



from Baby to **BIG Kid**

How Your Child Grows
from *ZERO TO THREE*®

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From Baby to Big Kid showcases children's growth and development each month from birth to 3 years. These resources translate the science of early childhood and offer strategies parents can tailor to their unique family situation and to the needs of their child.

Months 13 - 24

[Month 13](#)

[Month 14](#)

[Month 15](#)

[Month 16](#)

[Month 17](#)

[Month 18](#)

[Month 19](#)

[Month 20](#)

[Month 21](#)

[Month 22](#)

[Month 23](#)

[Month 24](#)

Click a month on the left to find out what you may expect in your baby during that month and see some helpful tips!



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 13

What to Expect From Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

Your Toddler's Development from 12 to 15 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
I'm moving! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can walk on my own by holding your hand. • I am learning to crawl up stairs but can't come down yet. • I can throw a ball and turn pages in books. 	<p>Give your child just enough help to reach his goal. If he wants to stand, let him hold your fingers for balance.</p> <p>Encourage your child to turn the pages when you read together.</p> <p>Support your child as he practices new skills like stair-climbing. Children need time to work on these new skills...safely!</p>
I'm starting to talk and understand so much more. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may use some words like "dudu" for "dog." • I can show you what I want through my actions. I may bang my high chair when I want more food. • If you ask me to, I can point to a body part or a picture in a book. 	<p>Choose books about things that interest your child. Children often like books about kids their age doing things they like to do.</p> <p>Build your child's vocabulary. If she points to or says "bus," you can say: <i>The school bus is driving down the street.</i></p> <p>Name the people, places, and things that your child sees each day: <i>That's a garbage truck taking our trash.</i></p> <p>Play games that involve following directions: <i>Throw the ball to me.</i></p>
I want to do more for myself. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I say "no" or show you in other ways that I have my own ideas and want to do things on my own. 	<p>Involve your child in self-help tasks like washing his hands.</p> <p>Follow your child's lead. Let him choose what toys or games to play.</p>
I love to imitate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I copy actions I've seen other people do, like stir a pot or talk on the phone. 	<p>Join in your child's play. If you see her putting a blanket on her toy bear, you might ask: <i>Does Teddy need a bottle before bed?</i></p> <p>Give her objects that she sees in "real life," like plastic dishes, a toy telephone, a small dust broom.</p>



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 13

What It's Like for Baby

I grab the edge of the coffee table with my hands. Then up I go! I love standing on my two feet. Sure, I still need to hold on for balance, but I can move. Oops! Down I go. Okay, pull up again. I'm moving. A few more steps, holding onto the table, and — again, down I go. When am I ever going to get the hang of this?! One more time, here I am, cruising along the coffee table, moving closer and closer to my Aunt Angela's, cell phone. Okay, I can reach it. But — uh oh — I have to let go with one hand to grab the phone. Can I do it? I give it a try and I wobble, but I don't fall down and I've got the phone. I hold it up to my ear and start to talk, just like I see Mommy and Daddy and Angela and my babysitter do.

Angela sees me and she takes the phone, Where did you learn how to do that? Aren't you a little young for a cell phone? I am mad so I yell and say, Mama! Mommy comes in and sees what's happened. Oh little man, now that you're on the move we've got to do a better job of keeping things out of your reach, don't we? How about playing with this toy phone? Here you go. Listen — I'm going to make it ring! Hmmm, it makes the same funny sound as Angela's...let me see what this button does...

What Your Baby Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- Early self-control and how to cope with limits when he can't play with the real cell phone
- Persistence as he works toward a goal — reaching the cell phone

Language and Thinking Skills:

- Imitation, as he mimics how he has seen others use a cell phone
- Problem-solving, as he figures out how to move his body toward the cell phone and how to pick it up with one hand
- Receptive language (the words he understands), as he puts together the words he hears with actions (when Angela sets the limit and takes away the phone)
- Expressive language (the words he says), as he calls his mother to intervene

Physical Skills:

- Balance, as he cruises along the coffee table and is able to take one hand off the table in order to pick up the cell phone
- Muscle strength, as his legs bear his body's weight
- Motor planning skills, as he plans a series of actions to reach his goal of grabbing the phone

Did You Know...

Parents are already setting a lot of important limits with their 13-month-olds?

Limits at this age generally focus on safety (like not touching dangerous things), safeguarding family property (like not coloring on walls), and preventing harm to others (like rules about no hitting). To a lesser extent, limits also focus on waiting — such as waiting for Mom to get off the phone.

Reference: Galinksi, H. H., & Kopp, C. B. (1993). Everyday rules for behavior: Mothers' requests to young children. *Developmental Psychology*, 29, 573-584



Do you know a “picky eater”?
“Picky” eating is when a child (or adult for that matter) refuses foods often or eats the same foods over and over. Picky eating usually peaks in the toddler and preschool years.

What the Research Means for You

Setting limits is an important way for your child to learn about family rules and appropriate behavior. But the limits you use have to be right for your child’s age and stage. Rules focusing on big issues like safety, how to treat family property, being kind and gentle with others, and coping with waiting are good ones to start with for a child in the 12 to 24 month old period.

Keep in mind that just because you have rules doesn’t mean your 13-month-old will be able to follow them. Young toddlers do not yet have the long-term memory they need to remember family rules. They also do not have the necessary self-control to stop themselves from doing what you just told them not to. This means that you will be reminding your little one about these limits frequently, and showing her what you mean with your actions, for example, taking your cell phone away and giving her a toy phone instead. (Children won’t consistently remember family rules until about age 4.)

Spotlight on: Dealing With Picky Eaters

Do you know a “picky eater”? “Picky” eating is when a child (or adult for that matter) refuses foods often or eats the same foods over and over. Picky eating usually peaks in the toddler and preschool years. Many parents worry that their picky eater is not getting enough nutrition to grow. But in most cases, he is. Keep a food diary for a day — writing down everything your child eats — and you will probably find that your child is eating more than you thought.

If you are worried or have questions about your child’s growth or nutrition, talk to your child’s health care provider. Keep in mind, however, that as long as your child is not losing weight and has the energy to play and interact, it is likely that he is eating enough to support his growth.

Picky Eating and Young Toddlers

Picky eating often surfaces around 13 months — a time when many children are beginning to feed themselves. They can now choose what and how much to eat, giving them some degree of control. So some days they may eat a lot of everything. Other days they may not seem to eat much at all.

In addition, while children usually grow a lot and quickly in their first year, growth slows down in the second year. Toddlers are also learning lots of new skills, like talking, walking, running, climbing, and more. During a time of great change, children often seek “sameness” as much as possible, including sticking to the same small group of foods. This consistency can help them feel safe and secure during a period of rapid change.

Parents also need to have appropriate expectations about how much toddlers “should” eat. After all, a toddler’s stomach is about the same size as her clenched fist (Martins, 2002).

Ellyn Satter, MS RD LCSW BCD, a researcher and practitioner in the field of pediatric feeding practices, explains that both parents and children have their own “jobs” to do when it comes to eating. Parents are responsible for providing healthy foods at meal and snack times. Children are responsible for what and how much they eat. This helps children learn what it feels like to be hungry and then full — and how to behave based on this awareness, by eating when hungry and stopping when full.



What to Do About Picky Eating

There are many reasons why a child may be choosier than usual at mealtime. Listed below are some of the most common causes of picky eating and ideas for how to respond. (Table adapted from Lerner & Parlakian, 2007.)

Some Causes of Picky Eating	What You Can Do
Some children are sensitive to the taste or smell of food and the way it feels in their mouth — its texture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer several healthy food choices — among the foods your child does like — at each meal. • Track your child's food sensitivities and keep them in mind when preparing meals. Does your child have trouble with "mushy" foods? You can offer apple slices instead of applesauce, or a baked potato instead of mashed. If you'd like your child to try a "mushy" food, combine it with a crunchy food that she does like. Give her an animal cracker to dip in the applesauce. • Talk to your child's health care provider about any nutritional concerns you may have.
Some children are simply less likely to try new things based on their temperament — their individual way of approaching the world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put new foods next to foods your child already likes. Encourage him to touch, smell, lick, or taste the new food. • Avoid becoming a short-order cook. Don't prepare special meals for your child. Instead, give him what the rest of the family is eating in toddler-sized portions. Over time, these choices are likely to become as accepted and familiar as his favorite mac-n-cheese. • Gently but frequently offer new kinds of foods. Children may need to be offered a new food as many as 10-15 times before they will eat it. • Use healthy dips such as yogurt, hummus, ketchup or low-fat salad dressings to encourage children to eat fruits, vegetables, and meats. • Involve your child in preparing the meal (like dropping cut-up fruit into a bowl for fruit salad). Handling, smelling, and touching the food helps make it more familiar and gets your child comfortable with the idea of eating it.

Chart continued on next page



The fact is that forcing children to eat usually leads to the child eating less.

Some Causes of Picky Eating	What You Can Do
Some children can seem “picky” because they only want to eat foods they can feed themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involve your child in self-help tasks like washing his hands.• Follow your child’s lead. Let him choose what toys or games to play.
Some children are very active. They may seem picky because they don’t like sitting for long.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set your child’s meal out before he sits down.• Keep mealtimes short — 10 minutes or so. Let your child get up when he shows he is finished eating.• Put healthy foods, such as a bowl of strawberries or bananas, where your child can reach them so when he gets hungry he can easily get to good foods.
Some children have medical issues that make it difficult to swallow or digest certain foods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek an evaluation by a health care provider. Sometimes children need special help with feeding.

What NOT to Do About Picky Eating

Force your child to eat. The fact is that forcing children to eat usually leads to the child eating less. Forcing also teaches children to rely on others to tell them how much to eat and what they are feeling. This does not lead to healthy eating habits or good self-esteem. In fact, some research has shown that forcing children to eat can actually increase picky eating behavior (Sanders, Patel, Le Grice, & Shepherd, 1993).

Nag or make deals with your child. *Just two more bites, just two more bites! Or, If you eat your vegetables, you will get dessert.* Strategies like these don’t work in the long run. Children who learn to make deals about eating quickly learn to make deals and ask for rewards for doing other things—like brushing teeth or getting their shoes on. And soon they won’t do anything unless there is a reward for it! 🌻



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 14

What to Expect From Your Toddler's Development

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Your Toddler's Development from 12 to 15 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
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Month 14

What It's Like for Baby

What a day! So much to see and smell, hear and do. The wind feels so cool on my face and I love the smell of the grass. Wait — I hear a dog barking. I look around, shout, Dog!, and point at the dog. Abuela says, Yes, that's Sampson. He's saying hello. Then she points up into the sky: Look! Look up there! Do you see the cardinal? That's the red bird up in the sky. I love talking with Mi Abuela. She always tells me about what I'm seeing and hearing on our walks. And she listens to what I have to say, too.

But...sitting in this stroller is getting a little boring. Maybe if I wiggle around a lot and make some unhappy noises, Abuela will unstrap me and let me get out. I try it, and she says, I know, I know. You want out. Luckily, we're here! We're at the library. Let's go. She stands close behind me while I climb the steps of the library. I push her away to show her I can do it on my own. She says, I know you can do it, but I want to stay close by just in case. When we get inside, I go straight to the children's section. Then she lets me pick a book to read while we cuddle up on the couch. I love my Abuela.

What Your Baby Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- Confidence, that he can do things like climb stairs, find the children's section of the library, and choose a book
- How to build a loving relationship with important adults, like his Abuela
- How to communicate his feelings, like curiosity, boredom, and excitement

Language and Thinking Skills:

- Using his own words (dog, me) and gestures (pulling at the straps of his stroller, pointing) to communicate
- New words, like cardinal
- Understanding his Abuela's words
- Connecting the sound of barking with the word for dog
- Using his past experience in the library to help him find his way to the children's section

Physical Skills:

- Practicing climbing steps two feet at a time
- Walking confidently

Did You Know...

That when your 14-month-old imitates you, you are helping her become an ethical person?

In a research study, mothers demonstrated a simple movement and asked their 14-month-olds to copy them. Researchers visited the children again when they were 33 and 45 months old, this time to test their ability to distinguish right from wrong. Researchers asked the children to play games that were impossible to win by following the rules (to see if children would follow the rules anyway). The children who had eagerly imitated their mothers at 14 months were also most likely to stick to the rules of the game at 33 and 45 months old.

Reference: American Psychological Society (2004, October 28). Toddlers' imitation predicts well-developed conscience. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved March 3, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2004/10/041027113855.htm>



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by nature, more
reactive to changes.
Other children
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managing changes
with ease.*

What the Research Means for You

Young toddlers are very aware of and influenced by the grown-ups they know and trust, especially their moms and dads. They want to be like you and do what you're doing. That's why they're so interested in holding your cell phone, shaking your car keys, walking around with your briefcase, and even trying on your shoes. So what is the link between imitation and the development of a conscience? Babies and toddlers who imitate the adults they love are also likely, as they grow, to adopt their families' behavior, values, and ethics. Imitation also reflects a toddler's interest in and attention to a loved adult's behavior. This leads (as children grow) to an interest in the adult's values and expectations — which supports the development of their conscience.

Spotlight on: Helping Your Toddler Cope With Change

There are all kinds of changes — both big and little — in a toddler's life. Some changes happen on a daily basis, such as transitions from one activity to another, or from playtime to lunch-time to nap time. Other changes are a bigger deal, such as switching from bottle to cup, getting rid of the pacifier, moving from a crib to a "big kid" bed. Still other changes — life-changing ones — may happen only once in a long while. These include starting a preschool or child care program, moving to a new home, welcoming a sibling, or coping with a separation from or loss of a loved one.

Changes can evoke a range of feelings in children, including:

- Excitement
- Sadness
- Fear
- Anger
- Happiness
- Confusion
- Anxiety or worry

How children cope with change is strongly influenced by their temperament—their individual approach to the world. For example, some children are, by nature, more reactive to changes. Other children go-with-the-flow, managing changes with ease. As you read about these differences in temperament below, think about how your child reacts to change and how you can help him or her cope.

Keep-It-the-Same Kids

These children have a harder time with change. They tend to:

- React to even the smallest of shifts—a new nipple on the bottle, a new food on their plate, or a slight change in a regular routine;
- Thrive on predictable routines to feel safe and secure;
- Need time and support to get comfortable in new surroundings or with new people; and
- Have more tantrums, which can be triggered by either minor changes (a new pair of shoes) or more major ones (a new babysitter). Tantrums can also unfold during everyday transitions, for example when children are asked to stop doing something they are happily involved in to begin another activity (such as going from playtime to lunch).



Let your child be part of the transition. Let him put the ball in the stroller bag when it is time to head home from the park or press the button to turn off the TV.

Roll-With-It Kids

Other children seem to take change in stride. They tend to:

- Find changes easier to cope with. New jackets, new friends, new foods, and new babysitters are interesting, not scary.
- Adapt to new people and experiences fairly quickly and easily. These are the babies who can nap in noisy restaurants, nurse wherever you happen to be, and (when older) are eager to explore a new playground or play with a new friend.

Your Child's Response to Change

Most children fall somewhere in the middle of the two ends of the spectrum described above. They may have an easy time with new foods, but a more difficult time with new places. They may be cautious around unknown adults, but perfectly comfortable with new peers. Given some time to get used to a change or new situation, they feel safe, at ease, and eager to explore. Take some time to think about your own child. When your toddler has faced changes in the past—big or small—how has he reacted? What do you think he finds challenging and why? What helps him adapt if he is having a hard time?

Strategies for Keep-It-the-Same Kids

Use familiar objects to ease anxiety during transitions. A new doctor will be less scary if your child has her favorite blanket or stuffed animal in hand.

Let your child be part of the transition. Let him put the ball in the stroller bag when it is time to head home from the park or press the button to turn off the TV.

Ease into new activities. Talk about new activities first and arrive early enough to allow your child to get comfortable.

Offer advance notice when an activity is about to end: *When this book is finished, we're going home.*

Notice and comment when your child has successfully made a transition. *You got into the car seat so quickly. That means we'll have more time to play when we get home.*

Give your child a sense of control about how he wants to make transitions. For a toddler, you might say, *Would you like to kick the ball one more time before we leave? Or, It is time to stop playing and eat dinner. Do you want the red plate or yellow plate?*

Use humor. Turn your child's toothbrush into a puppet who says, *Knock, knock. It's Mr. Toothbrush. He wants to come inside your Mouth House to clean your teeth!* Or, take your own toothbrush and start brushing your cheek. Your child will probably start laughing and show you how you really use a toothbrush.

Strategies for Roll-With-It Kids

Offer your child a variety of new experiences. Try a new park, check out the local pool for water play, or visit the library for story hour.

Be sensitive to your child's signals. When a child is very easygoing, we can sometimes take for granted that any change is okay. Your child might have an easy time with new people, but still have a tough time saying good-bye to you at her babysitter's house.

Let your child know about new situations ahead of time. For example, tell him before going to a new place or meeting someone new. Children who enjoy new situations also enjoy talking about and looking forward to them. You can also give your child some control over the change, for example, by letting him choose what to wear on his first day of preschool or letting him pick out the blanket for his new bed.



Create rituals for big changes, like moving houses.

Be sure to find some one-on-one quiet time to enjoy together. No matter how much a child enjoys being out in the world, there's nothing like snuggling at home with her favorite person.

Be sure to keep some things the same. During times of change, it's important to keep your child's important daily routines consistent (like your child's bedtime routine). This "same-ness" helps your child feel safe and secure, and gives him the strong foundation to continue coping with new changes so well.

Strategies for All Kids:

Talk and read about changes. If you are moving or expecting a baby, share stories about these changes. Talk with your child about what will, and will not, be changing.

Create a ritual for big changes. For example, if a friend is moving away, you can have a "good-bye" ice cream party for him. Or, if you are switching caregivers, you can create a photo book so your child can remember the important role this person played in her life.

Keep your family traditions going. Do you have pancakes every Saturday? Well, keep the flapjacks coming even—and especially—when there is a lot of change in your child's life. Family traditions make children feel loved and grounded.

Show your child how you cope with change. Your child is watching and learning from everything you do. As you cope with change, get in the habit of talking about how you are feeling and what you are doing to cope: *I feel sad to be moving to a new house. Even though it will be great and our family will be happy there, it feels sad to say good-bye to our old house. Why don't we take a picture by the front door so we can remember it?* While your child doesn't understand your words now, he will soon. Your problem-solving techniques will provide a great model for managing change and the stress that sometimes accompanies it.

Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Let's Play Pretend.** Children this age are in the early stages of understanding pretend — a critical step in their intellectual development. You can encourage your child's ability to pretend by doing things like feeding her favorite stuffed hippo with a spoon, putting it in the stroller for walk, or snapping a bib around its neck. Waterproof dolls can go in the tub for a scrub. Give your child a turn to help you take care of her hippo (or bear or doll). Talking as you play also helps your child develop language and social skills.
- **Watch Out, Dump Truck Is Coming!** If your toddler is now walking, it's time to "drive." Get a doll stroller, laundry basket, or sturdy cardboard box (about the size of a moving box) and open up the top. Let your toddler load up the "dump truck" with soft balls or stuffed animals and then push it around the house. The two of you can have some fun dumping out the "load." (Be sure to say beep beep beep as you back up!) This game is also a way of making clean up fun as you can go around the house picking up toys and putting them in the "truck" and returning them to their proper places. 🌀



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 15

Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

Your Toddler's Development from 15 to 18 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
I'm using my body to explore and learn. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may be walking, running, and even climbing. • I can scribble with a crayon and build a block tower. • I can feed myself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide chances to explore outdoors in safe places. Your child will love to discover new things, like sticks, rocks, and leaves, and show them to you. • Encourage your child to use his fingers and hands to explore. Let him scribble, tap a toy piano, or hold a bubble wand. • Show your child how to use a spoon and fork, if you want him to feed himself.
I'm using language to understand the world around me. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can understand simple questions and directions like, Throw the ball to me. • I communicate by combining sounds and actions, like pointing to a cup and saying "wawa" for water. • By 18 months, I might say as many as 20 words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your child questions: Would you like yogurt or a banana for snack? • Put her actions into words: You're pointing at the bird flying in the sky. • Read, sing, and make up rhymes and stories. This builds a love of language and words. • Limit TV watching. Children learn much more from exploring their real world.
I'm beginning to understand how my actions affect other people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may try to comfort someone who seems sad. • My feelings can be hard to handle. I may start having tantrums and will need your help to calm down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read books that talk about feelings. Connect what you are reading to your child's experiences. The child in the story doesn't like saying bye-bye to his daddy either. • Stay calm during tantrums. This helps your child recover more quickly. • Use feeling words (happy, proud, angry, sad, etc.) to help your child understand what he or another person is feeling, and why.
I'm becoming a good problem-solver. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may do something over and over to figure out how it works. • I use objects the way they are supposed to be used—like talking on a toy telephone. • I imitate what I see others do—like try to brush my teeth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your child repeat the same activity. It may be boring to you but is important practice for him. • Once your child has learned a new skill, like throwing the ball, add a twist: Bounce the ball to him. Or, set up a laundry basket for him to toss the ball into.



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 15

What It's Like for Baby

One of my favorite times with Mommy is when we read books together. It feels so cozy and warm to snuggle up with her. My favorite part is when Mommy shows me a few books and then lets me pick which one I want. She probably wonders why I pick the same book day after day. But it makes me feel so smart when I know what the book is about and can recognize the pictures. I love seeing kids doing things I do, like playing in the sandbox, or pictures of things I see where I live—like the doggies playing in the yard. I always point at the cover and say, dog! And I always point to the right picture when Mommy asks me, Where's the boy on this page? When we get to the page where the boy is bouncing a ball, she shows me how to bounce a ball. She always claps for me when I try. What's great is that Mommy doesn't sweat it when I keep turning back to my favorite page, or if I just flip through the book in 10 seconds flat! She just laughs and says that there are a lot of ways to have fun with books.

What Your Baby Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- That relationships with the special adults in her life are loving, supportive and fun
- That she is capable and competent as her mother applauds her efforts and lets her explore the book as she chooses

Language and Thinking Skills:

- How to make a connection between what is happening in the book (bouncing the ball) and what she can do in his "real life"
- To answer her mother's question about the illustrations
- New words, like "bounce"
- How to communicate a desire or interest (for example, by choosing the same book over and over, or by turning to a favorite page)
- To anticipate the pictures and stories in her favorite books

Physical Skills:

- Fine motor skills in the hands and fingers (by page-turning)
- Muscle coordination, by trying to bounce the ball

Did You Know...

That starting to walk can change the way children play? A small study looked at toddlers before and after they were able to walk. Researchers found that brand-new walkers had a shorter attention span and seemed to be less interested in sticking with their play, as compared to their pre-walking behavior. However, this step back didn't last long. Once children mastered walking, their play skills actually improved—with children showing increased persistence and attention to play after they had mastered walking.

Reference: University of Haifa (2007, May 30). Interest in play tends to decrease as child begins to walk. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved May 18, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/05/070529212954.htm>



Your child will begin using her new physical skills, strength, and coordination to conduct “experiments” to test out the new ideas and concepts she is learning.

What the Research Means for You

When children are in the process of learning a new skill—like walking—you often see changes in their behavior. It is common for them to go back to more “baby-like” behaviors temporarily while they focus on one particular area of development. These steps back usually don’t last for long...only until your child has “got” whatever new skill he is working on. And in fact, children will usually move on more quickly if the adults who care for them go with the flow and don’t force them to act like “big kids.” For example, if your child gets clingy as he’s learning to walk, give him big hugs, tell him how much you love him, and then get him involved in an activity he enjoys. Most likely, he’ll give up those behaviors once he’s mastered whatever skill he’s working on. You may even find that your child becomes *more* persistent and involved in his play after walking due, in part, to his new ability to use his body to reach his goals.

Spotlight on: Your Toddler’s Growing Thinking Skills

Toddlers are little scientists. They are eager to figure out how everything works. They do this through “experiments.” They might throw a ball to the ground and see that it bounces, then throw a doll to see what happens. They also learn to use objects as tools—for example, using a stick to try to get a toy that is out of reach. And their growing memory takes on an important role in helping them learn. For example, they imitate what they see others do, even hours or days later. So watch your toddler hold a cell phone up to her ear and have a chat, grab your briefcase and put on your shoes, or even pick up the newspaper and “read” it just like she’s seen you do.

One of the most important ways you can support your growing toddlers’ thinking skills is by **creating lots of chances for your toddler to “test out” the new ideas and concepts she is learning.** Your child will begin using her new physical skills, strength, and coordination to conduct “experiments” to test out the new ideas and concepts she is learning. She may stack blocks up in a teetery tower just to see how high it can get before she knocks it down. Or, she may practice pouring and filling in the bathtub, which requires a steady hand and lots of hand-eye coordination. She might even test out *cause and effect* by unrolling the toilet paper roll as far as it will go.

You can see how all areas of development are connected when you see your toddler use their physical skills to explore and learn. They dump and fill, pull and push, move things around, throw and gather items, and much more. Your child’s new physical skills give her the ability to test out her new ideas. So, if she carefully pours water out of her sippy cup onto the floor, it is not meant to be naughty, it’s an experiment to see: *What will happen if I do this?* Then you can teach her how to clean up with paper towels!

What you can do to nurture your little scientist:

- **Follow your child’s lead.** If your 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 concepts and skills as she builds with blocks or puzzles.
- **Offer your toddler lots of tools for experimenting**—toys and objects she can shake, bang, open and close, or take apart in some way to see how they work. Explore with water while taking a bath; fill and dump sand, toys, blocks. Take walks and look for new objects to explore—pine cones, acorns, rocks, and leaves. At the supermarket, talk about what items are hard, soft, big, small, etc.



If he's trying to make a sandcastle but the sand won't stick, show him how to add water but don't immediately make the castle for him.

Help your toddler become a good problem-solver. Toddlers can use their thinking and physical skills to solve problems. They do this by creating and acting on a plan to reach a goal. For example, if they see a toy out of reach, they might climb on a child-safe stool to get it. Or, they might take your hand, walk you to the shelf, and point to what they want. Your toddler is learning to solve problems when he:

- Tries to flush the toilet
- Explores drawers and cabinets
- Stacks and knocks down blocks
- Pushes buttons on the television remote control or home computer
- Pokes, drops, pushes, pulls, and squeezes objects to see what will happen

What you can do to raise a problem-solver:

- **Provide the support your child needs to solve a problem but don't do it for him.** If he's trying to make a sandcastle but the sand won't stick, show him how to add water but don't immediately make the castle for him. The more he does, the more he learns. This builds thinking skills *and* self-confidence.
- **Encourage your child to take on some self-care activities**—combing hair, brushing teeth, or washing his face. This helps him learn how familiar objects work and solve problems like how to hold the brush.
- **Give your child the chance to help around the house.** He can wipe down the counter with a towel or sponge, push a broom or mop, or rake leaves. These activities give your toddler many chances to solve problems such as how to clean up messes or clean up the yard. They also help your toddler feel helpful, which builds his self-esteem and self-confidence.

Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

A Tisket, a Tasket, Fill Up the Basket. Cut out about five to seven squares from colored paper. Line these up on the floor in a path. Put a small toy on top of each square. Then hand your toddler a basket and show him how he can follow the path and gather the toys to put in his basket. Games like this build physical skills and coordination as your child walks the path.

A Moment in the Spotlight. Let your child have some fun with a flashlight. Show her how it works, then let her flash it on the ceiling, floor, and walls. If she doesn't mind, you can dim the lights so she can better see the contrast of the light on the walls. You can take turns "chasing" the spotlight as one of you moves the flashlight along a wall. This game builds thinking skills and hand-eye coordination. 🌀



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 16

Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

Your Toddler's Development from 15 to 18 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
I'm using my body to explore and learn. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may be walking, running, and even climbing. • I can scribble with a crayon and build a block tower. • I can feed myself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide chances to explore outdoors in safe places. Your child will love to discover new things, like sticks, rocks, and leaves, and show them to you. • Encourage your child to use his fingers and hands to explore. Let him scribble, tap a toy piano, or hold a bubble wand. • Show your child how to use a spoon and fork, if you want him to feed himself.
I'm using language to understand the world around me. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can understand simple questions and directions like, Throw the ball to me. • I communicate by combining sounds and actions, like pointing to a cup and saying "wawa" for water. • By 18 months, I might say as many as 20 words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your child questions: Would you like yogurt or a banana for snack? • Put her actions into words: You're pointing at the bird flying in the sky. • Read, sing, and make up rhymes and stories. This builds a love of language and words. • Limit TV watching. Children learn much more from exploring their real world.
I'm beginning to understand how my actions affect other people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may try to comfort someone who seems sad. • My feelings can be hard to handle. I may start having tantrums and will need your help to calm down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read books that talk about feelings. Connect what you are reading to your child's experiences. The child in the story doesn't like saying bye-bye to his daddy either. • Stay calm during tantrums. This helps your child recover more quickly. • Use feeling words (happy, proud, angry, sad, etc.) to help your child understand what he or another person is feeling, and why.
I'm becoming a good problem-solver. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may do something over and over to figure out how it works. • I use objects the way they are supposed to be used — like talking on a toy telephone. • I imitate what I see others do — like try to brush my teeth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your child repeat the same activity. It may be boring to you but is important practice for him. • Once your child has learned a new skill, like throwing the ball, add a twist: Bounce the ball to him. Or, set up a laundry basket for him to toss the ball into.



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 16

What It's Like for Baby

I love washing dishes! You seem grumpy about it but it's so much fun for me. I love to do what you do. That's why I run to get my stool when I see you filling up the sink. I have so much fun rubbing my toy dishes with a sponge right next to you while you do the glass ones. I say, Nana, ook! Then you tell me what a good job I'm doing, like when you say, That plate looks so clean. It makes me feel so important and grown-up to help out. Even when you are sweeping the floor or making dinner, I love watching and imitating everything you do, and listening to you tell me about what you are doing. Those chores may be boring to you, but they are fascinating to me. It's fun to practice using new "tools" like the salad tongs you give me to play with when you are cooking. And when I can really help out, like when you let me put napkins on the table for dinner, I feel so proud. I know that I am smart and capable and an important member of our family.

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- Confidence and self-esteem as he has the chance to do "real" chores
- Cooperation as he contributes to the family's work and works as a "team" with Nana to clean up

Language and Thinking Skills:

- Problem-solving skills as he learns how objects work by imitating his Nana.
- Language and listening skills as he talks with Nana about what they are doing together.
- Early pretend play skills as imitation is a key step in developing the ability to eventually pretend and use his imagination.

Did You Know...

That among babies ages 8 months to 16 months, every hour per day spent watching programs like "Brainy Baby" or "Baby Einstein" resulted in six to eight fewer words in their vocabularies (compared to other children their age who did not watch this type of television)? This research study included 1,008 parents of children aged 2 to 24 months who were interviewed by telephone about their child's viewing habits and vocabulary development. Parents also completed a written survey about their child's communication skills.

*Reference: Zimmerman, F. J., Christakis, D. A., & Meltzoff, A. N. (2007 October). Associations between media viewing and language development in children under age 2 years. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 151(4), 364-368.*

What the Research Means for You

While the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no television for children younger than 24 months, many families choose to allow their young children to have some screen time—whether it takes the form of television shows, DVDs, or even computer games. As you think about television rules, take some time to talk with your partner about what feels right for your family. If you decide to allow your toddler to watch, try to limit viewing and whenever possible, to watch with her. Your child may also get more out of the viewing experience if you look for ways to make television more



Toddlers also use their bodies for communicating with and relating to you.

interactive. Answer your child's questions about the show you're watching, talk about the program together, point out and name the things you see on the screen, and look for opportunities to be active (dance along to the music, pretend to be the rocket ship you see taking off).

Most importantly, find ways to make connections between what your child is seeing on the screen and what he sees in "real-life." After a show where the characters are playing music, suggest to your toddler that he make music with a wooden spoon and pot while you start dinner. Children learn best by playing and doing, so give your little one lots of opportunities not just to watch, but also to touch, experiment, and discover.

Spotlight on: Staying Active With Your Toddler

Toddlers' sense of independence and self-confidence grow as they progress from standing to walking and running. The more they move, the more they learn.

Your child learns about *size* and *shape* as she sees that she can fit her body into one cardboard box but not another. She learns about *up* and *down* on the swing, and *high* and *low* on the slide. Movement also helps toddlers' budding imaginations blossom, for example, when they march around banging a drum like a musician in a parade. And as they imitate the activities they see going on around them, toddlers expand their understanding of the world.

Toddlers also use their bodies as a tool for communicating with and relating to you. As babies, they start with simple gestures like pointing. By the time they are toddlers, their movements become more complex. For example, your child may take your hand, walk you to the kitchen, pick up her shoes, and point to the back door. She is saying, *Could you help me put these on? I want to play outside.* By the time your child is 24 months old, she will be an even better communicator, learning many new words and phrases to add to her gestures. When you join your toddler's adventures and take time for lively discussions with her, you are building a strong bond and nurturing her self-esteem.

Here are some ideas for staying active with your toddler:

- **Make physical activity part of your daily routine.** Wake up and stretch together. Put on dance music while you cook dinner. Do some relaxing family yoga moves before bed. Take a walk on weekend mornings.
- **Try a new activity...together.** See if your community offers parent-child dance or other movement classes.
- **Let the good times roll.** Set aside one day a month for "Kid Olympics." If you like, invite other families you know to meet in your backyard or a local park to have a ball—and to kick a ball, roll a ball, or just run around.
- **Go on a house hike.** When you can't always play outside, be active inside by taking a hike. Walk up and down stairs, crawl over beds, hop off low stools (supervised), scramble over a pile of pillows, wiggle under a table. See what you can discover in your own house.
- **Make it a march.** Take a walk with your child. Give her a shaker to make noise with or a bell to ring. Put on some marching music and march around the house. As your child becomes a more confident walker, suggest trying out new ways to move: *Let's march. Now let's take great biggg steps! Okay, now teeny-tiny steps.* Act these moves out as you say them to help your child understand the meaning of the words you are saying. Your child is developing coordination and muscle strength as she varies her moves, and is developing listening skills too.



Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

Washing Time! Gather together some plastic dishes and even an old onesie and burp cloth. Fill a shallow pan with soapy water. Give your toddler a sponge for the dishes and let him scrub the clothes with his hands. As you closely supervise (as you would any activity involving water), you'll see your child problem-solving (*How do I hold the sponge? How do I squeeze the clothing to get the water out?*) You'll also probably hear your child talking or gesturing to tell you all about what he is doing. Respond by explaining what he is doing in words and helping when necessary. This gives your child the chance to learn new words and build new skills.

Let's Get Cooking. Choose a simple "recipe" like putting pre-cut fruit into a bowl for fruit salad, stirring cinnamon into applesauce, or dropping raisins onto a cream-cheese covered bagel. Let your child do as much as she can by herself. Snap some photos of her as she prepares her feast. Glue the photos to large index cards, punch a hole in the upper corner of each, and tie together with a piece of yarn. Your toddler will delight at starring in her own story of how she cooked the snack *all by herself*. 🌻



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 17

Your Toddler's Development

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from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 17

What It's Like for Baby

There are so many people I have to see—doctor, dentist, barber, and the shoe store clerk. They all want to touch me and move me around in different ways and I'm not sure I like it one bit. It can be scary (like the scissors the barber uses) and sometimes even painful (like shots at the doctor)! Sometimes there are too many people and too much noise... or other kids crying. I just don't like it.

But you really help me out by letting me know where we're going ahead of time. (But not too far ahead—that can confuse me.) You say, We're getting in the car now to go to the doctor for your check-up. I am not quite sure what you mean, since I don't remember my last doctor's visit all that well. But someday soon I will connect the word "doctor" with a picture in my mind of my doctor and know exactly what you mean.

I know that you also try to schedule my appointments during my best time of day, when I'm not too hungry or tired. And in the waiting room, you play with me and tell me the names of the animals on the wallpaper. That helps me feel comfortable. When it's time for my check-up, sometimes I don't want the doctor to touch me. But you sit next to me, hold me tight, and kiss my head. I feel safer with you close by. You ask the doctor and nurse to tell me what they are going to do before they do it. That makes me feel better because I know what to expect—what's happening next. It is also pretty neat when you show me all the doctor's stuff and tell me what it is: Stethoscope, scale, otoscope, tongue depressor. Those are funny words. And I love it when the doctor lets me listen to her heart and sticks out her tongue! When I get a little older, maybe I'll pretend to be a doctor and give you a check-up, too.

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- That her feelings are important.
- To cope with frightening or stressful situations.
- To be empathic. Children learn how to show empathy to others by experiencing it themselves.

Language and Thinking Skills:

- To develop her imagination. She sees the world from another person's perspective by pretending to listen to the doctor's heart and looking at her throat. Role-playing helps children develop the ability to imagine what another person might feel or think in a particular situation.
- New words—like the various objects in the doctor's office.
- How to communicate feelings of fear or anxiety.
- Memory—the ability to connect past experiences with the doctor with future doctor's visits.

Did You Know...

Your instincts about your child's health are probably right on target? Have you ever had the feeling that something was wrong with your toddler — that she just wasn't well? A recent large-scale survey of more than 2000 families found that a mother's perception of her 17-month-old's health corresponded with the child's actual health status as determined by a physician.

Reference: Monette, S., Séguin, L., Gauvin, L., Nikiéma, B. (2007) Validation of a measure of maternal perception of the child's health status. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 33(4), 472-481.



From the very beginning of your child's life, he is playing with you, whether he is watching your face as you feed him or listening to your voice as you sing to him during his diaper change.

What the Research Means to You

Trust your instincts. You are the expert on your child. You know what his gestures, facial expressions, and cries mean, his likes and dislikes, his temperament. This is why your observations of your child provide the professionals in your child's life with important information. When you sense that something is not right with your child, it is *always* worth checking out with a physician or a child development specialist. Ask as many questions as you need to understand your health care or service provider's diagnosis. And, most importantly, be an advocate for your child. The love you have for your child, and your belief in him, are powerful and will help see him through the challenging times.

Spotlight on: Toddlers and Play

Playtime is more than just fun, it is critical to all areas of a child's development-- thinking, language and literacy, physical and social skills. Play is children's "work." It is their way of learning about the world around them. Any activity can be playful to young children, whether it's rolling trucks back and forth or sorting socks. Through play, babies and toddlers try out new skills, develop their imagination and creativity, and learn about relationships with other people.

As a parent, you are your child's very first and favorite playmate. From the very beginning of your child's life, he is playing with you, whether he is watching your face as you feed him or listening to your voice as you sing to him during his diaper change. He is at work—connecting, learning and exploring. Here are some ways you can make the most of playtime:

Follow your child's lead. Provide an object, toy, or activity for your baby or toddler and then see what he does with it. It's okay if it's not the "right" way...let him show you a "new way."

Go slowly. Show your child how a toy works then give her time to explore it and figure it out on her own. You might begin something, such as stacking one block on top of another, and then encourage her to give it a try. Providing just enough help to keep frustration at bay motivates your child to learn new skills.

Look for "toys" around the house. A paper towel tube becomes a telescope or a trumpet. An empty box of dry oatmeal is an indoor sandbox. Metal pots and wooden spoons become musical instruments. Empty plastic containers can be blocks. Children love playing with and exploring interesting objects. When there are many different ways to play with the same toy, children play for longer periods and don't get bored so quickly.

Make active play part of every day. Children need time to be active each day. Make family walks, trips to the playground, "dancing time," or indoor hide-and-seek part of your everyday routine. Physical play is fun, gives children the chance to practice and learn new skills, and keeps the whole family healthy.

Read your child's signals. Your little one may not be able to tell you with her words when she's had enough or when she's frustrated. But she has other ways—like using her sounds, facial expressions, and gestures. Reading the signals that lead up to a tantrum helps you know when to change to a new activity or help her slow down and take a break. Reading her signals can also tell you what activities your child prefers.



The more they practice and master new skills, the more likely children are to take on new challenges.

Make sure young children have time to play with siblings and peers. For young toddlers, playing with other children usually takes the form of *parallel play* where two children will play next to, but not with, one another. This is very normal behavior. Parallel play is an important part of building friendships as toddlers watch and imitate one another as a form of social connection. By the time your child is about 2 1/2 to 3, she will start playing more interactively *with* other children, acting out stories or exploring the playground together.

Do it again! Your child will probably develop some favorite activities that he likes to play again and again. While this desire to do things over and over again is not necessarily thrilling for moms and dads, it is for their young children. They are practicing in order to master a challenge. And when they can do it *All by myself*, they feel competent and clever. The more they practice and master new skills, the more likely they are to take on new challenges and the learning continues. So when you're tempted to hide that toy that you don't think you can stand playing with yet one more time, remember the essential role repetition plays in your child's development.

Let's Play: Activities That Promote Learning and Bonding

A Drop in the Bucket. Gather together a bunch of balls, small stuffed animals, or blocks. Get a bucket or box. Drop one ball in the bucket, then have your child drop one in. Take turns dropping balls in until they are all gone. Then take turns pulling them out. Games like this support your child's cooperative play and sharing skills. They also help him develop hand-eye coordination and better strength and muscle control in his hands.

Go Camping. Throw a blanket or sheet over a low table or two chairs in order to make an indoor tent. Let your child go underneath and explore this new space. Get on the floor and crawl in the tent yourself to visit. Roll cars and trucks under and through the tent or put stuffed animals down for a nap inside its walls. Maybe your toddler would like to have snack in her tent. Creating new and different spaces for your child to explore jump-starts his imagination and builds his pretend play skills. 🌻



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 18

Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

Your Toddler's Development from 18 to 24 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
<p>I am learning new words everyday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may say as many as 50-100 words by my second birthday. • I may even put two words together to make my first sentences like, "Go 'side" when I want to go outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn your child's words and phrases into sentences. When she says, <i>More milk</i>, you can say: <i>You want more milk in your cup.</i> • Talk about what you are reading together. Ask your child questions about the pictures and stories you read together.
<p>I can use my hands and fingers to do so many new things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can turn the pages of a book. • I can figure out how to work toys with buttons and doors and gears. I can stack blocks and set up my toy dishes for a picnic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have fun in the kitchen. Finger paint with pudding on a baking sheet or mold cookie dough into fun shapes to bake. • Provide chances to draw with markers, crayons, and pens. • Go on nature walks. Let your child pick up and examine leaves and rocks.
<p>I am learning about my own and others' feelings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need your help to start learning self-control. I understand <i>No</i> but I still can't control my feelings and actions. • I may get frustrated when I can't do something by myself. Please be patient with me! I know other people have feelings, too. I may comfort another child who is crying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put your child's feelings into words — this will help him regain control: <i>I know you're really mad that I turned the TV off. It's OK to feel mad. Instead of TV, would you like to read or play blocks now?</i> • Help your child slow down or take a break when you see signs that he is getting frustrated or overwhelmed. • Play back-and-forth games to help her understand and practice taking turns. • Show that you appreciate your child's compassion. <i>That hug sure makes me feel better.</i> • Label your own and others' feelings. <i>I'm mad because I bumped my toe — ouch!</i>

Chart continued on next page



Let your child see you helping others, being kind, or staying calm when faced with a challenge.

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
<p>I am beginning to use my imagination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I may feed my doll pretend food.• I might make <i>brrummm</i> noises when I play cars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play pretend with your toddler. You might be a puppy, barking and running after a ball.• Jump-start your child's imagination with dress-up clothes, animal figures, blocks, and plastic dishes.
<p>I am a little scientist, always testing things out!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I love to fill and dump and open and close things to see how they work.• I may start to sort objects. I might put all my trains in one pile and all my cars in another.• I am becoming a problem-solver. I might blow on my food when you tell me dinner is hot.• I am learning by watching you and others. I might imitate what I see you do!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help your child practice sorting. As you fold laundry, ask your child to put socks in one pile and shirts in another.• Encourage lots of exploration. Fill-and-dump with water or sand. Make an indoor "sandbox" of dry oatmeal or fall leaves.• Help your child solve a problem but don't do it all for her. Be her coach. The more she does, the more she learns.• Be aware of your own actions and words. Let your child see you helping others, being kind, or staying calm when faced with a challenge.



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 18

What It's Like for Baby

I am playing with the shape-sorter again. I keep trying to figure it out. I can get the circle shape in the circle hole and I can get the square shape in the square hole. But I am having trouble with the other two shapes. Mommy says, The triangle and the star sure are tricky, aren't they? I just cannot get them in their spaces! I am getting really mad. WHY won't they fit? Mommy says, Try turning the triangle around (as she picks up one of the pieces and turns it in her hand). Then I think it will fit in the hole. I try to do what Mommy says, but it still won't work. I hate this toy! I throw the star and the triangle right across the room. Mommy says, This toy is hard to figure out — that can be really frustrating. But you can't throw things. She tells me to go pick them up and that she'll help me.

Then she asks me which one we should try first. I pick the star. Mommy says, Okay which hole should we try? I point to one, and she puts her hand over mine and we try to put the star in. It doesn't fit. I start to get upset again. Mommy says, Hey let's not give up. There's still one more hole to try. So we try the other hole and what do you know? It fits! Then we drop the triangle in too. Mommy smiles at me: See, I knew that we could figure it out! I give her a big hug. I did it!

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- To cope with frustration
- To express strong feelings like anger and frustration
- Self-control when she has to pick up the pieces, taking responsibility for her actions
- Self-confidence that she is smart and capable and can figure things out
- How to accept help and learn from others

Language and Thinking Skills:

- Words for colors and shapes
- Words for emotions like *frustration*, *upset*, *tricky*, etc.
- Problem-solving strategies, like trying the same shape in different holes to find where it fits, and moving the block around so that it is lined up to fit it in the hole

Physical Skills:

- Fine motor skills as she uses the muscles in her hands and fingers to pick up and work with the blocks. Fine motor skills are necessary for learning how to write later on

Did You Know...

That 18-month-olds are now able to understand that what others want may be different from what they want? The researchers determined this by showing both 14- and 18-month-olds a bowl of Goldfish crackers and a bowl of broccoli. When given a choice, both groups chose Goldfish crackers to eat. Then a researcher tasted each of the foods. She said, "Yuck" and made a face when she sampled the crackers, and said, "Yum" and smiled when she ate the broccoli. The researcher then asked the toddlers to give her some food. The 14-month-olds handed her crackers, presumably because they could not understand how anyone might want or desire something other than what they did — the



Now that your toddler is walking and running, sitting on your lap listening to stories may no longer be high up on her list of favorite things to do. This is totally normal and nothing to worry about.

crackers. However, the 18-month-olds handed the researcher broccoli. This showed that, while they preferred the crackers, these older toddlers “got” that the researcher liked the green stuff best.

Reference: Repacholi, B. M., & Gopnik, A. (1997). Early reasoning about desires: Evidence from 14- and 18-month-olds. *Developmental Psychology*, 33. 12-21.

What the Research Means for You

At 18 months, children begin developing a sense of self-awareness — the knowledge that they are individuals with their own feelings, thoughts, likes, and dislikes. Then they realize that other people have *their own* feelings, thoughts, and preferences, too. They can imagine how another person feels in a certain situation. You can help your child develop this emotional understanding and social awareness by:

- **Talking about others’ feelings.** *Kayla is feeling sad because you took her toy car. Let’s give Kayla back her car, and then choose another one for you.*
- **Suggesting how children can show empathy:** *Let’s get Jason some ice for his boo-boo.*
- **Putting yourself in your child’s shoes.** *That doggy is barking really loud. That can be scary. Would you like me to hold you until he walks by?*
- **Explaining differences.** *Randy doesn’t like going down the big slide like you do. Everyone is different and likes different things, don’t they?*

Spotlight on: Sharing Stories With Toddlers

Now that your toddler is walking and running, sitting on your lap listening to stories may no longer be high up on her list of favorite things to do. This is totally normal and nothing to worry about. As children enter the toddler years, they delight in what their bodies can do — walking, running, jumping, bouncing, rolling, sliding. Sitting still to hear a story just may not feel very fun right now.

So, if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em. Instead of expecting your child to always sit down to read a story, follow her lead and build reading into activities she enjoys even while she’s on the move. In early childhood, what’s most important for developing literacy skills is a love of books. It doesn’t matter whether your child reads a book upside down, only wants to read the same two pages over and over, or is doing somersaults as you read to him. He’s still developing literacy skills.

To combine your child’s love of moving and love of reading:

- **Choose books that feature interesting actions or movements.** For example, there are several storybook versions of the song “Wheels on the Bus” that can be great fun for you and your child to act out together. Also, action books like “Barnyard Dance” can be a wonderful way to expand your child’s vocabulary of verbs and adverbs.
- **Tell a story to your child.** That way, your child can be playing and moving around while still having the experience of hearing a story and spending time with you. And you don’t have to be Shakespeare to tell good stories. You can tell or adapt stories from your daughter’s favorite books, or pull from your own childhood exploits. Toddlers are also beginning to grasp the idea that they, themselves, were once babies. You’ll find that your daughter may love to hear about when she was teeny-tiny. *Once upon a time, long ago, when YOU were a baby...*
- **Sing with your child.** You can nurture your child’s love of words, sounds, rhythm, and rhyme through singing and music as well. Look for songs that are good for dancing, marching, bouncing, and spinning. Your child can also act out the song while you sing — for example, your child can call out different animals for *Old MacDonald’s Farm* and then pretend to be each one.




Tell your child the story of his day. This helps him understand his world and how he fits in.

- **Experiment with tools for writing.** What are stories but a collection of words and pictures? Give your child the chance to experiment with different writing materials: markers, pens, crayons, paint, pastels, etc. This helps toddlers build the fine motor skills they'll use later to write. It's also fun to watch toddlers as they become more skilled with writing and drawing — and creative, too.
- **Play with letters.** Look for letter magnets, stickers, or blocks that your child can arrange and rearrange to his heart's content. You can spell things out for him. Then you can knock these "word towers" down, and start over.
- **Pretend with your child.** Play out a sequence of events such as going on a picnic, cooking, and serving dinner, or having a "just pretend" birthday. These are all ways of telling a story.
- **Stick to short periods of time.** Let your child decide how much (or how little) time you spend reading. And you don't need to read every page. You may find that your child has a favorite page or even a favorite picture. She may want to linger there for a while, and then switch books or activities. When you let your child explore books in the ways that interest her, books become a source of pleasure.
- **"Read" the pictures.** You don't have to read the words to tell a story. You can simply describe the picture in your own words. When your child is old enough, ask her to read the pictures to you!
- **Let your child turn the pages.** This gives your child a sense of control as well as a job to do.
- **Make the story come alive.** Create voices for the story characters and use action to tell the story. See if your child is interested in acting out parts of the story, hopping like the frog or dancing like the princess.
- **Create stories from your child's daily exploits.** Tell your child the story of his day. This helps him understand his world and how he fits in. You can also snap photos of your child during his daily routines — like eating breakfast, getting dressed, washing hands, and brushing teeth. Glue these photos onto pieces of construction paper and tape or staple them together. You've made the story of "My Child's Morning." Children love reading and hearing stories about themselves most of all!
- **Get some "characters" to help you read.** Read or act out stories using inexpensive homemade paper bag puppets. Or have one of your child's favorite stuffed animals read the story to her.
- **Play games with words.** Write an action your child can do ("kick a ball" or "walk to the kitchen and come back" or "give me a hug") on index cards. If you can find a picture to match the action, even better. Put them in a hat and ask your child to pick one. Read it out loud and let her do the action. Take turns picking and doing.

Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

Glue is Good. Make a collage with your toddler by cutting out magazine and catalog photos of children, dogs, houses, and bicycles. Add some textured paper—like squares of aluminum foil, sandpaper, tissue paper, etc. Then squeeze a puddle of glue onto a paper plate and let your little one go wild with dipping and sticking pictures onto a big piece of heavy paper.

Create a Construction Site. Collect sturdy cardboard boxes of all sizes, from shoebox to shipping box. Tape the tops closed and let your toddler construct supersized castles or other structures. Snap photos of him as he's just beginning his play, while he's building, and again with the finished product. Print these photos out and glue them side by side on a piece of construction paper. Post it where your child can see it. As the two of you talk about the photos, your child will learn concepts like before/during/after and cause and effect. 



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 19

What to Expect From Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

Your Toddler's Development from 18 to 24 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
<p>I am learning new words everyday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may say as many as 50-100 words by my second birthday. • I may even put two words together to make my first sentences like, "Go 'side" when I want to go outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn your child's words and phrases into sentences. When she says, <i>More milk</i>, you can say: <i>You want more milk in your cup.</i> • Talk about what you are reading together. Ask your child questions about the pictures and stories you read together.
<p>I can use my hands and fingers to do so many new things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can turn the pages of a book. • I can figure out how to work toys with buttons and doors and gears. I can stack blocks and set up my toy dishes for a picnic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have fun in the kitchen. Finger paint with pudding on a baking sheet or mold cookie dough into fun shapes to bake. • Provide chances to draw with markers, crayons, and pens. • Go on nature walks. Let your child pick up and examine leaves and rocks.
<p>I am learning about my own and others' feelings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need your help to start learning self-control. I understand <i>No</i> but I still can't control my feelings and actions. • I may get frustrated when I can't do something by myself. Please be patient with me! I know other people have feelings, too. I may comfort another child who is crying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put your child's feelings into words — this will help him regain control: <i>I know you're really mad that I turned the TV off. It's OK to feel mad. Instead of TV, would you like to read or play blocks now?</i> • Help your child slow down or take a break when you see signs that he is getting frustrated or overwhelmed. • Play back-and-forth games to help her understand and practice taking turns. • Show that you appreciate your child's compassion. <i>That hug sure makes me feel better.</i> • Label your own and others' feelings. <i>I'm mad because I bumped my toe — ouch!</i>

Chart continued on next page



Help your child practice sorting. As you fold laundry, ask your child to put socks in one pile and shirts in another.

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
<p>I am beginning to use my imagination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may feed my doll pretend food. • I might make <i>brrrrmmm</i> noises when I play cars. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play pretend with your toddler. You might be a puppy, barking and running after a ball. • Jump-start your child's imagination with dress-up clothes, animal figures, blocks, and plastic dishes.
<p>I am a little scientist, always testing things out!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I love to fill and dump and open and close things to see how they work. • I may start to sort objects. I might put all my trains in one pile and all my cars in another. • I am becoming a problem-solver. I might blow on my food when you tell me dinner is hot. • I am learning by watching you and others. I might imitate what I see you do! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your child practice sorting. As you fold laundry, ask your child to put socks in one pile and shirts in another. • Encourage lots of exploration. Fill-and-dump with water or sand. Make an indoor "sandbox" of dry oatmeal or fall leaves. • Help your child solve a problem but don't do it all for her. Be her coach. The more she does, the more she learns. • Be aware of your own actions and words. Let your child see you helping others, being kind, or staying calm when faced with a challenge.



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 19

What It's Like for Baby

Daddy says, Okay, kiddo, we're heading out. Let's go get in the car. I know what that means — I have to sit still and get buckled into the car seat. I say, No, No, No. Stay HERE! Daddy shakes his head back and forth and says, We're heading over to pick Mom up at the train. She's waiting for us. He scoops me up into his arms while I kick and wiggle, trying to escape. Dad does not look happy with me: Stop kicking. Your kicking is hurting me. I stop kicking but keep trying to get out of his arms. Dad holds me firmly so I don't fall.

We walk out to the car and he plunks me into my seat. Okay, let's get you strapped in. No way! I start yelling and wiggling. I say: No, No, No! Daddy holds me firmly and straps me in: I hear you. You don't want to get strapped in. I know you don't like your car seat. But my job is to keep you safe so we always need to use the car seat. I am still pretty mad so I keep shouting as loud as I can. But Daddy is acting like he doesn't even hear me. He is not paying any attention. Then Daddy says, Look, fire engine! A fire truck goes roaring by. I stop crying and watch. Daddy looks at me and says, Wow, that truck was going so fast! Are you ready for some music now? I say yes. He puts my favorite song on and we go to meet Mommy.

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- To cope with frustration
- To accept limits (*No kicking*)
- How to recover from a tantrum
- Acceptable ways to express strong emotions — that crying is okay, but kicking is not
- That it's okay to feel angry and that her father will still love her
- That her father will always keep her safe and secure

Language and Thinking Skills:

- How to use language to express strong feelings
- How language is used to explain ideas (such as when her father explains the car seat rule)
- The concept of *cause and effect* — that when her father says they are going out, it means that she will need to sit in the car seat.

Did You Know...

That 19-month-olds are learning that words are symbols that represent objects and people? (For example, that the word "bird" stands for the funny little thing with wings they see flying in the air.) Researchers looked at, and labeled, objects for 12-, 19-, and 24-month-olds. Unlike 12-month-olds, 19- and 24-month-olds followed the researcher's eye gaze in order to learn words, attaching the spoken word to the object the researcher was looking at. This is a big jump forward for children. By 19 months of age, toddlers understand that a spoken label actually represents something — they "get" that the spoken word "dog" is a symbol for their beloved pet.

Reference: Hollich, G., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Rocroi, C., Hankey, C., Golinkoff, R., Brand, R., McKinney, M., Len Chung, H. (1998 April). *Breaking the Word Barrier: How Infants Learn Their First Words*. Poster presented at the International Conference on Infants Studies, Atlanta, GA. Abstract available online at: <http://hincapie.psych.purdue.edu/ICIS98/index.html>



Routines can be used for many reasons, but two of the most important are ensuring children's health and safety, and helping children learn positive, responsible behavior.

What the Research Means for You

Between 18-24 months language really takes off. Your 19-month-old uses many “tricks” to grow his vocabulary. One of their most important strategies is that young toddlers spontaneously check where adults are looking when they label new objects. For example, when you are in the park and look up as you say, *See the bird?* your child looks up too and comes to understand that that feathery flying thing is called a *bird*. Language learning is so intense during this period that it is often called a “language explosion.” Remember, though, that learning a word does not always mean *saying* it. Your child will understand more words than she can speak for a while yet. Here are some ways you can support your toddler's growing language skills:

- **Sort and match.** Together, separate socks from shirts while sorting laundry, or spoons from forks while putting away the dishes. As you work together, talk about the objects you are sorting, what their names are, and what makes them different or the same. Your child is learning lots of new words—and new ideas—during everyday conversations like these.
- **Keep books at toddler-level** so your child can easily choose the ones he wants to hear. Ask him to look at the pictures on each page and tell you about what he sees.
- **To grow your child's vocabulary,** use different words to describe the same thing, such as, *That bulldozer is really big. It's gigantic!*
- **Go on a word safari.** Take a walk through the park and stop to look at and name all the insects and animals you see: ants, beetles, squirrels, birds, etc.
- **Go shopping for words.** As you go through the supermarket, ask your child to name each item you put in your shopping cart. Talk about how they taste, what time of day you eat them, and which she likes or doesn't like.

Spotlight on: Learning Through Everyday Routines

For most of us, our lives involve a series of patterns—routines we perform almost every day, like stopping at the same place each day for coffee on the way to work. This is also true for babies and toddlers. In fact, routines are critical for children's development in many ways:

Routines help toddlers learn self-control.

Consistent routines — activities that happen at about the same time and in about the same way each day — provide comfort and a sense of predictability and safety for young children. When children feel this sense of trust and safety, they don't have to worry about what will happen next, they are free to do their “work,” which is to play, explore, and learn.

Routines guide positive behavior and ensure safety.

Routines are like instructions — they guide children's actions toward a specific goal. Routines can be used for many reasons, but two of the most important are ensuring children's health and safety, and helping children learn positive, responsible behavior. For example, children must hold an adult's hand when crossing the street, or children are taught to say *please* and *thank you* when asking for more snack.

Routines help children cope with transitions.

Depending on your child's temperament, transitions between activities may be easy or more difficult. Going from play to lunch, lunch to the store, the store to home, and especially transitioning to bedtime, can be challenging. Routines can make transitions easier. Some parents use a timer or a “5-minute warning” to prepare their toddlers for a change in activity. Others use a book, song, or special game.



At the market, count out the apples as you put them in the bag.


Routines are important opportunities for learning.

Daily routines are often thought of as boring chores: meal time, running errands, getting ready for bed, taking baths. But these everyday activities are rich opportunities to support your child's learning and development while having fun.

You can use routines to help your child learn, such as when you are:

- **Grocery Shopping:** At the market, count out the apples as you put them in a bag, or the bananas in a bunch. Have him count along with you if he likes. Ask him to find something red on the shelf. Or ask him to take three big steps and two little steps down the aisle.
- **Diapering:** Name your child's body parts and how they're all connected to build her body awareness: *Here are your fingers. What are your fingers connected to? Your arms, that's right.*
- **Preparing meals:** Let your toddler watch you prepare a meal and even help in safe ways (like putting the lettuce in a bowl for salad). Talk about the order in which you are doing things: *First we put the lettuce in. Then the other vegetables. Then we put a little dressing on and stir it up.* This builds the skill of sequencing — putting events in order.
- **Mealtime:** Turn off the television and let mealtime be a chance for everyone at the table to share something about their day. This back-and-forth conversation builds language skills and also strengthens the bond between you and your child.
- **Bathtime:** Provide your child with a variety of toys in the bath — plastic pitchers, cups, spoons, bowls, and sponges. As you play, use these items to talk about concepts like *wet/dry, a little/a lot, floating/sinking, and pouring/scooping*. Activities like these build math and science knowledge as well as language skills.
- **Bedtime:** Tell the “story” of what your child did that day. This helps her make sense of her experiences and the feelings that she dealt with that day. Chats like these strengthen your child's literacy and language skills as well as her social-emotional growth.
- **Driving Together:** As you drive, ask your child what he sees out the window. Tell stories to your child. Or pick a favorite song and sing it together. Feel free to change the words to make it funny — like making *The Wheels on the Bus* all about the *The Wheels on the Stroller*. Talking and singing together builds your toddler's vocabulary and makes for a shared, joyful experience between the two of you.

Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- Make tube tunnels. Tape a paper towel tube to the leg of a table or hold it up for your child to drop balls, blocks, or small cars through (put a box or basket at the bottom to catch these items after they drop). Which items fit through the hole? Which are too big? Use this game as a chance to talk about top/bottom, up/down, in/out/through, falling/catching, and big/little. You can also hold a wrapping paper tube up and compare the items that will fit down this larger tube with what will or won't fit down the smaller paper towel tube. Supervise your child carefully during this game and ensure that none of the items used are choking hazards.
- Create a kid-sized shape sorter. Cut colored paper into large shapes—circle, square, triangle, etc.—and tape them to the floor. Ask your child to jump on the circle or crawl to the square. If your child is not quite ready for shape names, use the colors instead and do the activity with your child: Let's dance on pink. Let's hop on blue. Over time, your child will add these words (and ideas) to her vocabulary. 



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 20

What to Expect From Your Toddler's Development

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Chart continued on next page



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from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 20

What It's Like for Baby

Arms up! I work hard to follow your directions when you help me get dressed in the morning. Thanks for being gentle and making sure that the shirt doesn't catch on my ears or nose. I hate that! I know that sometimes I pull away and say, Me do it! When you let me try, you will see how much I've learned from you. I can help push my head through the hole of the shirt and poke my arms through the openings where they go. I stick my foot into the sock, but get a little frustrated when I can't figure out how it goes in. When you help me just enough so I can do it, and then tell me how proud you are that I am getting to be such a big kid, I feel so good and strong.

I know I can also be a little wiggle worm sometimes, but it's hard to be patient when I think about my toys waiting for me in the other room. It helps when you make getting dressed fun, like counting my toes as we put on my socks or pretending that my pants go on my head. I say No, silly! and we laugh. We name the colors of my clothes — red, blue, yellow, green. You even let me choose which shirt I want to wear sometimes. When we're done, you give me a big hug and tell me how cute I am. Then I try to help you get dressed just like you helped me. I hold your sock up to your foot and push it over your toes. You tell me I'm a good helper. That makes me happy so I give you a big hug.

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- Self-confidence, when he is given an important choice to make (about what shirt to wear). Self-help tasks, like dressing, also help children feel confident.
- Cooperation and following directions, when he listens to his mother's instructions while getting dressed
- Coping with frustration, as he works to put on socks
- Patience and learning to wait, both important for learning self-control, when he has to leave his toys to get dressed
- Sense of humor, when his mother makes a joke about wearing pants on his head
- Helpfulness, when he tries to help his mom put on her socks

Language and Thinking Skills:

- How to use language in a playful way — as when his mother jokes about putting pants on his head
- Words for colors and numbers
- Spatial relations — how pieces fit together, like getting his head through the head hole of his shirt
- Problem-solving — as in how to get his socks to fit over his feet
- Understanding the sequence of events (getting dressed before breakfast; putting a diaper on before pants)

Physical Skills:

- Fine motor skills (using the small muscles in his hands and fingers) that he uses to hold his sock and shirt to get them on



Encouraging your child to talk through a frightening moment, while you help her make sense of it and reassure her, actually helps your child move on from the experience faster.

Did You Know...

That talking with your 20-month-old about experiences she's had helps her remember these moments better, sometimes months, and up to a year, later? Toddlers at different ages (13, 16, and 20 months) were tested for their memory of activities that happened during a visit to a researchers' lab. The memory test occurred at different time periods, ranging anywhere from 1 to 12 months after the lab visit. The study found that when parents talked about the lab visit with their children, it seemed to help them remember the event. Neither the age of the child at the time of the lab visit nor how much time had passed since the visit made a difference. Their memories were demonstrated both nonverbally and verbally.

Reference: Bauer, P. J., & Saenger Wewerka, S. (1995, June). One- to two-year-olds' recall of events: The more expressed, the more impressed. *The Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 59(3), 475-496.

What the Research Means for You

Children learn from you, their first — and best — teacher. When you take the time to talk with your toddler about his life experiences, he remembers them better and also learns more about the world around him. Repetition at this age helps children master new ideas and new skills. That's why your toddler likes to hear the same story over and over or play the same game again and again. What can you do to nurture your child's learning and memory?

- **Tell the story of your child's day.** At bedtime, take a few minutes to talk about what your child did that day — how he felt, what he saw, where he went. (If your child is at child care during the day, talk to his teacher about the day's activities.) This helps your child remember his experiences that day.
- **Tell the story of what *will* happen.** Before important experiences in your child's life — a trip to the doctor, a visit to the grandparents — tell her what will happen, what she will do, and why she is doing it. This gives your child a chance to look forward to fun activities, and to prepare for events that may be difficult (like a trip to the doctor).
- **Add some pictures.** Create simple photo books of your child's everyday experiences (such as pictures of his morning routine: eating breakfast, brushing teeth, putting on his shoes). This can be a lot of fun for your toddler because he can "tell" you the story himself using the pictures and his memory.
- **Let your child talk about scary or upsetting experiences.** Sometimes when a child has had a scary experience, we might encourage her to move on and not talk about it. But ignoring feelings doesn't make them go away. Encouraging your child to talk through a frightening moment, while you help her make sense of it and reassure her, actually helps your child move on from the experience faster.

Spotlight On: Setting Limits With Young Toddlers

Toddlers have minds of their own and strong feelings that they express with gusto. While they are funny and thoughtful, curious and passionate, there are some very typical challenges that come with having a curious, active toddler. For example, *No!* becomes a favorite word and a powerful way for toddlers to assert their independence. Toddlers can also become easily frustrated because there are still many things that they want to do but can't yet. Often, they do not have the communication skills to explain, express, and fully make sense of these strong emotions.

Young toddlers have difficulty controlling their behavior during this period because they are not yet able to:

- Fully understand the consequences, or the *cause and effect*, of their actions
- Understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior



If you stop your child's behavior, but do not offer an alternative, the unacceptable behavior is more likely to continue.

- Remember the limits or rules you set without your having to tell her
- Have the self-control to stop themselves from repeating an unacceptable behavior

This is why punishment is not effective for young toddlers. In fact, punishments can be scary and confusing for children. However, it is still important to begin setting limits on your toddler's behavior, both to keep her safe and to help her eventually understand the consequences of her actions and how to make good choices as she grows.

The first step in limit-setting is getting in a positive mindset. Your child is not purposefully being "bad". He is simply trying out different behaviors to see what happens. Your response helps him learn what behaviors work best. Your toddler's most challenging moments — when he wants a cookie before dinner, to climb the stairs by himself, pull on your earrings, knock a block against the window, you name it — are also the best moments to help your child learn to manage his anger, sadness, and disappointment, and to teach him what is and is not acceptable.

With this frame of mind, the steps below can help you effectively set limits (while knowing that you will probably set this limit a thousand more times before your child "gets" it):

- **Use words and actions to limit-set.** Words alone are often not enough to get your toddler to stop an unacceptable activity. Use a low, firm (not angry or screaming) voice. At the same time, use a "stop" or "no-no" gesture along with your words. Young toddlers communicate primarily through actions so it helps to use both words and gestures when you are setting limits. Keep in mind that your toddler may not respond the first or even the second time you set a limit. It takes hundreds of repetitions — hearing the words together with the actions — before the words alone are enough.
- **Acknowledge your child's goal and then redirect her to acceptable activities.** Use words to show your child that you understand what she wants to do: *I see that you want to play with the water. But you cannot spill it from your sippy cup onto the floor. Let's go outside and play with water there. Or, it's not okay to throw blocks. Someone might get hurt. You can throw these foam balls in the basket instead.*

If you stop your child's behavior, but do not offer an alternative, the unacceptable behavior is more likely to continue. This is because most young toddlers are not yet able to come up with other (more acceptable) activities on their own. And don't forget to give your child lots of positive feedback when she does the "right" thing (i.e., petting the kitty gently), rather than emphasizing what your child *should not* do (pull the kitty's tail).

Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Freeze!** Put on some music and dance with your little one. Every few minutes, switch the music off and say *Freeze*. Teach your child how to stand in place. Then play the music again. Games like this teach listening skills, self-control, and build balance and muscle coordination.
- **Recycle Ball.** Place a cardboard box or recycling bin against a wall. With your child, make balls of newspaper. Show your child how to throw the newspaper into the box. Practice standing very close, then take small steps farther and farther away. You can also use your imaginations and drive toy dump trucks, filled with newspaper balls, to the recycling bin. 🌱



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 21

What to Expect From Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

Your Toddler's Development from 18 to 24 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
<p>I am learning new words everyday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may say as many as 50-100 words by my second birthday. • I may even put two words together to make my first sentences like, "Go 'side" when I want to go outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn your child's words and phrases into sentences. When she says, <i>More milk</i>, you can say: <i>You want more milk in your cup.</i> • Talk about what you are reading together. Ask your child questions about the pictures and stories you read together.
<p>I can use my hands and fingers to do so many new things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can turn the pages of a book. • I can figure out how to work toys with buttons and doors and gears. I can stack blocks and set up my toy dishes for a picnic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have fun in the kitchen. Finger paint with pudding on a baking sheet or mold cookie dough into fun shapes to bake. • Provide chances to draw with markers, crayons, and pens. • Go on nature walks. Let your child pick up and examine leaves and rocks.
<p>I am learning about my own and others' feelings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need your help to start learning self-control. I understand <i>No</i> but I still can't control my feelings and actions. • I may get frustrated when I can't do something by myself. Please be patient with me! I know other people have feelings, too. I may comfort another child who is crying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put your child's feelings into words — this will help him regain control: <i>I know you're really mad that I turned the TV off. It's OK to feel mad. Instead of TV, would you like to read or play blocks now?</i> • Help your child slow down or take a break when you see signs that he is getting frustrated or overwhelmed. • Play back-and-forth games to help her understand and practice taking turns. • Show that you appreciate your child's compassion. <i>That hug sure makes me feel better.</i> • Label your own and others' feelings. <i>I'm mad because I bumped my toe — ouch!</i>

Chart continued on next page



*Help your child solve a problem but
don't do it all for her. Be her coach.*

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
<p>I am beginning to use my imagination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I may feed my doll pretend food.• I might make <i>brrrrmmm</i> noises when I play cars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play pretend with your toddler. You might be a puppy, barking and running after a ball.• Jump-start your child's imagination with dress-up clothes, animal figures, blocks, and plastic dishes.
<p>I am a little scientist, always testing things out!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I love to fill and dump and open and close things to see how they work.• I may start to sort objects. I might put all my trains in one pile and all my cars in another.• I am becoming a problem-solver. I might blow on my food when you tell me dinner is hot.• I am learning by watching you and others. I might imitate what I see you do!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help your child practice sorting. As you fold laundry, ask your child to put socks in one pile and shirts in another.• Encourage lots of exploration. Fill-and-dump with water or sand. Make an indoor "sandbox" of dry oatmeal or fall leaves.• Help your child solve a problem but don't do it all for her. Be her coach. The more she does, the more she learns.• Be aware of your own actions and words. Let your child see you helping others, being kind, or staying calm when faced with a challenge.



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 21

What It's Like for Baby

We went to a birthday party today and there was a clown. You took me to meet him. I did NOT like him. He looked sort of like a person, but not really because his hair was so big and it was purple. And his face was bright white with a big red mouth. I know you said he was a nice clown, but he looked scary and strange to me. Then he reached out his hand to touch me. YIKES. I was so scared! That's why I turned my face toward you and hugged you tight and started to cry.

Thank you so much for taking me away from that clown and into the other room. You held onto me and said, It's okay. You're safe. The clown looks strange, but he is a man in a costume. He will not hurt you. But if you do not want to meet him, you can stay here with me. We stayed in the other room for a while and played with some trucks. We heard the clown sing a song. You walked with me to the doorway and held my hand while I peeked out to take a look. Then we joined the party again for cake. That clown was still there, but you chose a seat far away from him and I sat on your lap. I didn't mind him so much as long as you were close... and he was far!

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- To accept comfort and reassurance when feeling fearful
- That it is okay to express her fears. And that her parent will take her seriously and respond sensitively
- Trust that her parent will keep her safe
- That she is able to take steps toward conquering her fear with the support of her parent, like when she walks to the doorway to peek out at the clown
- To cope with challenging situations, such as when she and her parent ate birthday cake in the same room as the clown

Language and Thinking Skills:

- Words to express fear and reassurance
- The idea of what a person "should" look like. The clown (purple hair, white skin, big red mouth) does not match this child's image of a person in important ways. However, the clown does look like a regular person in other ways (arms, legs, face, etc.). Because some parts of him are "normal" and others are not, he is scary and confusing to this toddler.

Did You Know...

That your toddler is already gaining self-awareness — learning who he is?

Researchers put a dot of red rouge on babies' noses (without them knowing) and then sat them in front of a mirror. The babies ranged in age from 9 to 24 months. Researchers wondered whether the babies would react to their images in the mirror by touching their own noses, which would show that the babies knew they were seeing their own faces in the mirror. None of the babies under 12 months reacted to their reflection in a way that showed they understood they were looking at themselves. However, most of



Along with developing a sense of “me” is understanding the concept of “mine!”

the babies between 15 and 24 months did react to seeing themselves in the mirror, often by touching their own noses with an expression of surprise or curiosity. This experiment established that during this period toddlers first develop a sense of *self-awareness*.

Reference: Lewis, M., & Brooks, J. (1978). Self-knowledge and emotional development. In M. Lewis & L. A. Rosenblum (Eds.), *The development of affect*. New York: Plenum.

What the Research Means for You

Self-awareness is the knowledge that each of us is an individual with our own body, mind, and actions that are separate and independent from other people. This understanding is the foundation for more complex emotions like empathy, pride, and self-confidence, as well as shame and embarrassment. This is a huge milestone in your toddler’s thinking and emotional skills.

How can you nurture your toddler’s self-awareness? Try these ideas.

Use mirror play. Like in the study above, give your toddler a child-safe mirror to play with. Talk about what your baby is seeing. Point to the striped shirt on his image in the mirror, then point to your child’s striped shirt.

Look at photos. Make an album of photos of your baby with the important people in her life, and at the places she regularly goes (child care, the park, etc.). Read this book together and ask your child to point to herself in the photos.

Play “Is this yours?” Along with developing a sense of “me” is understanding the concept of “mine!” You can explore this new idea through play as you sort the laundry and pull out a t-shirt belonging to your child. Ask: *Is this yours?* See what he says. Then pull out a shirt belonging to you: *Is this yours?* Games like this help your child develop self-awareness as well as memory and thinking skills.

Spotlight on: Learning Through Everyday Routines

Two 21-month-olds reach for the same bright red shovel in the sand box. One grabs, the other grabs. Tears follow while each argues to the other: Mine! One child’s father steps in and gently separates the two, handing a red shovel to one and a plastic bulldozer to the other. He shows them how one can bulldoze a pile of dirt, which the other can shovel into a bucket. These children are learning how to resolve conflict, cope with disappointment, and build relationships through cooperative play. Cooperation is the ability to balance one’s own needs with someone else’s. We often think of cooperation as children doing what adults want. That is compliance. True cooperation means a joint effort — a give and take between two people toward a shared goal. Helping children understand how our requests and rules are good for everyone encourages a cooperative spirit.

Below are ways you can help your child develop the skill and experience the rewards of cooperating:

Take turns. Take turns putting pieces in the puzzle or shapes in the shape-sorter. When you have completed a puzzle, notice aloud how it was your “teamwork” that helped the two of you be successful. When it’s time to clean up, make a game of taking turns placing toys back on the shelf. These experiences are opportunities for your child to feel the pleasure of accomplishing something as a team.

Explain your reasons for limits and requests. While it isn’t until about age 3 that children understand simple explanations, you can build this skill starting now by pointing out how rules benefit the whole family. *We all help clean up. Then we don’t lose our toys and we can find them again. Or, When you help me put away the laundry, I finish quicker and then we can play.*



Offering choices shows your child respect, and respect creates a sense of collaboration.

Do chores together starting at an early age. Together you can set the table, clean up toys, or wash the car. Point out the advantages of cooperating. *Look how fast we set the table. Now we have time to read a book before dinner. Or, Boy was it fun to wash the car with you. You are a great scrubber! Look how bright and shiny you made our car!*


Give specific praise for cooperative efforts. Point out why and how their contribution was important. This helps children recognize and value their skills. *You put the books away on the shelf. Now it's easier to find all of your favorites.*

Give your child choices while maintaining the rules. *Teeth need to be brushed at bedtime. Do you want to do it before we read books or after?* Of course, children almost always choose to do it after, but they're less likely to protest if you are consistent about the rule and give them some control over when it happens. Offering choices shows your child respect, and respect creates a sense of collaboration.

Use humor. It's harder to say no when you are laughing. Plus, using humor creates fun and loving moments instead of a battle of the wills. Picture this: Your toddler doesn't want to get pajamas on. You put his pj pants on your head. Then you run around the room frantically asking, *Where are your pajamas? Have you seen them?* Or, if your toddler doesn't want a diaper change, turn the clean diaper into a puppet who calls your child's name and starts tickling him.

Turn on your imagination. You can walk to the bus stop, or, you can put your arms out and "fly" there like an airplane. At bathtime, pretend that your child is a fish and you are trying to make his fins very, very shiny with the washcloth. Hop like kangaroos back to the car after a trip to the park. Look for ways to bring imagination and creativity into your child's life, and you will find that cooperation comes along for the ride.

Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Paint with water.** Pick up some inexpensive paintbrushes from the hardware store and fill up a bucket with water. Let your toddler "paint" the sidewalk, the front steps, and anything else she finds outside. Look and see how the water changes the color of things, like making the sidewalk look darker. Games like this build fine motor skills (the use of the small muscles in her hands and fingers), which will help her learn to write later on. As with any water activity, supervise carefully and empty the bucket as soon as you are done playing.
- **Can you...?** Build on your toddler's growing pride in all he can do on his own by asking, *Can you spread both arms out wide? Can you touch your fingers to my fingers? Can you jump up really high!* Games like this help your child develop listening skills and the ability to make a plan to accomplish a task or goal. 



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 22

What to Expect From Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

Your Toddler's Development from 18 to 24 Months

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<p>I can use my hands and fingers to do so many new things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can turn the pages of a book. • I can figure out how to work toys with buttons and doors and gears. I can stack blocks and set up my toy dishes for a picnic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have fun in the kitchen. Finger paint with pudding on a baking sheet or mold cookie dough into fun shapes to bake. • Provide chances to draw with markers, crayons, and pens. • Go on nature walks. Let your child pick up and examine leaves and rocks.
<p>I am learning about my own and others' feelings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need your help to start learning self-control. I understand <i>No</i> but I still can't control my feelings and actions. • I may get frustrated when I can't do something by myself. Please be patient with me! I know other people have feelings, too. I may comfort another child who is crying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put your child's feelings into words — this will help him regain control: <i>I know you're really mad that I turned the TV off. It's OK to feel mad. Instead of TV, would you like to read or play blocks now?</i> • Help your child slow down or take a break when you see signs that he is getting frustrated or overwhelmed. • Play back-and-forth games to help her understand and practice taking turns. • Show that you appreciate your child's compassion. <i>That hug sure makes me feel better.</i> • Label your own and others' feelings. <i>I'm mad because I bumped my toe — ouch!</i>

Chart continued on next page



*Help your child solve a problem but
don't do it all for her. Be her coach.*

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<p>I am a little scientist, always testing things out!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I love to fill and dump and open and close things to see how they work.• I may start to sort objects. I might put all my trains in one pile and all my cars in another.• I am becoming a problem-solver. I might blow on my food when you tell me dinner is hot.• I am learning by watching you and others. I might imitate what I see you do!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help your child practice sorting. As you fold laundry, ask your child to put socks in one pile and shirts in another.• Encourage lots of exploration. Fill-and-dump with water or sand. Make an indoor "sandbox" of dry oatmeal or fall leaves.• Help your child solve a problem but don't do it all for her. Be her coach. The more she does, the more she learns.• Be aware of your own actions and words. Let your child see you helping others, being kind, or staying calm when faced with a challenge.



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 22

What It's Like for Baby

I try to put the big whiffle ball on the tee, but it keeps falling off. So I walk after it, grab it, and try to get it up there again. It takes a few tries, but finally the ball stays on top of the tee. Then Uncle Martin hands me a bat. I take it and stand in front of the tee. The first time I swing it, I completely miss the ball! What happened? Uncle Martin says, Good effort! Try again. So I stand back and swing, and whack! I knock the ball off the tee! Uncle Martin claps and shouts. I run to find the ball in the grass and put it on the tee again. It's fun playing this game over and over. I feel so good when I can hit the ball all on my own!

Then my cousin Deneisha comes over. She wants a turn. I'm not too happy about sharing my ball or bat. Uncle Martin says, Deneisha is on your team. Everyone gets a turn to hit the ball. Why don't you put the ball on the tee and let Deneisha hit it? Then you can have a turn to hit it yourself. He gently takes the bat out of my hands and gives it to my cousin. I'm mad. I don't want to take turns. I won't put the ball on the tee and instead I throw it on the ground. Uncle Martin picks up the ball and tells me he knows it's hard to share but everyone has to have a turn. Then he puts the ball on the tee. Deneisha hits it and gives me back the bat. That wasn't too long to wait. We play and take turns for long time while Uncle Martin watches. Deneisha is so fun to play with!

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- Persistence as he keeps working toward his goal of trying to get the ball to stay on the tee.
- Confidence that he can do what he sets out to achieve — set the ball on the tee and hit it
- Relationship-building skills as he enjoys time playing and talking with Uncle Martin
- Cooperation as he learns to accept limits and to take turns playing ball with his cousin
- Friendship-building skills as he enjoys playing with his cousin

Language and Thinking Skills:

- How language is used to communicate limits, as when Uncle Martin explains how the children will take turns
- How objects work as he figures out how and where to swing the bat so that it hits the ball
- Motor-planning skills — taking a series of steps to reach a goal — as he sets up the ball on the tee and figures out how to hit it successfully
- Event sequences, such as Scenario #1: *I put the ball on the tee, hit it, retrieve it and begin again;* and Scenario #2: *I hit the ball, then Deneisha hits it, then I get to hit it again.*

Physical Skills:

- Fine motor skills — using the small muscles in his hands and fingers as he balances the ball on the tee
- Large motor skills — using the larger muscles in his arms and legs as he swings the bat and runs after the ball



Your child's ability to pronounce words correctly will develop over time. By the time your child is 3, adults outside your family should be able to understand her.

Did You Know...

Your child is starting to understand new ideas by using his thinking skills and imagination? Researchers gave a group of 22-month-olds and 19-month-olds a stuffed animal to play with in the laboratory. The researchers then took the toy out of the room and told the toddlers that it had gotten soaking wet after someone spilled a bucket of water on it. They asked children to go into the next room and find the toy. The researchers were looking to see if the toddlers would take the wet stuffed toy, or the dry one. The 22-month-olds (but not 19-month-olds) correctly selected the wet toy. This shows that by 22 months, toddlers were able to use the new knowledge they received to change their mental image of the toy from dry to wet. Using their imaginations, they were able to picture what a "soaking wet" stuffed animal might look like, which helped them pick the right one. This represents a huge leap in thinking skills as children are now able to use their mind to think about new ideas and concepts.

Reference: Association for Psychological Science (2007, September 4). When are toddlers old enough to think about out-of-sight objects? *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved June 24, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/08/070829122928.htm>

What the Research Means for You

You can nurture your child's critical new thinking skills just by talking together about everyday events. You might explain that when there are a lot of gray clouds in the sky it means that rain may be coming soon; that cars need gasoline in order to go; and, that medicine (while it tastes yucky) will actually make his body feel better. Talking with you about daily events and experiences is one of the most important ways that your child begins to understand new ideas and concepts.

Spotlight on: Making the Most of Your Child's "Language Explosion"

Talk to a few toddlers and you'll hear some interesting words — *carker* for "cracker," *pilyo* for "pillow," *aminal* for "animal," *cool* for "school." Keep in mind that incorrect pronunciations are not only normal and expected, they are actually a good sign that your child is listening and learning new words and trying them out. This shows that she's an active, confident learner.

Your child's ability to pronounce words correctly will develop over time. By the time your child is 3, adults outside your family should be able to understand her. For now, close family, friends, and caregivers will likely understand her words most of the time—but not always. However, adults who don't spend a lot of time with your child may have a little trouble understanding what she's saying. Some common errors you may hear include:

- Shortening words, saying *duh* for *dog* or *ju* for *juice*.
- Leaving out letters, saying *poon* for *spoon*.
- Replacing letters. Consonants that are difficult to pronounce, like *k* or *t*, may be replaced by easier-to-pronounce consonants. *Truck* may be pronounced *guck*.
- Applying one grammar rule very broadly (known as *over-generalizing*). Toddlers frequently use one word to convey many meanings. Your child might say *dog* to describe any furry animal on four legs.



*Notice how hard
your toddler is trying
to communicate
with you.*

Notice how hard your toddler is trying to communicate by using words in whatever way she can to get her message out. For most kids, these language “kinks” work themselves out over time, as your child hears more and speaks more herself. Until then, try some of the strategies below to nurture her language development during this period of rapid speech development.

What You Can Do:

See the silver lining in speech mistakes. Constant corrections can make your child less confident about speaking. Instead, look at mistakes as a step forward. When you hear an error, model the correct pronunciation in your response. If your child says, *Gamma said I could have a cookie*, you might respond by saying, *I see that Grandma gave you a cookie, yum yum!* This gives your child a chance to hear how the word sounds. It also shows your child how talking is a pleasurable back-and-forth process.

Be a translator. If other adults have difficulty understanding your child’s speech, you can “translate” what he is saying. Give your child a chance to speak first, and then explain: *Julio is telling you that this is his new truck.*

Repeat it — again and again. Choose books and songs that repeat words or phrases. Children learn new words and pronunciations through repetition. One good choice for this age group is *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?* by Eric Carle. Other good choices include books that:

- Encourage a response from the child, such as books that pose simple questions like *Where Is Baby’s Belly Button* by Karen Katz or *Pat the Bunny* by Dorothy Kunhardt;
- Provide clear pictures of common objects (you can name the pictures for your child);
- Explain daily routines like getting ready for the day, going to the doctor, or getting ready for bed; or
- Offer predictable plots that toddlers can understand through the pictures.

Let’s Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

Let’s sort things out. Toddlers love to sort. This new skill, called *categorization*, is really developing around this time. Line up a group of your child’s favorite toys — cars, trains, plastic animals, balls, toy dishes. Then ask your child, *Can you find all the toys with wheels? Can you find all the animals?* See if your child would like to ask you to find a certain type of toy. You can even sort items as you do chores — ask your child to put socks in one pile and shirts in another while you’re doing laundry, or put crackers on one side of the plate and cheese slices on the other for a snack.

Color me happy. Fill several clear plastic bowls with water that you tint with food coloring. Give your toddler cups and spoons to pour and stir the water. Notice with your child how the colors change when you mix them. As with any activity involving water, supervise your child carefully and empty water from all containers when you are through playing. 🌀



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 23

What to Expect From Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

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What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
<p>I am learning new words everyday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may say as many as 50-100 words by my second birthday. • I may even put two words together to make my first sentences like, "Go 'side" when I want to go outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn your child's words and phrases into sentences. When she says, <i>More milk</i>, you can say: <i>You want more milk in your cup.</i> • Talk about what you are reading together. Ask your child questions about the pictures and stories you read together.
<p>I can use my hands and fingers to do so many new things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can turn the pages of a book. • I can figure out how to work toys with buttons and doors and gears. I can stack blocks and set up my toy dishes for a picnic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have fun in the kitchen. Finger paint with pudding on a baking sheet or mold cookie dough into fun shapes to bake. • Provide chances to draw with markers, crayons, and pens. • Go on nature walks. Let your child pick up and examine leaves and rocks.
<p>I am learning about my own and others' feelings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need your help to start learning self-control. I understand <i>No</i> but I still can't control my feelings and actions. • I may get frustrated when I can't do something by myself. Please be patient with me! I know other people have feelings, too. I may comfort another child who is crying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put your child's feelings into words — this will help him regain control: <i>I know you're really mad that I turned the TV off. It's OK to feel mad. Instead of TV, would you like to read or play blocks now?</i> • Help your child slow down or take a break when you see signs that he is getting frustrated or overwhelmed. • Play back-and-forth games to help her understand and practice taking turns. • Show that you appreciate your child's compassion. <i>That hug sure makes me feel better.</i> • Label your own and others' feelings. <i>I'm mad because I bumped my toe — ouch!</i>

Chart continued on next page



Be aware of your own actions and words. Let your child see you helping others, being kind, or staying calm when faced with a challenge.

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
<p>I am beginning to use my imagination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I may feed my doll pretend food.• I might make <i>brrrummm</i> noises when I play cars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play pretend with your toddler. You might be a puppy, barking and running after a ball.• Jump-start your child's imagination with dress-up clothes, animal figures, blocks, and plastic dishes.
<p>I am a little scientist, always testing things out!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I love to fill and dump and open and close things to see how they work.• I may start to sort objects. I might put all my trains in one pile and all my cars in another.• I am becoming a problem-solver. I might blow on my food when you tell me dinner is hot.• I am learning by watching you and others. I might imitate what I see you do!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help your child practice sorting. As you fold laundry, ask your child to put socks in one pile and shirts in another.• Encourage lots of exploration. Fill-and-dump with water or sand. Make an indoor "sandbox" of dry oatmeal or fall leaves.• Help your child solve a problem but don't do it all for her. Be her coach. The more she does, the more she learns.• Be aware of your own actions and words. Let your child see you helping others, being kind, or staying calm when faced with a challenge.



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 23

What It's Like for Baby

My friend, Nia, came over to play today. At first, I felt shy and hung on to Mommy's legs. She kept saying, Go say hello to your friend, but I didn't want to. It felt strange to see my friend from preschool in my house. Then we all went into the family room where my toys are. Nia started playing with my toy dishes. I watched her for a little while. Then I started playing next to her with my toy food. After a little while, Nia started playing with my trucks. She started pushing my favorite truck around the room. I grabbed it out of her hands and she started to cry. Then Mommy took it out of my hands and said we had to take turns. So I started to cry too. Mommy handed me my truck that honks. At first, I didn't want to play with it but she honked it a few times, then I honked it, and it was funny. So Nia and I started pushing trucks all around the house. We stopped in the kitchen and I showed her how I can pull a stool over to the counter. We climbed onto it and took a few of the cookies Mommy and I had made for Nia's visit. They were so good! When Mommy came in the kitchen, she said, You two have been awfully quiet. When she saw us on the stool, I said: Look, Mommy! Snack! Nia and I laughed and Mommy did too.

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- Friendship-building skills, when the two toddlers play next to, but not with, each other, which is typical for this age
- Sharing and cooperation, when Nia's mom helps her accept her friend playing with her favorite truck and agrees to play with another truck
- Early practice with manners, when her mother suggests that she greet her friend at the door

Language and Thinking Skills:

- Putting words together into short sentences to convey thoughts and ideas (*Look, Mommy! Snack!*)
- Motor planning skills — the ability to plan a series of actions to reach a goal, like pulling the stool over to reach the cookies
- Cause and effect — understanding that pressing the button makes the truck honk

Physical Skills:

- Large motor skills (using the large muscles in the arms and legs), as she pulls the stool over and climbs up to reach the cookies
- Balance and coordination, as she stands on the stool

Did You Know...

You can expect your child's first two-word sentence right about now — between about 21 and 24 months of age? While children generally follow the same steps in developing language, timelines differ. For example, one study found that 10 percent of 24-month-olds have a vocabulary of more than 550 words, but another 10 percent speak fewer than 100 words — more than a fivefold difference.

Reference: Berger, K. S. (2001). *The developing person: Through the life span, fifth edition*. New York: Worth Publishers, p. 175, 178.



Research shows that the quality of the caregiver or teacher is one of the most important factors in nurturing a young child's development.

What the Research Means for You

Your child has a lot to say, whether it's *Dada, up! Or, Me cookie*, or the all-time favorite toddler combo, *No! Mine!* As you listen to your child talking, you'll be amazed at how much he can communicate using just a few words, gestures, and facial expressions. To continue building your toddler's language skills, you can:

Expand on his sentences. If he says, *Dada up!*, you can say: *You want me to pick you up. You want to see out the window.* Responses like this help your child learn new words, phrases, and rules of grammar.

Play pretend. Role-playing (like when the two of you pretend to cook food to feed your child's stuffed bear) creates lots of opportunities for using language. You can ask questions: *What is Bear's favorite food?*; and talk about what you are doing together.

Change the words. Take your child's favorite songs and change the words. *Wheels on the Bus* can become *Babies in the Bath*. And for truck-loving toddlers, *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* can become *Stinky, Stinky Little Garbage Truck*.

Spotlight on: Choosing a Preschool Program for Your Child

Many parents of 2-year-olds are considering registering their child for some form of preschool beginning between ages 2 and 3. You may be wondering how to know whether a program is "right" for your child. The following steps can guide you in making a good choice for your child and family.

Step One: Look for Responsive Care

Research shows that the quality of the caregiver or teacher is one of the most important factors in nurturing a young child's development. Therefore it is very important to find a program with skilled, sensitive, and responsive early childhood professionals who will take the time to get to know your child. The best teachers are able to adapt their approach to your child's individual needs and temperament. Responsive caregivers wonder why a particular behavior is occurring, come up with an educated guess, and test out different strategies to find what works best for your child. Is a crying toddler tired? Hungry? Overwhelmed? Lonely? Frustrated? They avoid one-size-fits-all responses and try to figure out what is happening (and why) with an individual child.

Responsive caregivers also follow the children's lead and build on their interests, which is the best way to nurture children's curiosity and help them learn. They nurture children's learning through everyday routines. For example, if your toddler is protesting a diaper change, they may comfort or sing to her instead of just approaching this as a chore with minimal interaction.

Here are some specific criteria to look for when visiting a child care program:

- Do the teachers seem to enjoy children? Do they join in their play and look like they're having fun?
- Do teachers answer children's questions patiently? Do they ask children questions?
- For toddlers, is a daily schedule posted, using pictures and visuals, so that children can anticipate what will happen next?
- Is there a good balance between group activities and individual or "free" play?
- How do caregivers use everyday moments for learning and skill development (for example, reading stories at nap time)?
- How do caregivers build on children's interests to help them learn?
- Do teachers interact with children on different levels—individually, in small groups, and as a class?
- Do caregivers track children's development through photos, noting children's comments, and art displays? Do they provide formal progress reports to parents at least twice each year?



Preschools may have a lot in common (like wooden blocks and dress-up clothes) but are also very different in important ways. This is why it is important to consider the look and feel of the school as a whole.

- How does the teacher feel about discipline? Weaning? Toilet training? Feeding? Do the teacher's beliefs and strategies match your own or feel comfortable to you?
- Does the teacher handle conflicts without losing patience, shaming a child, or frequently displaying anger?

Step Two: Evaluate the Preschool Program

Preschools may have a lot in common (like wooden blocks and dress-up clothes) but are also very different in important ways. This is why it is important to consider the look and feel of the school as a whole. Is it warm and friendly, or more cold and institutional looking? Are you greeted by children's artwork on the walls? Do staff members smile and say hello? Are the facilities well-maintained? Is there adequate outdoor playspace for the children? How much outdoor time do children get each day? In the classroom, is there an acceptable noise level? Are children busy, happy, and involved in activities? Are there plenty of materials at the child's level to stimulate interest and curiosity?

Confirm Licensing

Each state has different licensing requirements for programs and providers. Questions to ask the preschool include:


- Is the program licensed by the state or local government?
- Is the program accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children or the National Association of Family Child Care?
- Are the caregivers certified by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition with a Child Development Associates degree credential for infant-toddler caregivers? Do caregivers possess an equivalent credential that addresses comparable competencies (such as an Associate's or Bachelor's degree)?

Confirm Health and Safety Issues

- Is there a secure sign-in/sign-out procedure for dropping off and picking up children?
- Are all doors and play areas secure—locked and/or fenced?
- Does the program have regular fire drills? Has the program developed an evacuation plan, in the event one is needed?
- Are all staff trained in basic first aid and CPR?
- Are diapering, sleeping, food preparation, and play areas separate?
- Are there clearly written sanitation procedures specific to each area? Are there instructions posted on proper diapering and food storage/preparation procedures?
- Are toys washed and disinfected regularly?
- What is the sick-child policy?

Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

You've Got Mail. Give your toddler some markers, paper, and envelopes. Let her draw/write/scribble on the paper and envelopes, making her own "letters." Help her put a piece of paper in each envelope and seal them with stickers or a glue stick. Create mailboxes from shoeboxes or baskets you have around the house. Let your child deliver the mail to you, to her stuffed animals, or to herself! Later, see if she'd like to help you mail a real letter at the post office.

Take a Closer Look. Tape two toilet paper tubes together to form a pair of binoculars. Toys like this build on your toddler's growing imagination. Take your toddler to the park or on a walk to "see what you can see" through your new fieldglasses. You can announce that you've spotted... someone you love very, very much. Can your child guess who that is? 



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 24

What to Expect From Your Toddler's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

Your Toddler's Development from 24 to 30 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Toddler
I use my body to get me places! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can walk up stairs one foot at a time. • I can walk backward. • I can balance on one foot, which helps me climb 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit TV time and get moving. Go on a neighborhood walk. Let your child stop to check out what's interesting to him. • Play "island hop." Line up circles of paper on the floor and help your child jump from one to the next.
I am using language to tell you what I'm feeling and thinking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can make longer sentences like, <i>More juice!</i> • My favorite words might be <i>no</i>, <i>me</i>, and <i>mine</i>. I may get overwhelmed by my strong feelings and need your help to calm down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about what you are doing together. Ask her about her ideas: <i>What part of the book did you like?</i> • Acknowledge feelings and teach social skills at the same time: <i>I know the doll stroller is your favorite toy. But Thomas would like a turn pushing it.</i> • Stay calm when your child is having a tantrum. This helps her learn to calm herself—an important life skill.
I am getting really good at playing pretend. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can use one object to stand in for another. A shoebox may become a bed for my stuffed hippo. • I laugh at silly things, like the idea that my toy car might go <i>moo</i> instead of <i>beep beep</i>. • Sometimes I get scared. I am getting so good at using my imagination but am not always sure what's real and what's pretend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use pretend play to help your child handle challenging situations. You might act out a story together about meeting a new babysitter. • Let your child lead the play. Ask: <i>Who should I be? What happens next?</i> • Acknowledge your child's fears and explain what is real and pretend. This builds trust and security.
I want to make friends but still need help with sharing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like watching other children and might copy what I see them do. • I may have one or two best friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give your child regular chances to play with children his age. This will help him develop important social skills while having fun. • Be patient with conflicts around sharing and turn-taking. Toddlers need help with their growing social skills.



from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 24

What It's Like for Your Child

We went to my cousin Marcella's birthday. I was sitting on Nana's lap when they were cutting the cake. They gave me a piece with the green balloon on it. I said, No! Want pink! Everyone looked at me. Mommy said, Sweetie, that's not nice. You got the green balloon. It's yummy, here take a taste. But I don't want the green. I want the pink because I am wearing my favorite pink shoes with the bow. Me want pink! Pink cake! Pink shoes! I demanded.

My Aunt Deborah said, I have an idea, let's share. I have a pink flower and I'll give you some. And you give me some of your green balloon. Mommy said, What a good idea, Deborah. Say thank you to Aunt Deborah. So I said thank you, but it sounded more like "Dank do." Then Aunt Deborah whispered in my ear, You are pretty clever. Pink balloon, pink shoes. I love it! I snuggled close to her. She always makes me feel good. Aunt Deborah cut up my cake and I used my fork to eat it all by myself. I am so big now!

What Your Toddler Is Learning

Social-Emotional Skills:

- Persistence, as she keeps at her goal of having the pink, not the green, part of the cake
- Early self-control as she copes with the disappointment of not getting it all her way, and accepts sharing as a compromise
- Manners, when her mother prompts her to say *thank you*
- Relationship-building and self-esteem, when she snuggles close to Nana who appreciates her feisty personality
- Confidence, when she feeds herself

Language and Thinking Skills:

- To use language to communicate a desire
- To use language to share an idea (the similarity between the pink shoes and the pink cupcake)
- The skill of matching—noticing similarities between two things—when she points out the shoes and cake are the same color
- Pronunciation of new words (though she makes common errors, as when she pronounces /th-/ as a /d/ sound)

Physical Skills:

- To coordinate and utilize her fine motor skills, or the small muscles in her hands and fingers that are critical to learning to write later on.



Playtime with peers is critical to helping children develop friendships, learn to cooperate, and practice sharing.

Did You Know...

That having a strong, positive relationship with your child can help him develop self-control? Researchers followed a group of 102 babies (and their parents) from age 7 months to 4 years. They found that children who had developed a close, positive, and mutually responsive relationship with their parent or parents over their first two years were more likely to show self-control, self-regulation, and patience when they were 4. “Mutually responsive relationships” were ones in which parents and children related to each other well, were “in sync”, picked up on each other’s cues, communicated well, and enjoyed each other’s company.

Reference: Society for Research in Child Development (2008, February 7). Close ties between parents and babies yield benefits for preschoolers. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved June 30, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080207085606.htm>

What the Research Means For You

You matter. When you take the time to listen to, respond, comfort, and have fun with your child, you are building a strong connection between the two of you. You are also helping her develop the confidence and other skills she needs to succeed later on in school and in life.

Spotlight on: Supporting and Nurturing Your Child’s Early Friendships

As your child gets older, he will become more and more interested in playing *with* other children, instead of just playing next to or nearby them. Playtime with peers is critical to helping children develop friendships, learn to cooperate, and practice sharing. Because your 2-year-old is just beginning to learn these skills, toddler playtimes can have their challenging moments. But with a little planning, and by keeping your cool, you can make it fun for everyone (despite the inevitable fighting over a toy and other assorted challenging behaviors that go with the territory). Here are some common questions and answers about playtime with young toddlers.

How many kids should I invite over to play?

It really depends on your child. If your toddler is slow to warm up or on the shy side, you may want to invite only one other child whom your toddler knows well. If you have a very social 2-year-old, inviting two or three other children might work fine. As you’re planning the playtime, see if at least one other parent can stay, both to help you out with the kids and to provide some much-deserved adult conversation.

When are the best times to have friends over and for how long?

Invite friends over during typical “peak” times for your toddler—when she is well-fed and not tired. This tends to be mid-morning. For this age range, playtimes that last one hour to 90 minutes often work best. Plan to offer a snack at the halfway point (talk to parents beforehand about possible food allergies). And, if any of the children are potty training, be sure to ask them periodically if they need to use the bathroom.



To help your child adjust to sharing his precious objects during playtime, before his friends arrive have him choose just a few items that he doesn't have to share. Put these special toys away in a closet or a room separate from the play area.

What types of activities should I offer?

Children really enjoy free play, so the best thing to do is have a few choices of age-appropriate toys out and available (toy cars/trucks, blocks, dolls/stuffed animals, some plastic dishes/toy food). Interesting objects like a large moving box are also great as children will have a blast climbing in and out and using their imaginations to turn it into a cave, a house, or anything else they think up. Letting children make their own fun, within limits, works best as it allows them to explore what interests them and nurtures creativity.

It's also good to plan some activities that don't require sharing. And, if possible, offer multiples of the same or similar toys (such as putting out two trains). If children are having an especially difficult time with turn-taking, try these activities that are less "competitive":

- Dancing to music
- Making music (with toy instruments or "kitchen instruments" like a wooden spoon banged on a plastic bowl)
- Playing in the sand or with playdough
- Blowing and then running to pop bubbles

Toward the end of the children's time together, introduce slower, quieter activities to wind down. These might include drawing/coloring, reading stories aloud to children, or puzzles.

Also be sure to give children the "5-minute-warning" that it will be time to go home. Letting children know what will happen next gives them a sense of control and can make the transition a lot smoother.

How do I handle conflicts about sharing?

It is really difficult for young toddlers to share their most-loved toys and other objects. To help your child adjust to sharing his precious objects during playtime, before his friends arrive have him choose just a few items that he *doesn't* have to share. Put these special toys away in a closet or a room separate from the play area. Then remind your child that while he won't have to share his favorite toys, he will need to share the others. This doesn't mean your sharing problems are over; but with time, discussions like these help your child learn the "rules" of playing with friends.

When there is a conflict over a toy — which is very normal and expected at this age — you can:

1. **Explain:** *We take turns with our friends. Right now, Darnell is playing with the train. He has it for 3 more minutes. I will set the timer and when it goes off it will be Julia's turn.*
2. **Set a kitchen timer for 3 minutes.** Show the children the timer and explain that when it "dings" that it will be time for Julia to have her turn with the train.
3. **Validate feelings.** If Julia is still upset, let her know you understand: *It's hard to share, but it will be your turn soon.*



Learning to take turns is not easy for young children.

4. **Redirect:** Let's play with the dump truck. You can fill the back with blocks and then we can dump it.
5. **Stay cool.** Yes, there may be crying but this is part of the learning process. Learning to take turns is not easy for young children. Keep in mind that because 2-year-olds still lack self-control, it is not appropriate to expect them to be able to share on their own. They are just beginning to learn this skill. It won't be until they are between 3-4 years old that they really understand how to share and have the self-control to wait their turn.

With a little planning, some grown-up supervision, and some full-of-fun toddlers on the run, you too can host a successful playtime. Just be sure to leave some time afterward for a nap. No, not for your toddler. For you!

Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Toddler-Powered Jack-in-the-Box.** Find a large box, big enough to fit your toddler. At first, hold one of your toddler's stuffed animals in the box (gently cover the toy with the flaps of the box) and sing, *Silly bear is hiding in the box, One, two, three and up he hops!* Then see if your child would like to get inside the box and hop out: *Silly Brandon is hiding in the box...* Children love to have a starring role in this game, which builds listening skills, self-control, and an understanding of cause and effect.
- **Bowl-a-Rama.** Line up 8-10 empty 2-liter plastic soda bottles. Give your child a playground ball or beach ball to roll and knock them down. Let your child try to set the "pins" up again. Games like this build fine motor skills (using the small muscles in the hands and fingers), large motor skills (the large muscles in her arms and legs), coordination, turn-taking, and cooperation. 🌀