



20 Fun Things to Do with Your Toddler

1. Blow bubbles
2. Play hide and seek
3. Give them the pots and pans
4. Go for a walk
5. Read a book
6. Use sidewalk chalk
7. Plant a seed
8. Have a picnic
(invite the teddy bears too!)
9. Toss soft balls or newspaper balls into a laundry basket
10. Make a house by putting a sheet or blanket over a table
11. Play with an empty box — turn it into a house, car, or train
12. Make a drum out of an oatmeal box
13. Bake cookies together
14. Give your child a bubble bath
15. Give the baby dolls a bath
16. String macaroni onto a shoelace (be careful if you let your child wear this as a necklace)
17. Wash little toy cars with a squirt bottle
18. Make puppets and a puppet show
19. Finger paint
20. Take a nap!



KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

Toddlers can sound like they understand more than they really do. This is because their language develops faster than their minds and emotions. Adults are often surprised by the problems that toddlers have following the rules. They seem to understand one day, but the next day you find yourself teaching the rule all over again. This can be very frustrating. Toddlers are not doing this to drive you crazy — it is just easy to expect too much because they seem to really understand.

Expect that it takes time to teach the rules and you may feel like a broken record, repeating yourself time and time again. Supervise your toddler carefully, and take pride in her learning the rules, and don't be too disappointed when she forgets. It's all part of learning.

TEACH TURN TAKING

"Mine!" You hear two voices shout at once and you know right away what the problem is. The kids are having trouble sharing again. Toddlers are not developmentally ready to share. Teach them to take turns instead.

Allow each child to use a toy until he feels finished. If another child wants that toy, teach him to ask for a turn when the other child is done. Teach the child who is using the toy to say, "I'm not done." Often if you ask the child: "Can he use it when you are finished?" most children will say yes, and the good feeling between them will be renewed. Sometimes when you use this approach, the child who has finished will even offer it to the child who was waiting. Once a child feels finished, he feels satisfied and can share more easily.

Toilet Learning

Every child is special. Just as each child learns to walk in her own time, each child becomes ready for toilet learning in her own time. Most children will show signs of being physically, mentally, and emotionally ready between the ages of 24 and 38 months. Often children will have some but not all of these signs of readiness.

Here is a checklist of readiness signs to look for in your child. Toilet learning is possible when children are not fully ready, but it is smoothest when children are ready in all three areas:

SIGNS OF READINESS CHECKLIST

Physical Readiness

- Child can stay dry for longer periods of time, or overnight
- Child knows the feelings that signal he or she needs to use the bathroom
- Child can pull down own pants, and pull them up
- Child can get himself to the toilet

Mental and language readiness

- Child can follow simple directions
- Child can point to wet or soiled clothes and ask to be changed
- Child pays attention to the physical signals even when she is doing something else (a challenge for many children, which is why accidents are so common)
- Child knows the words for using the toilet and can tell an adult when she needs to go
- Child has asked to wear grownup underwear

Emotional Readiness

- Child seeks privacy when going in diaper
- Child shows interest in using the toilet — may want to put paper in and flush it
- Child shows curiosity at other people's toilet habits
- Child has decided he or she wants to use the toilet
- Child is not afraid of the toilet



The course of toilet learning is not always smooth. Accidents and setbacks are common. Children often have accidents when they are involved in play. Let the child help clean up when possible, and reassure them that they will do better next time. Sometimes they refuse to use the toilet and insist on diapers again after a period of wearing underpants. This is because toddlers are tugged by strong emotions—the desire for independence and the fear of growing up. It is okay to let a child take some time off from toilet learning.

Trying again later can lead to a feeling of real accomplishment for the child who takes some time off and then decides she is ready to try again.

“Me Do”

Toddlers love to do things themselves. When you let your child do things for himself, you are giving him more than just a chance to learn skills. You are giving your child a gift of your belief in him.

While it is quicker for you to do things yourself, and often much neater, real work teaches children many important life lessons.

Here are ten things toddlers can do for themselves:

1. Wipe their own face (you finish the job)
2. Wash their own hands (you supervise until they learn how)
3. Brush their own hair (you finish the job)
4. Carry plates to the table and back to the sink
5. Wipe up their own spills (you finish the job)
6. Go and get their own diaper, lift their bottom, and hand you a wipe
7. Put away something from a grocery bag
8. Sweep the floor
9. Pick up and put away toys
10. Help carry out small garbage bags (be careful that nothing sharp is in the bag)

Think about your own family life and find ways for your toddler to “Me Do.”

He or She? Him or Her?

Please note: In this and all Better Kid Care publications we take turns referring to children as “he” or “she.” When we use he or she, we include all children.

Supported by funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Child Care/Early Childhood Development Training System, Developed by the Penn State Better Kid Care Program 253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA 16801 • Phone: 1-800-452-9108 • Website: betterkidcare.psu.edu.

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May 9, 2002

