

GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



22 MONTHS

Play and Playthings

Playing times are special. They help you and your child share love and happiness, but play is not just a way to have fun. It is also one of the best ways to help children learn and grow.

Play helps toddlers learn. When they play, toddlers learn how to use their bodies. They learn about the way things look, feel, stack, fall, and fit together. Playing games helps them to figure things out and later helps them to share and cooperate. All this will help your child to be the friendly, intelligent, and successful person you want him to be.

Make play handy. Set things up to encourage play. Keep a drawer of safe things for your child to play with in rooms you use a lot so he can play and be near you. Keep a box of tub toys in the bathroom for bath-time play.

Change toys for variety. Change the things you let your toddler play with from time to time to give him variety. Remember, the best toys can be things you already have around the house like plastic containers, wooden spoons, pans, empty cardboard cartons, pillows, and old magazines.

What's It Like to Be 22 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I am probably using one hand more than the other.
- If you fold a paper, I can imitate you.
- I can obey about three directions.

How I Talk

- I like to hear stories.
- I can ask for things by name.
- I can point to five body parts on myself or my doll.
- I can help with simple tasks.

What I Have Learned

- I am really curious about people, animals, birds, and everything that I see.
- I like listening to nursery rhymes, and if you help me, I can repeat them.
- I can recognize a picture in a book even when the book is upside down.
- I can build a tower of four or five blocks.

How I Get Along with Others

- I'm beginning to be sympathetic to other people and I can sometimes cooperate with others.

- I can show love to you and other favorite people.
- I'm becoming easier to get along with, but I still get demanding at times.

What I Can Do for Myself

- I may be able to put things where they belong.
- I can pick up and put away my toys if you will help me.
- I like to sweep, dust, mop, hammer, vacuum, shovel, scoop, or rake because I have seen you do these things.

Play I Enjoy

- I can put rings on a spindle toy.
- I like to pretend, like wrapping up my doll or stuffed animal and putting it to bed.
- My feelings are easily hurt by criticism.
- I am continually testing the limits you set and trying to get my own way.

Putting Words to Action

Children can be very different from each other. Don't worry if your child is "early" or "late" in growth. Look for your child's growth in each area. Encourage each new ability. If you are concerned about your child's development, talk with your doctor.

You can help your little one learn words by talking about what you and he are doing. If you're making cookies and he's watching, tell him about what you're doing. For example, you might say, "First we sift the flour and put it in the bowl. Now we add the eggs. Plop! Plop! Now we mix and mix and mix. Then we'll scoop cookies out, plop them in the pan, and pop them in the oven."

Your child will hear the words "sift," which is very hard to say. "Plop," "mix," "scoop," and "pop" are fun words to hear and fun to say.

Describe what is happening. Use words with your child just as you use toys. None of us grows and develops in only one area at a time. Your child uses his eyes to watch your actions, his mouth and tongue to put words to your action, and his small and large muscles to imitate your actions. Putting words and actions together can help him develop all these skills.

Keep it short and sweet. Your toddler's attention span is very, very short. A few minutes of the cooking lesson and he'll be up and away to bigger, better things. Remember, too, that hot water, sharp kitchen utensils, and heavy objects can hurt your child. Always watch him when he is in the kitchen.

Games for Growing: Paper Folding

Purpose of the Game: To teach your child to imitate and to use his small muscles.

How to Play:

- Sit in any relaxed position.
- Fold a piece of paper a few times in front of your child.
- Give your child a new sheet of paper. Ask your child to fold it. If your child doesn't fold it, fold your sheet again step by step. Ask your child to fold as you do.
- When this is done, get new sheets of paper and do the same thing again.

Nutrition: Chewing Isn't Easy When You Don't Have All Your Teeth

By now your toddler has some, but not all her baby teeth. She probably will not have all 20 baby teeth until she is about 2 to 2 1/2 years old.

Beware of choking. Your child doesn't have enough teeth to chew well, so she might swallow large pieces of food that could cause her to choke. Choking on food is a real danger for toddlers. For this reason, grind meat and cut all food into small bite-size pieces.

The foods toddlers choke on most often are hot dogs, candy, nuts, and grapes. Hot dogs aren't a very nutritious food. If you do give them, cut them in quarter circles. Never cut them into full circles as they can get stuck in your child's throat.

Cut grapes in quarter sections and break nuts into small bits. Don't give your toddler candy very often. When you do, be sure it is in small pieces that can't possibly get stuck in your child's throat.

Other foods that sometimes cause choking are popcorn, chewing gum, and lollipops. Since these foods aren't nutritious, don't give them to your toddler.

Know what to do when a toddler chokes. If your child starts to choke on something, pick her up and lay her chest down across your lap. Then tap on her back to dislodge the food. Don't pound or slap your child too hard because you can break your toddler's ribs. While you are doing this, have someone call the emergency number just in case she continues to choke.

Be Good to Yourself: Give Yourself a Pat on the Back

Sometimes when life gets tough, we forget to look at the good things about ourselves. But we need to give ourselves credit, even if no one else does.

- Praise yourself often—not just for moving mountains, but for climbing molehills too. Say, “Good for me! I got through the day without yelling at anybody!”
- Talk to yourself when you know a tough situation is coming. Say, “I know I can get through this job interview. After all, I did call and make the appointment, and I've written a good application letter.”
- Look at the good side. Say, “I didn't finish cleaning the whole house, but I got the downstairs done, and that's the hardest part.”

Remember, no one is a perfect parent, daughter, son, husband, or wife. Give yourself credit for all the good parts about you, and work on improving the others.

Safety: Injury Prevention

Your toddler is becoming a real explorer. She climbs, runs, walks, and rarely sits. You need to protect her in special ways. There are three major dangers you can help your child avoid:

Poison: Your toddler explores with her mouth. Everything goes in her mouth. Keep all medicines and household products away from your child. All medicines should have safety caps. Keep the poison control center telephone number and your doctor's telephone number near your telephone. Have syrup of ipecac on hand, but don't use it unless poison control, a doctor, or a nurse tells you to.

Automobiles: Always put your child in a car seat and buckle both the seat and your toddler. When a car stops suddenly, children and adults continue moving until something stops them. Do not hold your child in your lap. When you are taking your child to and from the car, make sure you are holding her hand. Toddlers are unpredictable and may quickly run in front of a car.

Water: Many children love to play in water. Never leave your toddler alone in the bathroom or tub. Your child can drown in a tub or a toilet bowl. Never leave your child alone near water for even a moment. Even if your child is learning to swim, he is not water safe. Water wings or other swimming aids do not make him safe alone in the water. If you have a pool, there should be a 4-foot high fence around it with a self-closing latch door.

Questions

- Q:** “Soft teeth run in my family. Is there anything I can do to protect my child's teeth?”
- A:** Babies aren't born with soft teeth. Most dental problems in children under 3 years are caused by baby bottle tooth decay. Many parents don't realize that formula, juice, and even milk contain some sugar. Cavities can begin when a baby carries a bottle around all day, nurses constantly, or is allowed to sleep with a bottle.

To protect your child's teeth:

- Feed only formula, milk, or water from a bottle.
- Limit bottle use to feeding time. Sleeping times are not feeding times. Do not put baby to bed with a bottle. If your child needs comforting at bedtime, put him to sleep with a favorite blanket, or stuffed animal.

Happy Routines

If you can do the same thing in the same order every day, your child is likely to feel more safe, comfortable, and secure. He'll know what's coming next. He'll know what he should do. Here are some simple routines that are not too hard to stick to.

Have quiet time and bedtime at the same time everyday. You can help your little one get used to routines by telling him that when he has finished lunch, it will be time to rest, or that after you read one more book, it will be time for bed. Other routines that you can set up are:

- Getting your little one dressed as soon as he gets up in the morning.
- Brushing his teeth after breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- Washing his hands before he eats.
- Picking up his toys before dinner (or at some other convenient time).
- Saying good night to every member of the family, maybe including dogs, cats, and assorted toys before going to bed.

You can help your child learn about routines and time by letting him know that the mail comes at 10 o'clock or we go to the grocery store on Saturday or mommy or daddy comes home at 6 o'clock.

Helping at Home

Help your child become a proud working partner in your family. Even young children can help with some household jobs. In helping, your child will begin to learn responsibility and will develop pride in being useful.

Begin by helping your child with the task. Keep each task simple. Tell your child what a good job he's done.

Here are some tasks a toddler can do:

- Pick up unused toys and put them in proper places.
- Put books and magazines on the shelf.
- Put napkins and silverware on the table.
- Clean up the floor after eating.
- Help wipe up after accidents.

Remember, don't expect more than is reasonable from your toddler. Do expect him to help and do praise his accomplishments.

Appreciation & Thanks to the Original Authors

This issue has been adapted from **Parent Express**, by Dr. Dorothea Cudaback, Cooperative Extension, University of California and her colleagues throughout the national Cooperative Extension System.

Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Patricia Tanner Nelson, Cooperative Extension, University of Delaware for computerizing this series of "age paced newsletters" and for permission to reprint for parents in Utah.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert L. Gilliland, Vice President and Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University. (2-95)