



RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS:

Toddler Age Group

This package is intended to support caregivers in a variety of settings that work directly with children ages 18 months – 3 years. Included are resources related to child development, as well as a compilation of both indoor and outdoor activities using materials that can be found around the house or easily obtained at little cost.

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¹MILESTONES FOR 2-YEAR-OLDS

THINKING AND REASONING (COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT)

Most children by age 2:

- Begin to understand simple time concepts, such as "now," "later," or "a few minutes." (The distant future or "forever" are too complex to conceptualize at this age.)
- Follow simple requests, such as "Put the book on the table." But two-step instructions, such as "Wash your hands and come here," usually cannot be completed.
- Recognize basic symbolism, such as nodding the head for yes or no.
- Often want to do two incompatible things at the same time. For example, a 2-year-old may want to go out in the snow and wear his or her slippers.
- Start to play "pretend," such as by talking on a toy telephone.
- Begin to recognize and sort objects by shape and colour.

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Most children by age 2 are:

- Developing self-awareness, the realization that they are individuals and are separate from other people. Although children are excited by their developing skills, they also are often struggling with their emerging independence. Your child may resist your comforting one minute, only to run clinging to you the next. They understand and use the word "no" as a way to assert themselves. Sometimes calmly redirecting your child or stating the request in a different way will help this behaviour. But a child can also stubbornly resist direction. [Temper tantrums](#) reflect related frustrations and competing feelings.
- Aware that they may not always get what they want or that they may have to wait for it. Although many children also start to see a relationship between how they act and what happens next, they often act on impulse. They often do not behave consistently, because they can't yet completely anticipate the consequences of their actions.
- Interested in observing and imitating other people.
- Interested and excited about being with other children. But they still engage in parallel play—playing next to, but usually not with, other children. They usually have not mastered sharing and other co-operation skills.
- Not concerned about gender differences, but start to recognize that they exist. Usually, they are noticing simple clues, such as hair length or clothing.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Most children by age 2:

- Use at least 50 words.
- Put two words together, such as "no bottle."
- Name some body parts and familiar objects, such as "toy" or "cat."
- Speak with a mix of made-up words and understandable words.
- Repeat words they overhear, such as from adult conversations.

SENSORY AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Most children by age 2:

- See and hear well.
- Are rapidly developing motor skills. Around the second birthday, children can usually go up and down stairs one step at a time, kick a ball, and are starting to run. Most children can also stand on their tiptoes. You may see your child carrying toys, sometimes large toys, around the house. Pull-toys are also a favourite around this age.
- Scribble and draw simple strokes with a crayon. They can also pour out toys or other objects from a container and build a tower with 4 or more blocks. You may notice your child using one hand more than the other.

¹ <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=ue5313&lang=en-ca#ue5313-sec>

THINKING AND REASONING (COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT)

Most children by age 3:

- Know their own name, age, and gender.
- Follow 2- to 3-step instructions, such as "pick up your doll and put it on your bed next to the teddy bear."
- Grasp the concept of "two." For example, they understand when they have two cookies rather than one. But they usually aren't yet able to understand the concept of higher numbers.
- Memorize a string of numbers rather than actually count. The same is true of the alphabet. A child may say the letters from memory but may not be able to recognize a written letter singled out from the others. But some 3-year-olds show great interest in and ability with numbers, counting, and the alphabet.
- Enjoy working with puzzles that have 3 or 4 pieces. Most children can also sort objects by shape and colour.
- Have active imaginations and a rich fantasy life. For example, they may imagine that their toys or stuffed animals can talk and play with them.

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Most children by age 3:

- Experience a wide range of emotions.
- Separate easily from their parents.
- Express affection openly. They may show affection for familiar playmates spontaneously.
- Understand the concept of "mine" and "yours." They may have trouble sharing toys at times or have conflicts when playing with others.
- Can identify a person as a boy or girl. But they do not yet fully understand the distinctions between genders.
- Are interested in [toilet training](#). Many stay dry when they are awake.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Most children by age 3:

- Learn new words quickly. Most recognize and can name common objects.
- Use plurals, such as "books" for more than one book. Also most children use pronouns (I, you, me, we, they) and use complete sentences of 4 to 5 words. Strangers understand most of what they say.
- Often ask "why" and "what."
- Understand most of what they hear.
- Are not yet able to fully express their feelings with words.

SENSORY AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Most children by age 3:

- Develop more large muscle movements (gross motor skills). These generally include:
 - Running.
 - Climbing. Most children alternate feet when going up or down stairs.
 - Jumping in place.
 - Pedalling a tricycle.
 - Kicking a ball.
 - Bending over easily.
- Develop more small muscle coordination, which involves their hands and fingers (fine motor skills). These skills may include:
 - Copying a circle.
 - Using a cup, fork, and spoon with ease.
 - Getting dressed, although they usually still need some help managing buttons, zippers, and snaps.
 - Turning the pages of a book one at a time.
 - Building a tower of 6 blocks.
 - Holding pens and pencils using thumb and forefinger.
 - Screwing and unscrewing lids.

² <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=ue5314&lang=en-ca#ue5314-sec>

COMFORT, PLAY AND TEACH LINKS

COMFORT, PLAY AND TEACH ACTIVITY PROGRAM - TODDLER

https://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/Comfort,-Play-Teach/CPT-Activity-Guide_Toddler.aspx

COMFORT, PLAY & TEACH: DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES BY AGE AND AREA OF DEVELOPMENT (BIRTH TO 5 YEARS)

https://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/Comfort,-Play-Teach/CPT-Ages-StagesMilestones_Full-Set_2019.aspx

COMFORT, PLAY AND TEACH: ACTIVITIES/LEARNING AREAS

https://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/Comfort,-Play-Teach/CPT-Activities_Learning-Areas_Full-Set.aspx

COMFORT, PLAY AND TEACH: ACTIVITIES BY AGE RANGE (0 TO 5 YEARS)

https://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/Comfort,-Play-Teach/CPT-Activities_by-Age_Full-Set.aspx

COMFORT, PLAY AND TEACH: PARENTING MOMENTS TIP SHEETS

https://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/Comfort,-Play-Teach/TVO_CPT-Tip-Sheets_full-set.aspx

PROMOTING HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

APPLE MAGAZINE “NURTURING HEALTHY KIDS” ISSUE

<http://www.applemag-digital.com/applemag/fall2013?pg=1#pg1>

ACTIVE FOR LIFE CANADA

www.activeforlife.com

PLAY, PARTICIPATION AND POSSIBILITIES: AN EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR ALBERTA

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/482257/play-participation-and-possibilities-reduced.pdf>

INDOOR ACTIVITIES

CREATIVE ART IDEAS

PAINTING WITH DIFFERENT OBJECTS

Try using fly swatters, bubbles, straws, flowers, dinosaur toys, the ends of celery stalks, a salad spinner or marbles!



You can also add different **MATERIALS** to your finger painting... or paint on different materials!



COLOUR MIXING

This can be done with paint or water with food colouring or any other coloured materials you have like playdough!

GLUEING

Rip pieces of paper or tissue then glue it to create a new object. You can glue it in the shape of an animal, tree, or even fruit!

CUTTING

Cut a variety of materials to practise fine motor skills.

A fun cutting activity is cutting pieces of egg cartons to make into animals!



³DUPLO SORTING

Sorting Duplo is a quick and easy to set up activity. Tape down construction paper and provide Duplo or Mega blocks. Toddlers will learn colour sorting skills and are entertained as they are on a mission.



POPSICLE STICK SORTING

Gather lids from household containers and cut slits onto the top. Colour each slit to coordinate a colored Popsicle stick. Play a matching game where each Popsicle stick has to find its matching spot! You can use other items and colour coordinate you just may have to expand the size of the slits.

⁴COLOUR SORTING TOYS

Fill a laundry basket with coloured toys or items from around the house. Have the child empty the basket by sorting the toys onto the coloured construction paper.

Variation: If you have coloured stickers, children can put stickers on the coloured paper too. This can also be made into a gross motor game by running to a color as it is called out. Add a variety of movements such as crawling, hopping, etc.



COLOUR MATCHING IN WATER

Make buckets of different coloured water. Match the colour of the water with toys of that colour. To make it extra fun, pick toys that don't usually go in the tub.

³ <https://busytoddler.com/>

⁴ <https://littlelearningclub.com/>

CARDBOARD TUBES MAZE

ITEMS NEEDED:

- Painters Tape
- A variety of paper towel rolls, toilet paper rolls or wrapping paper rolls
- Assorted pom-poms
- Note: you can also substitute the pom-poms for other household objects such as snack pouch tops, 1" cubes, large beads, balls, etc.
- Be sure to use painters tape on walls to prevent removal of paint from your walls. If you're doing this activity somewhere that you're not afraid of ruining the paint or surface, then standard duct tape will work too.



WHAT TO DO:

1. Find an open flat, vertical surface, such as a wall or door.
2. Using painters tape, tape the paper towel and toilet paper rolls to the wall.
3. Align the tubes vertically or diagonally (with the tape horizontal) so when the objects are dropped in from the top they will fall out the bottom. Make it a fun maze by allowing the pompoms to drop from one tube into another.

You can use any arrangement that you wish, as long as you make sure any tubes that are in vertical alignment are directly on top of each other so the object can fall through both of them.

4. Demonstrate to your child how to put a pompom or object into the top and see it drop.
5. Watch as they can't wait to get started on their own.
6. Teach them to use a pincer grasp (thumb and pointer only) to grab each pompom one-at-a-time.



To go one step further for an older toddler who is learning colors and counting, have them name each color as they put it in the tube or call out a color and have them pick that one up. They can also count each pompom as they put it in or place each color into piles and count them before they put them in.

Note: Be careful if your toddler still tends to put things in their mouth as these are small enough to be choking hazards

SPONGE PAINTING

Cut various shapes out of sponges and provide children with paint and paper.

TEXTURE PLAY

Collect cut outs of different textured materials (rough, bumpy, smooth, soft etc.) and explore!



MAKE A ZIPPER BOARD

Have your child explore the zippers and practice fine motor skills by zipping and unzipping.



⁵FIND THE HIDDEN COLOR



**HIDDEN
COLORS**
QUICK & EASY TODDLER SCIENCE



ITEMS NEEDED:

- Food colouring
- baking soda
- vinegar
- a squirt bottle or regular water bottle
- cupcake tin or small containers
- storage tub to keep things contained/"clean"

Put a drop of food colouring in each cup of the muffin tin and then a teaspoon of baking soda over it to hide the coloring. Put vinegar in the water bottle and have the child squirt the vinegar into each muffin tin – watch it fizz and try guess the colour.

⁵ <https://busytoddler.com/>

⁶MARSHMALLOW PLAYDOUGH

RECIPE & INSTRUCTIONS:

(per color)

- 6 large marshmallows
- 3+ tbsps. of corn starch
- 2 tsp coconut oil (Other oils will also work)
- Food colouring



Note: You will also need a microwave- Combine all of the ingredients in a microwave-safe bowl and then heat until the marshmallows expand (roughly 30 seconds).

Carefully remove the bowl from the microwave, and then mix the ingredients as much as you can with a spoon.

Add more cornstarch as you mix if needed. This helps the dough to lose its stickiness and become soft and pliable.

Keep adding corn starch until the desired consistency is reached, but be sure to **add it slowly**. If you add too much the dough will become a crumbly mess.

Keep kneading until the dough has formed. Then, wash your hands, and **knead the dough** once more with **clean, dry hands**. After a bit of handling you will be left with, the most delightfully squishy & stretchy **play dough**!

Repeat the above steps for each color of marshmallow **play dough** that you wish to make. Then, the **fun** can begin!



BATH PAINTS

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

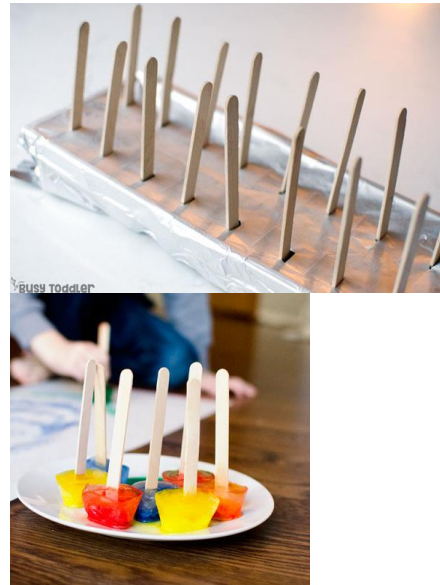
- food coloring
- 1/2 cup of baby body wash
- 1/2 cup of corn starch
- 2 tablespoons of water
- some kind of divided tray (iced cube tray, silicone tray)
- paint brushes (or old tooth brushes)

⁶ <https://www.growingajeweledrose.com/2015/02/marshmallow-dough-recipe.html>

HERE'S HOW TO MAKE IT

1. In a medium bowl, mix baby body wash and corn starch together.
2. Add in water. If the consistency is still too thick, feel free to add more water. *You want it to be thick enough to stick to the walls (and not be too runny).*
3. Take your tray or whatever you're using to hold the paint and evenly distribute the mixture into the compartments.
4. Use 1-2 drops of food coloring to create different colors.
5. Now grab those paint brushes and you're ready to let your little one paint. Have fun!

⁷FROZEN PAINT



Take an ice cube tray and filled each compartment half way with paint. Top it with water, stirred, then **cover the tray with foil**. Make Popsicle stick sized holes in the tin foil all the way around the ice cube tray. Then I set in the Popsicle sticks – which are held upright and in place by the foil. If needed, put paper in a cookie sheet to keep the melted water/paint in a contained area too.

Once the frozen paint is ready to go, tape paper to the floor and enjoy the creative artwork. Note: This frozen paint activity can be used outside on the sidewalk as well

⁸BUBBLE TRUCKS

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Bubble Bath/ Body Wash
- Water
- Food colouring (optional)

⁷ <https://busytoddler.com/2018/01/frozen-paint-process-art-activity/>

⁸ <https://busytoddler.com/2018/07/bubble-trucks-soap-foam/>

- ALSO – construction trucks/cars, etc.

The magic of bubble foam is a 2:1 ratio – 2 parts bubble bath to 1 part water. Mix with a hand blender to make the foam.

For this bubble trucks activity, I used 1/2 cup bubble bath with 1/4 cup of water for each color. I added in a few drops of food coloring to make it just a little more special.

You can create many other variations of sensory bins and change the items depending on what your child is interested in!



⁹SHAVING CREAM SENSORY PLAY (OCEAN THEME)



For this ocean sensory bin activity, use store bought shaving cream (make sure to get the foam kind). Shake the can and add to a plastic or freezer safe bin. Add food coloring (if desired) and toys such as ocean animals.

It's not super cold for little hands. Shaving cream will take about an hour to freeze.

Variation: explore this fun shaving cream sensory activity right in the bath so the child/children could get messy and then just hose it off.

When water is added to the **shaving cream**, it turned this sensory shaving cream right into an **ocean** of water right before their eyes.



⁹ <https://www.hellowonderful.co/post/frozen-shaving-cream-ocean-sensory-play/>

¹⁰SPAGHETTI AND COLANDER ACTIVITY

ITEMS NEEDED: Colander and uncooked spaghetti

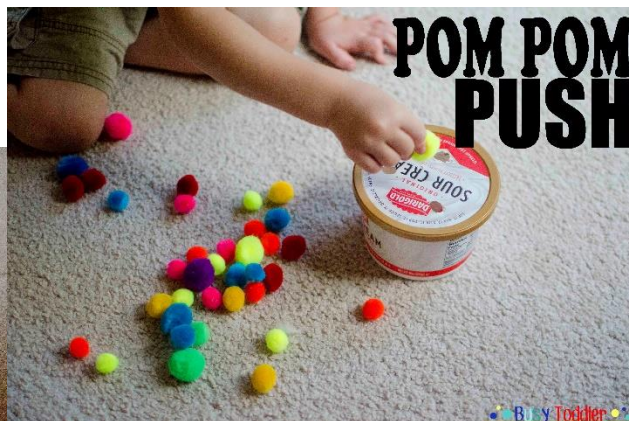
Provide items and encourage the fine motor skill of pushing and pulling through the holes. If no pipe cleaner, try yarn or string and wrap a piece of tape on the end.

This can also be done with other materials that are available such as pipe cleaners, or strings of yarn with tape wrapped on the ends.



¹¹POM-POM PUSH (AND OTHER VARIATIONS)

Take a container and cut holes in the top. Make the holes large enough to push a pom-pom through. If you do not have pom-poms, cotton balls will work too.



A variation to the pom-pom push is to make a long cut out to put a deck of playing cards in.

You could also use pieces of paper, large juice lids, cut paper towel rolls or use toys (such as Duplo) or anything else you can find around the house.

These are fun activities that will keep children busy while encouraging their fine motor skills.



¹⁰ <https://www.messylittlemonster.com/2016/05/pasta-play-simple-activities-for.html>

¹¹ <https://busytoddler.com/2015/09/pom-pom-push/>



Put pom-poms in a whisk or place them in an egg carton and provide children with tongs or tweezers.

¹²THREADING ACTIVITY

Use cardboard tubes and straws to create a threading activity!



CARDBOARD BOX FORT

Use large boxes to make forts for toddlers. You can poke holes in the top and add Christmas lights to light up the fort!

Use a plastic hammer to hammer golf tees into an egg carton.

¹² <https://laughingkidslearn.com/fine-motor-threading-activity-using-straws-and-cardboard-tubes/>

LOOSE PARTS EXPLORATION

Provide a variety of materials that can be found around the house (i.e. bowls, cardboard boxes, jar lids etc.) and build towers, paint, make music, or create new objects through exploration. Build towers, mazes, or a zoo for all their favorite animals using the materials.



Build an [INDOOR OBSTACLE COURSE](#) for some gross motor movements!

Play [GROUP GAMES](#) such as musical chairs red light green light or freeze dance.

DRAMATIC PLAY

¹³ICE CREAM PARLOUR

Use balls of colour paper or tissue paper as ice cream. Add a recycled container for sprinkles, pom-poms for cherries, etc. Cotton Balls may also be used.



¹³ <https://entertainyourtoddler.com/ice-cream-dramatic-play/>

¹⁴SPAGHETTI SHOP DRAMATIC PLAY

Provide a variety of kitchen items such as utensils, colander, whisk, small pots, tongs, plates, recycled cheese containers (parmesan cheese container), etc.

Use cut up yarn or wool as spaghetti. Coloured cooked spaghetti may also be used (add food colouring when cooking the spaghetti).

Other ideas include: a pizza shop, grocery store, vet, pet groomer etc.



*Dramatic Play Spaghetti Shop
for kids*



MIRROR PLAY. Use a mirror to talk with the child about parts of the face, recognizing them and naming them. Extend to craft with cut outs of part of the face where they can glue them down on a face. Use the mirror to talk about emotions, showing a sad face, happy face, angry, etc.

Create **FORTS** and use them for quiet activities, reading or role-playing. Bring in a variety of items to encourage dramatic play such as dishes and table clothes, bowls and ladles for potion making, dinosaurs and rocks etc.

PUT ON A PLAY. You can make your own or choose a favorite book to recreate!

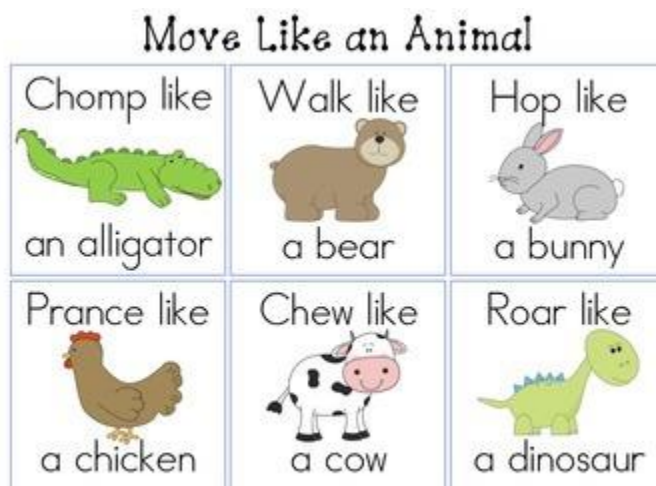
MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

FREESTYLE DANCE-AND-FREEZE!

Make it even more exciting by adding paint and paper, so at the end of the dance you have also created a masterpiece!

MOTION CARDS

You can use cards, dice, Popsicle sticks and make your own (write down a variety of actions like hopping, flapping like a bird, dinosaur stomp) and take turns drawing an action to perform!



Made by Lucy Ford

Graphics by megpaulgraphics.com



¹⁴ <https://whereimaginationgrows.com/dramatic-play-spaghetti-play-for-kids/>



BANG ON DRUMS

Use items you already have, such as recycled items (coffee cans, buckets) or pots and pans with wooden spoons.

Try making different musical instruments (e.g. shakers, rain sticks etc.) and decorate them as you like!

RIBBON DANCING

Use any fabric materials you have on hand and encourage your child to explore how the fabric floats and twirls and follows their movement as they go!



HOPSCOTCH AND VARIATION

Use chalk to make a variety of colored circles or objects around the space and as you call out the color or object run to each one, you can change this activity by choose a different gross motor movement each time! "Dinosaur stomp to the red circle, swim like a fish to the blue circle".

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

LIST OF SIMPLE IDEAS

CREATE A STICKY MURAL OF NATURE MATERIALS

CREATE A SIMPLE OBSTACLE COURSE

SCAVENGER HUNT

SPRAY BOTTLES WITH COLOURED WATER

EASTER EGG HUNT

CHALK DRAWINGS



BACKYARD BALL RUN FUN

GROW A GARDEN

NATURE WALK (MAKE A LIST OF ITEMS TO COLLECT ON A WALK)

BRING INDOOR TOYS OUTSIDE!

POOL NOODLE OBSTACLE COURSE (SECURE WITH TENT PEGS IN THE GROUND)

HOPSCOTCH USING CHALK OR HULA HOOPS



ROCK PAINTING OR ANY FORM OF PAINTING OUTSIDE

CREATE A MUSIC WALL USING POTS, PANS, ICE CUBE TRAYS ETC.



SENSORY ACTIVITIES

Create **MUD PIES** in sensory kitchen using individual bowls, plates and utensils

¹⁵**TREE BARK RUBBINGS** (tape paper to a tree and use crayons)

SAND AND WATER play with scoops and cups (and any other household materials!)

Make a bracelet with **TAPE**, sticky side facing out. Collect flowers, leaves, twigs and grass to stick to the tape.

Paint outside with water on **DIFFERENT SURFACES**. Sidewalks, house, fence etc.



IMAGINATIVE PLAY IDEAS

Create a car or bus that children can pretend to drive.

Set up a stage area and play music that children can dance to.

Take babies for a walk in their strollers.

Create individual boats for children to play in using laundry baskets or crates.

QUIET ACTIVITIES

Find a cozy spot to **READ BOOKS** together outside.

Lay on the grass and look up at the **CLOUDS** to find different shapes.

Create **COZY SPACES** using items such as blankets and pillows for children to play and have quiet time.

Practice **YOGA** poses and stretches in the grass.



¹⁵ <https://www.icanteachmychild.com/outdoor-tree-bark-rubbings/>