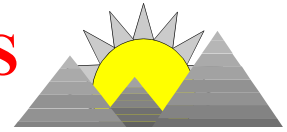


GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



18 MONTHS

Learning by Helping: Make Helping Fun!

When your child tries to help you, remember to look for ways you can make helping fun for both of you. That way, your child will enjoy helping and will want to help more.

Children can learn how to pour milk from a small pitcher by watching you. They can learn how to sweep the floor, pick flowers and hang up clothes.

On-the-job practice is great. Toddlers spend up to 20 percent of their time just watching, listening and staring at you. They're learning how to imitate the things you do. When you let your little person help you, you are giving him a chance to practice what he has learned.

Be gentle with mistakes. He will make mistakes of course, but don't scold him for these. Instead say, "That was a good try. Maybe it would work better if you did it this way."

Take the time to help him succeed now and later he will be able to do more things for himself and for you. This is time well spent for both of you.

Play Is Fun, Not Work

In each issue of this series, we describe games you can play with your toddler for enjoyment and for growth. These games will help him solve problems,

understand the world, and learn the things he will need to succeed in school.

Play is ALWAYS fun. Remember, these games should be fun for both you and your child. If you turn the games into work or into contests, your toddler will not want to play them. He might become discouraged about learning new things or feel like a failure. This will rob both you and your little one of the enjoyment and learning you can have together.

Play the game only when you and your toddler both want to play. Stop the game before your child gets tired or bored. This may mean playing the game only for a few minutes.

Praise, but don't criticize. Don't criticize your child for mistakes or failures; do praise his efforts and his successes. Use your imagination to vary the games so that they are more fun; encourage your little one to do the same. Make the play challenging but not frustrating for your child.

Play and learning go together, especially for your toddler. Keep play light, creative, and fun.

Sharing Is Hard

"Mine! Mine!" Do you hear that a lot from your little one? Sharing is a very difficult thing to learn. We don't expect children to be able to share until they are at least 3 years old, but you can begin to lay the foundation now.

Start with “who does this belong to?” How do you teach your child to share? Children probably learn best by having many good sharing experiences over a long period of time. You need to talk about what’s mine and what’s yours, what’s daddy’s, what’s mommy’s and even what’s doggy’s.

Set a good example. It also helps to demonstrate sharing behavior. For example, you’ve just cut an apple in half. You can say, “I have a red apple and I will share my apple with you.”

There are things that you don’t have to share. If there are other children in your home, your child may need to learn sharing more quickly. Be sure she has some things that are just for her, that she does not have to share.

Real sharing is a grown-up behavior. Your toddler will need a lot of help from you to learn to share. Be patient and don’t expect true sharing until your young one is older.

What’s It Like to Be 18 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I’m beginning to use one hand more than the other.
- When things don’t go the way I want, I get angry.
- I’m learning to creep backward downstairs.
- I like to grab anything I can reach.

How I Talk

- I try to sing and I like to have you sing to me.
- Sometimes I can ask you for what I want, like a cookie, by naming it.
- I can say about ten words, but mostly I use the word “no.”
- I am beginning to understand the meaning of “now.”

Play I Enjoy

- I may be able to string large, colored, wooden beads.

- I like blowing bubbles.
- I still don’t play very long with any one thing.

What I Have Learned

- I am beginning to remember where things belong.
- I can use a stick to get a toy.
- I can build a tower of two or three blocks.
- With your help I can turn pages of a book.

How I Get Along with Others

- I may be afraid of some things, like thunder and lightning and large animals.
- I may have temper tantrums when I’m tired, angry, or frustrated.
- I still love to show off and get attention.

What I Can Do for Myself

- When I’m ready for bed, I may bring you my pillow or my favorite stuffed toy.

Games for Growing: It’s Always In the Same Place

Purpose of the Game: To help your child pick the can that a toy is under three times in a row so that he can learn to use clues like size and shapes to solve problems.

How to Play:

- Sit with your child at a table or on the floor.
- Tell your child to turn around and not to peek.
- Put a toy under one of three different size tin cans.
- Ask your child to guess which can it is under.
- Change the position of the cans but always put the toy under the same can.
- When your child guesses the right can say, “Good, let’s try it a few more times to see if you know where the toy is always hidden.”

Remember—when playing any game with your child, be flexible. Change the way you play it and

encourage your child to change the game too. Games should be fun for both of you.

Nutrition: It's Okay to Eat a Little Or a Lot

“You have to eat everything on your plate.” Is this something you were told as a child? After all, no one wants to see food wasted.

Appetites vary from day to day. It's really unfair to ask your child to eat the same amount every day. Some days your child will be very hungry and will want more than you've put on his plate. Other days he will be less hungry and won't want as much.

Let your child decide how much to eat. Only your child knows how hungry he is, so let him decide how much to eat. Let him eat until he isn't hungry anymore, then let him stop.

Many parents worry that their toddler isn't eating enough, but most toddlers eat enough for growth and health. They don't need to be bribed or rewarded to eat more.

Don't punish your child for eating too little or for eating too much. If you do, your child will feel ashamed of his appetite and will begin to feel guilty about food.

If there is food left on his plate, you may be giving him too much food and need to give less.

If your child asks for more of a certain food and you don't have any more of it, say you're sorry there isn't any more. Then offer more of the food that is still left. It takes a lot of patience to help children learn to eat well.

Show Your Toddler He's Important To You

We feel better about ourselves if we think we are important to others. This is especially true of toddlers. They are forming opinions about themselves. Whether they feel loved, capable, and

important depends on how they are treated by people who care for them.

Show your toddler you care about him and respect him. Let him know you love him just for being himself, not for what he does.

Tell him you thought about him during the day while you were gone. Tell him that you like his smile, his laugh, his toes and ears.

Show him you're proud of all the things he is learning to do. Tell him how much you enjoy doing things with him.

Don't assume he knows all this just because you take care of him. Take the time to put your love into words. Loving words that come from the heart can never be said too often.

Guidance and Discipline: Limits Show Love

Sometime between 15 and 24 months, toddlers may become resistant and defiant. You will probably hear them say “no” a lot. All this is perfectly normal.

I am growing up. Toddlers are more aware of their individuality and more able to do things for themselves. They want to test their independence and power and to show you how important they are. They may do this by being negative, but that is a sign that they are growing up. Be patient.

Channel that wonderful growth. Your toddler needs encouragement to become more independent, but he also needs guidance and discipline. Otherwise his independence might cause him to hurt himself or others, or to be destructive.

Have a few good rules. These can be trying times for parents. You need to decide early on some reasonable rules—a few, not too many.

Make rules that your toddler can understand and follow. Most important, make rules that you can enforce consistently.

Having a few simple rules will help your toddler know you care about him, that you will keep him safe. You will also be helping him learn that he can and should follow rules, even if he really doesn't like them. He needs to know this to grow into a responsible adult.

Abide by your rules. Try not to break your own rules. If you have a rule against candy before dinner, try to enforce this all the time. Otherwise, you teach your toddler that rules don't matter or that they can be easily broken.

Explain the rules. Explain in simple words why you have the rule. Say something like, "You always hold my hand when we cross the street so I can keep you from being hurt." This helps your toddler learn that rules have a purpose.

Studies show that children follow rules better when they are given reasons for the rules. This understanding will help them follow rules and make good decisions later.

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