

Play is a key way that your toddler develops and learns about the world around her.

What Does Play Teach Your Child?

Play helps your child grow in all 5 major areas of development. It builds:

- **physical skills** like crawling, climbing, walking, running, using her fingers, seeing and hearing
- **social skills** like cooperating, sharing, being polite and leading and following others
- **emotional skills** like identifying and dealing with feelings
- **cognitive skills** like problem solving, using her imagination, figuring out how things work, and learning shapes, colours and numbers
- **language skills** like learning the names for things, forming sentences, telling stories and listening



KEY TAKEAWAY

Play is a big part of how your child learns about herself, others, and the world around her. Giving your toddler lots of time to play is good for her development. And it's also a wonderful chance for you to show interest in the things that she likes to do.

Play by Age

6 to 12 months: Explorer

Your toddler may:

- grab at things
- search for things you hide
- enjoy dumping, stacking and pouring things

Try giving her:

- balls
- sturdy toys on wheels
- blocks
- nesting toys
- rattles
- bowls of different sizes



DID YOU KNOW

Outdoor play helps your child develop in all areas. She'll use her imagination, learn to play with others, and build her confidence by trying new things, like going down a big slide for the first time.

12 to 24 months: Mover and Shaker

Your toddler may:

- be able to handle smaller toys
- show her personality through play (active or quiet? focused or multi-tasker?)
- take part in "parallel play" (playing beside another child but not with them)

Try giving her:

- balls to chase and, later, to kick and throw
- pop-up toys
- sit-and-ride toys

24 to 36 months: Dreamer and Connector

Your toddler may:

- play with another child
- enjoy imaginary play

Try giving her:

- dress-up clothes and props





BRAIN BUILDER

Expand your child's imaginary play by showing an interest, asking questions and playing along.



DID YOU KNOW

Many toddlers aren't ready to play with other children until they're 3 years or older.



HOW TO

Encourage your toddler to play

- ✓ Provide a variety of toys suited to her age.
- ✓ Offer her choices and let her decide what she plays.
- ✓ Set aside time to play with her each day.
- ✓ Encourage both active and quiet activities.
- ✓ Give her praise and proudly show her work.
- ✓ Take a break when she seems tired, hungry, uninterested or over-stimulated.
- ✓ Give her lots of free, unscheduled playtime for her to be creative and see where her imagination leads her.

5 ideas for playing together

1. Pretend to be animals.
2. Show her how to do something you enjoy, like puzzles or dancing.
3. Go outside to crawl over logs, look at bugs or pick stones.
4. Wash the dishes or tear the lettuce together.
5. Get out some paper, paint and glue and be creative.



TRY THIS

When time is short, sing or play word or guessing games while you're doing other things.



TRY THIS

If your toddler is in child care, spend some time observing her there to see if you can pick up ideas for play at home.

