pair of pantyhose makes a great swinging target game; cut a slot in a wine cask to turn it into a posting box; mix up some dish washing liquid for bubbles; cook up some playdough or turn a shoe box into teddy's bed or a tool box.
- **Songs, music and dancing** Put on CDs/videos to sing and dance to. Sing action songs for your toddler to copy like "Head and shoulders, knees and toes". Make some musical instruments out of pots and pans.
- **Active play** Let your toddler have fun on swings, slides and climbing frames. A ball is great to throw and kick. You could also set up a sandpit. Let your toddler have a go on a push along bike or trike. Set up a wading pool for summer fun. Visit your local park/playground. Make sure your child is safe but don't be too over-protective.
- **Hand skills** Let your toddler have paper and crayons for drawing, or set up a blackboard. Try puzzles (inset and jigsaw puzzles with 5-10 pieces) or show your toddler how to build a tower of blocks, thread beads onto a shoelace and post coins into a money box.

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