

Terrific Twos

What should we be helping children learn before kindergarten? This handout gives some information about your child's development and learning, based on the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*. We include ideas for things you can do with your child—in your daily routines of family life—that will help support your child. You can change them to fit your family's needs. If you have questions about your child's development or learning, you can speak with your child's teacher or doctor.

Approaches to Learning

Toddlers observe and imitate, and learn through play. They pretend to cook dinner or go to the store. Toddlers like to try to solve problems, saying, "Me do it."

Ways to Support Your Child

- Pretend with your child, talk and ask questions. "I'm going to the store, would you like to come with me? What should we buy?" Suggest things, and offer pretend choices. "I'm going to buy some fruit. Should we buy oranges or bananas?"
- Encourage your child to try new things, and take safe "risks", letting him know that you are there to help.
- Show your child how to handle problems and frustration in different ways. When something is difficult, you can say, "Oops, that didn't work, I'll have to try something else."

Emotional and Social Development

Toddlers learn to follow social rules and routines with reminders. They begin to understand that they need to behave differently in different situations. For example, they may whisper when someone is sleeping or hold a grown-up hand to be safe in some places.

Toddlers understand more about feelings. They use facial expressions and actions associated with different emotions. Toddlers begin to take more responsibility by feeding themselves with a spoon and fingers, and taking off clothing.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Encourage morning and bedtime routines, with simple steps, such as: "In the morning we get dressed, eat breakfast, and then brush our teeth before school."
- Tell your toddler what you expect, using simple language, and remind often. For example, "We whisper in the library/church" and whisper when you say it—as a model.
- Talk with your child about feelings—yours and theirs. Describe feelings of characters in books.
- Teach your toddler how to use a fork and a spoon. Break down dressing tasks into little steps. For example, "Put your toes in the sock first and then pull it over the heel."

Health and Physical Development

Toddlers move all the time, as they begin to run and jump and climb. They can follow sleep routines and fall asleep on their own. Toddlers become coordinated with their hands, and can do simple puzzles, turn pages of books, and try to draw.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Actively play with your child every day. You can walk to a store, do jumping jacks, or dance to music in your living room. Even in small spaces, you can find a way to move.
- Have a sleep time routine for your child, maybe something like, “First bath, then 2 books, then time to sleep.”
- Encourage your child to use her hands to do things in your home: open a jar, turn a doorknob, and peel a banana.

Language Development and Communication

Toddlers understand and use more words every day. They begin to talk more, asking and answering questions, using simple (2-3 word) sentences, and can have a back-and-forth conversation. They can also follow directions.

If learning two languages, toddlers may use some words in one language and some in the other. They listen to short story books and remember words and events from story. Toddlers may show an interest in “writing” making marks on the page.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Talk with your child all the time. Your child will not always be able to talk back, but may point or nod/shake his head to respond. Encourage your child to use actions (hands up for “up”), and words to show you what he wants or needs.
- When giving directions, use your child’s name to get her attention, and give the direction(s) slowly. Give a reminder, and praise her when she follows the direction. Start with one step directions, and then two steps: “Pick up your books and put them on the shelf.”
- Try to read to your child every day, and make it part of your family routine. Read favorite books over again—and watch how your child starts to learn the ideas and words in the book!
- Show your child how you use writing to make a list, remember a name, or write a note. Encourage your child to write with paper and a pencil or crayon.
- Whatever your home language, continue to use it at home and in your community. Learning two languages is good for a child’s brain development.

Cognitive Development

Toddlers observe and can describe things, such as “big and little,” “more and less,” “open and closed,” “girl and boy.” They show an interest in counting, and can count a few items (1–3). Toddlers show curiosity about how things work and experiment.

Ways to Support Your Child

- When talking to your child, use words that describe. “Look at this leaf, it is green. This leaf is yellow. We have a green leaf and a yellow leaf— two leaves.”
- Show children how you use counting in your daily routines. “Let’s pick out some apples and put them in the bag. Help me count, ‘one, two, three.’ We have three apples in the bag.”
- Encourage your child to wonder and explore how things work. You can do this by wondering out loud, and it is okay not to have an answer. “Look at that!”