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## 21 Months

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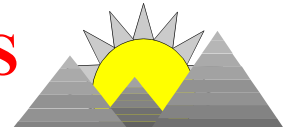
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# GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



## 21 MONTHS

You are the center of her world. Your toddler will be watching other children playing and may even follow after them. At this age, though, your child is more interested in you, her own play, and her own toys than in other children.

It's easier to be friendly to someone you know. Poking, touching, and pushing are her ways of showing interest in other children. She may develop interest in a special friend her own age if that friend is with her a lot. You will notice your child will smile more and fight less with this friend than with a child who is a stranger.

Extra toys make playing together easier. From 2 to 3 years of age, your child will become more social and will enjoy playing with other children. Groups of children play best when they have the same toys or materials. They will fight less if there are two blue trucks or two dolls instead of one doll and one truck.

Play is the way children learn. Play is the main activity of childhood. It is the way children learn about themselves, their family, and their world. Let your child play alone sometimes, but also make time to play with her. You'll learn about her, she'll learn about you, and you will be helping her to grow.

Your little one is becoming more sociable—but you are still number one!

You know by now that the very best plaything your little one can have is a caring adult. In other words, she needs someone like you who will play with her and enjoy her explorations.

### What's It Like to Be 21 Months Old?

#### *How I Grow*

- I'm becoming a little less self-centered.
- I love to run, throw, and climb.
- I can walk upstairs with both feet on each step holding a railing.

#### *How I Talk*

- I can say about 20 words.
- I like to have you sing me rhyming songs.
- I like to look at books, but if you don't watch me, I will tear them.
- I try to follow directions.

#### *What I Have Learned*

- I'm interested in very tiny things, especially bugs. Watch what I put in my mouth.
- I can recognize and name people I know from photographs.
- I can put together a simple picture puzzle if it has only two or three large pieces.
- I love to build and knock down, empty, pull apart, feel, twist, and squeeze everything I can get my hands on.

### ***How I Get Along with Others***

- I'm developing a mind of my own, so I don't respond so quickly to requests and often do the opposite of what I'm asked.
- I can understand what's mine and what's yours.
- I try to tell people what I have seen and done.

### ***What I Can Do for Myself***

- I can wash and dry my hands.
- I can hold a cup and drink from it.
- I may be able to put on my shoes, but I still can't lace them, and I may put them on the wrong feet.

### ***Play I Enjoy***

- I like to fit things together.
- I enjoy using a toy telephone.
- I like to pull things around in a wagon or cart.
- I like playing tag with you or an older child.

### **Choosing Child Care**

If you want to stay home to raise your baby and are able to do so, then you certainly should. You and your baby will gain from your time together. However, if you want to (or have to) work outside the home, then staying home with your baby might be a mistake.

Will your toddler have love and attention? There are two important questions to ask yourself before you decide on a caregiver. First, is she or he very fond of your child? Toddlers need lots of loving and attention.

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.

Will your toddler be able to form stable relationships? Second, will she or he be there during the hours you need in the months to come? Toddlers need to form close bonds with people, and can suffer if they have too many caregivers.

Children do best when their parents are happy and when they have a caring, sensitive caregiver at home and in the day care.

You may worry about leaving your child in someone else's care. The more you trust your caregiver the more secure you will feel. Here are some things to look for as you decide on a child care arrangement:

#### **Does the caregiver:**

- Have child-rearing attitudes similar to yours?
- Understand what children can and want to do at different stages of growth?
- Spend time holding, playing with, and talking to your child?
- Have enough time to look after all the children in his or her care?
- Welcome visits from parents?

#### **Does the home or center have:**

- A clean comfortable look?
- Equipment that is safe and in good repair?
- Nutritious meals and snacks, if provided by the caregiver?

#### **Are there opportunities for children:**

- To be held, cuddled, rocked, smiled at, talked to?
- To relax and rest when they need to?
- To walk and explore safely?
- To play with things that develop their senses of touch, sight, and hearing?
- To learn language? Does the caregiver talk to the children, name things, describe what she or he is doing, respond to the children's actions?

## Research in Brief: Day Care for Children

Do children who are cared for in day care centers or day care homes develop more poorly than those who are cared for at home by a parent? Researchers conclude that 2-5 year-olds look basically the same—whether they are cared for out of the home or in the home. High quality day care seems clearly to enhance the intellectual and social development of children from low income homes.

These are the factors that seem to influence the effect day care will have on a child:

- **The condition's of the mother's and father's jobs.** If parents come home from work very tired and full of tensions, their stress can affect everyone in the family.
- **The mother's and/or families attitudes about working.** If a mother has a positive attitude about her job, her work is likely to have a positive effect on her children. The father's support or lack of support for the mother's working also has an influence on the children.
- **Other stressful events in the family.** When stress gets piled too high, it hurts people. Those children who have recently had to deal with “big life events” such as divorce, death, a family move, or the birth of a new brother or sister may find their mother's working the straw that breaks the camel's back.
- **The quality of child care.** Those children in the care of adults who are **responsive** to them seem to develop in the healthiest ways. Responsive adults respect the needs and interests of each child.

The caregivers are the most important part of child care. Choose caregivers who are warm, friendly and flexible. Be sure they treat each child as a special person and cheerfully care for each child's needs.

## Homemade Toys that Teach: A Simple Puzzle

This toy will help your child learn about shapes and sizes. It will also help him learn how to solve problems and to fit things together.

### Materials

- Stiff paper
- Colorful, simple pictures from magazines or calendar
- Child-safe glue (Check the bottle to be sure it says nontoxic or child-safe.)

### Making the Toy

Glue the picture on to the stiff paper and cut it into two or three pieces.

### Playing

Help your child learn to fit the pieces together to make the picture. To make this more challenging, cut the picture into more pieces.

## Toddler Talk: Help Me Play with Another Child

Help me learn to play with another child. I may push or poke to say hello. You can show me how to touch gently or use words as hello. Stay near me while I play with her so I can come back to you quickly.

Don't force me to share my favorite toys. Help me look for toys that my friend can play with. I still may take the toys away. This isn't because I want to play with them, I'm just not sure I want the other child to have them. If we go to another house to visit, let me take a few of my own toys with me. I'll feel better if I know I can take them back home.

## Games for Growing: Hard and Soft

**Purpose of the Game:** To teach your child to group objects by touch and learn words to describe the way things feel.

## How to Play:

- Sit on the floor or at a table by your child.
- Place hard and soft things together in a pile. For example, you may use blocks, bottles, rocks, and so forth as hard objects and soft toys, cotton balls, pieces of cloth as soft objects. Show her how to tell things that are soft and hard.
- Ask your child to place the hard things in one pile and the soft things in another.
- If your child cannot do this, take the hard things and say, “These are hard. Put them in one pile.”
- Put the objects all together in one pile and repeat the game.

## Other Grouping Games

You can ask your child to group fuzzy and smooth objects separately, or sticky and clean, or wet and dry, hot and cold, heavy or light things. Change the game to keep it fun for your child and you.

## Guidance and Discipline: Hassles in Public

Have you ever noticed that your toddler seems to be her naughtiest when you really want her to behave well? You are not alone.

Although there are no perfect solutions to this very common dilemma, the suggestions below may help:

**Be reasonable.** Don’t expect too much. Try to avoid situations that toddlers are too young to handle. If your toddler is normal, she likes to do things her own way, doesn’t want to share toys, and may tear books. This may mean that play with age mates should be brief and visits to the library well supervised.

**Prepare.** Toddlers this age can be disobedient and defiant, so be sure you have explained to your toddler before you go out what you will be doing together, how you want her to behave, and what will happen if she misbehaves. You could tell her how you will reward her good behavior. This reward could be a hug or a promise to tell her a story on

your way home. If you expect her to be bored, hungry, or restless, take things to keep her entertained.

**Follow through.** If your toddler is behaving well, compliment her on her good behavior. If she is misbehaving, try to keep calm (not easy to do) and follow through on the consequences you had discussed with her. Try not to embarrass her—or yourself—in front of others. If possible, take her aside and tell her in simple words how you want her to behave. Don’t give in to unreasonable demands. If you do, you are rewarding undesirable behavior and she will be more likely to repeat it.

**Redirect.** When your toddler misbehaves suggest a new activity. Telling her “no” or “don’t” is seldom enough. In the supermarket, for example, if she whines or fusses, ask her to help you find her favorite cereal or the apples, or talk to her about what you are doing.

**Have patience.** No one said parenting was easy. Remember, your good guidance practices now will pay off later in making life easier and more enjoyable for both you and your child.

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