



## What You Can Do to Support School Readiness Skills: 12 to 24 Months

### Language & Literacy Skills

**Talk together.** Point out and name the things you see. Ask what each item is, then wait a few seconds until you offer the answer. This gives children a chance to respond and show you what they know. Research shows that the more adults talk with children, the bigger the children's vocabularies.

**Share books together.** Let the child hold the book. Point to the pictures as you read together. Ask him to point to the baby, house, or dog. You can start to read stories that introduce ideas such as *up/down* or *big/little*, *colors*, and *numbers*. Most children are also just beginning to learn to sing—try the book version of “Wheels on the Bus.”

### Thinking Skills

**Follow the children's lead.** Toddlers learn many new concepts through everyday activities. If a child loves to be active, she will learn about *fast* and *slow*, *up* and *down*, and *over* and *under* as she plays on the playground. If she prefers to explore with her hands, she will learn the same ideas by playing with blocks.

**One more time!** Toddlers like to repeat actions over and over again. This strengthens the connections in the brain that help children learn new skills. Provide interesting and challenging activities (e.g., blocks, puzzles, water, and sand) that encourage him to problem solve.

### Self-Control

**Begin to teach children limits.** Setting consistent limits makes children feel safe because the limits help them know what to expect. A child who has her crayons taken away when she writes on the wall learns that she either writes on paper or she can't use crayons.

**Label and validate children's feelings.** Letting children know that their feelings are understood helps them calm down and regain control. This doesn't mean you give in to their demand. “I know you are mad that we had to come inside, but hitting me is not okay. You can hit this pillow instead.” Giving children choices also helps them feel in control—and helps them calm down.

### Self-Confidence

**Let children be problem solvers.** See yourself as a coach. Give toddlers the support they need to solve a problem, but don't solve it for them every time. For instance, line up their jackets so it is easy to slip them on, rather than you putting them on each time. Mastering these challenges makes toddlers feel confident in their ability to solve new problems and learn new things.

**Provide challenges.** Watch to see what skills each child has learned and then help him take the next step. If a child can easily build towers with blocks, suggest that the blocks can also be a house for stuffed animals. This helps toddlers learn about pretend play.