

■ Change the game by touching the nose or ear and repeating the word for it several times. Do this with objects, too. When she hears you name something over and over again, your child begins to connect the sound with what it means.

■ Point to and name familiar objects. By hearing an object named over and over, your baby learns to associate the spoken word with its meaning. For example, “Here’s your blanket. Your very favorite blanket. What a nice, soft blanket!”



## *TODDLERS - 1 to 3 Years Old*

### **What to Expect**

#### **Between their first and second birthdays, children:**

- Are energetic, busy and curious;
  - Are self-centered;
  - Like to imitate the sounds and actions of others (for example, by repeating words that parents and others say and by pretending to do housework or yard work with adults);
  - Want to be independent and to do things for themselves;
  - Have short attention spans if they are not involved in an activity that interests them;
  - Add variations to their physical skills (for example, by walking backwards);
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- Begin to see how they are like and unlike other children;
- Play alone or alongside other toddlers;
- Increase their spoken vocabularies from about two or three words to about 250 words and understand more of what people say to them;
- Ask parents and others to read aloud to them, often requesting favorite books or stories; and
- Pretend to read and write the way they see parents and others do.

**Toddlers pretend to read and write the way they see parents and others do.**



**Between their second and third birthdays, children:**

- Become more aware of others;
- Become more aware of their own feelings and thoughts;
- Are often stubborn and may have “temper tantrums”;
- Are able to walk, run, jump, hop, roll and climb;
- Expand their spoken vocabularies from about 250 to 1,000 words during the year;
- Put together 2-, 3- and 4-word spoken sentences;
- Begin to choose favorite stories and books to hear read aloud;
- Begin to count;
- Begin to pay attention to print, such as the letters in their names;
- Begin to distinguish between drawing and writing; and
- Begin to scribble, making some marks that are like letters.

## What toddlers need:

### 1- 2-year-old children require:

- Opportunities to make their own choices: “Do you want the red cup or the blue one?”;
- Clear and reasonable limits;
- Opportunities to use large muscles in the arms and legs;
- Opportunities to use small muscles to manipulate small objects, such as puzzles and stackable toys;
- Activities that allow them to touch, taste, smell, hear and see new things;
- Chances to learn about “cause and effect” — that things they do cause other things to happen (for example, stacking blocks too high will cause the blocks to fall);
- Opportunities to develop and practice their language skills;
- Opportunities to play with and learn about alphabet letters and numbers; and
- Opportunities to learn about books and print.

### 2- 3-year-old children require opportunities to:

- Develop hand coordination (for example, by holding crayons and pencils, putting together puzzles or stringing large beads);
- Do more things for themselves, such as dressing themselves;
- Talk, sing and develop their language skills;
- Play with other children and develop their social skills;
- Try out different ways to move their bodies;
- Learn more about printed language and books and how they work;
- Do things to build vocabulary and knowledge and to learn more about the world, such as taking walks and visiting libraries, museums, restaurants, parks and zoos.

## Shop Till You Drop

Shopping for groceries is just one of many daily routines that you can use to help your child learn. Shopping is especially good for teaching your child new words and for introducing him to new people and places.

### What You Need

- A grocery shopping list

### What to Do

- Pick a time when neither you nor your child is hungry or tired.
- At the grocery store, put your child in the grocery cart so that he faces you. Take your time as you walk up and down the aisles.



- Let your child feel the items that you buy — a cold carton of milk, for example or the skin of an orange. Talk to your child about the items: “The skin of the orange is rough and bumpy. Here, you feel it.”
- Be sure to name the objects that you see on shelves and talk about what you are seeing and doing: “First, we’re going to buy some cereal. See, it’s in a big red and blue box. Listen to the great noise it makes when I shake the box. Can you shake the box? Now we’re going to pay for the groceries. We’ll put them on the counter while I get out the money. The cashier will tell us how much we have to pay.”

**Children need to hear a lot of words in order to learn how to communicate.**

- Encourage your child to practice saying “hi” and “bye-bye” to clerks and shoppers.
- Leave for home before your child gets tired or grumpy.
- Children need to hear a lot of words in order to learn how to communicate themselves. It’s particularly helpful when you talk about the “here and now” — things that are going on in front of your child.

# Puppet Magic

Puppets are fascinating to children. They know that puppets are not alive, yet they often listen to and talk with them as if they were real.

## What You Need

- An old, clean sock
- Buttons (larger than 1 inch in diameter to prevent swallowing)
- Needle and thread
- Red fabric
- Ribbon, yarn
- An old glove
- Felt-tipped pens
- Glue



## What to Do

To make puppets:

- **Sock puppet:** Use an old, clean sock. On the toe-end of the sock, sew on buttons for eyes and nose. Paste or sew on a piece of red fabric for the mouth. Put a bow made from ribbon at the neck.
- **Finger puppets:** Cut off the fingers of an old glove. Draw faces on the ends of the fingers with felt-tipped pens. Glue on yarn for hair.
- Things to do with puppets:
  - Have the puppet talk to your child: “Hello. My name is Tanya. What’s yours? Kaylee. That’s a pretty name. What a great T-shirt you have on, Kaylee! I like the rabbit on the front of your T-shirt.” Or have the puppet sing a simple song. Use a special voice for the puppet.
  - Encourage your child to talk to the puppet, answering its questions and asking questions of her own.
  - Put finger puppets on your child’s hand to give him practice moving his fingers one at a time.
  - The next time you want your child to help you clean up, have the puppet make the request: “Hello, Max. Let’s put these toys back on the shelves. Can you get the ball for me?”

## Moving On

Toddlers love to explore spaces and to climb over, through and into things.

### What You Need

- Stuffed animal or toy
- Large cardboard boxes
- Pillows and a large sheet
- A soft ball
- A large plastic laundry basket
- Elastic
- Bells



**Give your child a large cardboard box to push around and play in.**

### What to Do

- **Pillow jump.** Give your child several pillows to jump into. (Toddlers usually figure out how to do this on their own.)
- **Box car.** Give your child a large cardboard box to push around the room. He may want to take his stuffed animal or toy for a ride in it. If the box isn't too high — you'll most likely find your toddler in the box as well.
- **Basketball.** Sit about three feet away from your child and hold out a large plastic laundry basket. Let her try throwing a large, soft ball into the basket.
- **Table tent.** Cover a table with a sheet that's big enough to reach the floor on all sides. This makes a great playhouse that's particularly good for a rainy day.
- **Jingle bells.** Sew bells onto elastic that will fit comfortably around your child's ankles. Then watch (and listen) as he moves about or jumps up and down.

As you do an activity, talk, talk, talk with your child about what the two of you are doing!

## Music Makers

Music is a way to communicate that all children understand. They don't need to follow the words to a song; it makes them happy just to hear the comfort in your voice or on the recording or to dance to a peppy tune.

### What You Need

- Music
- Noise makers (rattles, a can filled with beans or buttons, empty toilet paper rolls, pots, pans, plastic bowls)

### What to Do

- Have your toddler try banging a wooden spoon on pots, pans or plastic bowls; shaking a large rattle or shaking a securely closed plastic container filled with beans, buttons or other noisy items; and blowing through toilet-paper or paper-towel rolls.
- Sing or play recordings of nursery rhymes. Have your toddler participate actively. Even if he can't recite the words, he can imitate your hand movements, clap or hum along.
- As your child becomes more physically coordinated, encourage her to move to the music. She can twirl, spin, jump around, tiptoe or sway.
- Find recordings of all kinds of music for your child to listen to. Help her learn to clap out rhythms, to move to both slow and fast music and to listen carefully for special sounds in the music.

Here are a few tips to get your child to sing:

- Sing yourself. Sing fairly slowly so that your child can join in. Discourage shouting.
- Start with simple chanting. Pick a simple melody, such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb," and sing, "la, la, la." Add the words later.
- Make singing a natural part of your daily routine — let your child hear you sing as you work around the house or sing along with songs on the radio or TV or with your own recordings. Encourage him to join in.

**Make singing a natural part of your daily routine. Let your child hear you sing as you work around the house.**

## Play Dough

Young children love to play with dough. And no wonder! They can squish and pound it and form it into fascinating shapes. Helping to make play dough lets children learn about measuring and learn and use new words.

### What You Need

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 4 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- Food coloring
- Food extracts, such as almond, vanilla, or peppermint
- Saucepan
- Objects to stick in the dough, such as Popsicle sticks and straws
- Objects to pound with, such as a toy mallet
- Objects to make impressions with (jar lids, cookie cutters, bottle caps)



### What to Do

To make play dough:

- Add the food coloring to the water. Then mix all of the ingredients together in a pan.
- Cook over medium heat, stirring until it forms a soft ball.
- Let the mixture cool. Knead slightly. Add food extracts to different chunks of the dough to make different smells.
- Talk with your child about what you are doing as you make the dough. Let your child help you with measuring and adding ingredients.
- Let your child handle some dough while it is still slightly warm and some when it has cooled off to teach him about temperatures.
- Give some of the dough to your toddler or preschooler so she can pound it, stick things in it, make impressions in it and make her own animals, houses and people from it.

## Read to Me!

The single most important way for children to develop the knowledge they need to become successful readers later on is for you to read aloud to them often — beginning when they are babies.

### What You Need

- Board books, predictable books and books that label and name concepts (such as colors, numbers, shapes)
- A children's dictionary (preferably a sturdy one)
- Paper, pencils, crayons, markers

**From the time your child is born, make reading aloud to your child a part of your daily routine.**



### What to Do

- From the time your child is born, make reading aloud to your child a part of your daily routine. Pick a quiet time, such as just before you put him to bed. This will give him a chance to rest between play and sleep. If you can, read with him in your lap or snuggled next to you so that he feels close and safe. As he gets older, he may need to move around some as you read to him.
- If he gets tired or restless, stop reading. Make reading aloud a quiet and comfortable time that your child looks forward to.
- Try to read to your child every day. At first, read for no more than a few minutes at a time, several times a day. As your child grows older, you should be able to tell if she wants you to read for longer periods. Don't be discouraged if you have to skip a day or don't always keep to your schedule. Just get back to your daily routine as soon as you can. Most of all, make sure that reading stays fun for both of you!

■ Give your baby sturdy board books to look at, touch and hold. Allow him to turn the pages, look through the holes or lift the flaps. As your child grows older, have books on shelves or in baskets that are at his level. Encourage him to look through the books and talk about them. He may talk about the pictures and he may “pretend” to read a book that he has heard many times.

■ For a late toddler or early preschooler, use reading aloud to help him learn about books and print. As you read aloud, stop now and then and point to letters and words; then point to the pictures they stand for. Your child will begin to understand that the letters form words and that words name pictures. He will also start to learn that each letter has its own sound — one of the most important things your child can know when learning to read.

**When reading books is a regular part of family life, you send your child a message that books are important, enjoyable and full of new things to learn.**



■ As you read, talk with your child. Encourage her to ask questions and to talk about the story. Ask her to predict what will come next. Point to things in books that she can relate to in her own life: “Look at the picture of the penguin. Do you remember the penguin we saw at the zoo?”

■ Reread favorite books. Your child will probably ask you to read favorite books over and over. Even though you may become tired of the same books, he will enjoy and continue to learn from hearing them read again and again.

■ Read “predictable” books to your child. Predictable books are books with words or actions that appear over and over. These books help children to predict or tell what happens next.

■ As you read, encourage your child to listen for and say repeating words and phrases, such as names for colors, numbers, letters, animals, objects and daily life activities. Your child will learn the repeated words or phrase and have fun joining in with you each time they show up in the story. Pretty soon, she will join in before you tell her.

- Be enthusiastic about reading. Read the story with expression. Make it more interesting by talking as the characters would talk, making sound effects and using facial expressions and gestures.
- Buy a children’s dictionary— if possible, one that has pictures next to the words. Then start the “let’s look it up” habit.

**The books that you pick to read with your child are very important. If you aren’t sure what books are right for your child, ask a librarian to help you choose titles.**



- Make writing materials such as crayons, pencils and paper available.
- Visit the library often. Begin making weekly trips to the library when your child is very young. See that your child gets his own library card as soon as possible. Many libraries issue cards to children as soon as they can print their names (you’ll also have to sign for your child).
- Show your child that you read, too. When you take your child to the library, check out a book for yourself. Then set a good example by letting your child see you reading for yourself. Ask your child to get one of her books and sit with you as you read your book, magazine or newspaper. Don’t worry if you feel uncomfortable with your own reading ability. It’s the reading that counts. When your child sees that reading is important to you, she may decide that it is important to her, too.
- If you are uncomfortable with your reading ability, look for family or adult reading programs in your community. Your librarian can help you locate such programs. Friends and relatives also can read to your child and volunteers are available in many communities to do the same.