

## 65 Things To Do With Children Under 2!

In keeping with the theme of this newsletter, we thought we would provide a variety of activities for you to engage your child in play. Each of the following activities is relatively easy to make and lots of fun for you and your young ones!

1. Lay your baby on the floor. Hold her hands and gently sit her up and lay her back down; talk with her about "up" and "down." You can also gently rock her from side to side and talk about "left" and "right."
2. Play a variety of music; hold your baby and "dance" to the speed of the music. (Hint: avoid jostling him too much, which may frighten him. Also ensure his head and neck are fully supported while you dance.)
3. Play with flashlights: encourage your baby to follow the beam of light on the wall or ceiling. Your toddlers may enjoy "catching" the light beam or holding the flashlight and making the light beam "dance" on the wall.
4. Hide a rattle under a blanket and encourage your baby to find it.
5. Lay on the floor with your legs bent; sit your baby on your feet facing you. Hold her hands and gently lift your feet up and down, keeping her balanced against your shins. (Another great opportunity to talk about "up" and "down.")
6. Your baby enjoys water play too: give him clean, wet sponges to squeeze; large ice-cubes to push; shallow water (less than 1/2 inch) to splash.
7. Tape record your babies' vocalizations and replay the sounds for her to hear.
8. Partially hide from baby and encourage him to "find" you.
9. Play "paper bag peek-a-boo": encourage your baby to crawl in and out of a large paper bag.
10. Give a "baby lotion" massage and sing "This is the way we rub our..." as you massage her skin.
11. Tell your baby, "I'm going to get your..." and gently tickle that body part.



12. Play “monkey see, monkey do”: mimic your toddler’s movements and/or speech; encourage him to mimic yours.
13. Gently rub “satiny/silky” scarves over your baby’s skin. Give her scarves/ bandanas for “dancing” to music.
14. Fill small plastic soda or water bottle with water and cut-up sponges. (Hint: super glue cap on for safety.)
15. Fill small plastic soda or water bottle with equal parts of baby oil (or mineral oil) and water; add food coloring/sequins/beads etc for additional visual exploration. (Hint: super glue cap on for safety.)
16. Fill some small plastic soda or water bottles with “quiet” materials (i.e. cotton balls, pom poms, foam pieces) and other with “noisy” materials (i.e. marbles, popcorn kernels, beads) for children to shake and compare. Talk to your baby/toddler about “quiet” and “noisy.” (Hint: super glue cap on for safety.)
17. Fill small plastic soda or water bottle with rice and add a few small objects (i.e. buttons, paperclips, beads. Encourage your toddler to find the objects “hidden” in the rice. (Hint: super glue cap on for safety.)
18. Stuff different types of fabric into a “boutique” style tissue box for your baby/ toddler to pull out and explore.

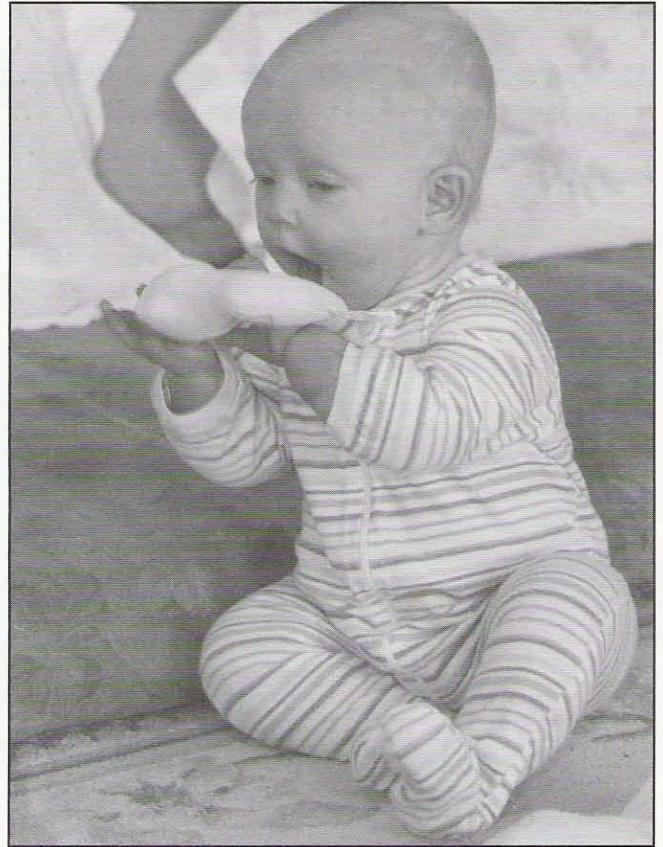


19. Create sensory book by mounting different fabrics on mat boards. Punch holes in the board and “bind” with metal rings.

20. Create a home-made set of blocks: wash/clean milk cartons, (round) oatmeal boxes, shoe boxes, or other sturdy box. Cover with contact paper or place old/ duplicate family photos on blocks with clear contact paper.
21. Place a few bells or other noisemakers in a clean (round) oatmeal box. Secure the end(s) with superglue and roll back and forth with your baby/toddler!
22. Hide a bell inside one of three small, clean, cardboard milk containers. Encourage your baby/toddler to identify which one has the bell.
23. Play “I Spy...”: Tell your toddler, “I spy with my little eye something that is...” and ask him to identify the object you see.
24. Record different sounds on a cassette tape. Encourage your toddler to listen to the tape and identify the sounds she hears.
25. Create a sensory bag: fill lingerie bags with pom poms, tissue paper, or crumpled cellophane. (Hint: Secure the end of the bag to prevent leaks.)
26. Create a “mystery box” of familiar objects: encourage your toddler to reach in the box and identify the object by how it feels; your baby can enjoy the sensory/ discovery experience.
27. Cut the side off a clean, plastic, milk carton and fill it with objects for your toddler to fill and dump. *Or* collect a bucket of objects, some which will fit in the milk carton and some that won’t. Encourage him to identify what fits... and what doesn’t.
28. Create a matching game with familiar objects (i.e. wash clothes, socks, mittens).
29. Collect a set of large “nesting” boxes for your baby/toddler to crawl in/out.
30. Line a large cardboard box with soft fabric to create a private cuddle space for your baby/toddler.
31. Fill a large box with crumpled paper that your baby/toddler can empty and refill.

32. Create an obstacle course for your toddler: under a table, over a pillow, through a box.
33. Tape different materials to the floor {i.e. felt, satin, bubble wrap, burlap, contact paper (sticky side up)} for your baby/toddler to crawl over.
34. Create a trail of toilet paper through your home for your toddler to follow.
35. Use old socks to create sock puppets. Use permanent markers to draw facial features/hair on the puppet.
36. Cover one end of toilet paper or paper towel rolls (after all paper is used) with cellophane to make a kazoo.
37. Fill film canisters with "smelly stuff" (i.e. coffee, vanilla, orange, mint, lemon). Encourage your toddler to smell and (if old enough) identify the scent.
38. In the bathtub: give your toddler a clean plastic container that has holes punched in the bottom. Encourage her to explore what happens when she fill the container with water.
39. Send your toddler on a "treasure hunt" by hiding a favorite toy or object and encouraging him to find it. Give him clues to help him locate the item.
40. Put a "leash" (less than 6") on your toddler's favorite stuffed animal; encourage her to take her pet on a walk around the house.
41. Give your baby/toddler old newspapers, magazines sand paper, or construction paper; or clean foil or wax paper to tear.
42. Make "wind catchers": glue or tape streamers to the end of a paper towel roll (after all paper is used) and encourage your toddler to "catch the wind."
43. Create "sun catchers": encourage your toddler to stick a variety of objects (i.e. feathers, glitter, sequins) onto a piece of clear contact paper; cover with another piece of clear contact paper and hang in window.

44. Outside: give your toddler spray bottles of water to squirt.



45. Create a newspaper bat and ball for your toddler's play.
46. Cut old/duplicate family photos into 2 – 4 pieces to create puzzles your toddler can put together.
47. Put stickers on your toddler's fingers to create finger puppets; sing "Where is...?"
48. Blind-fold your toddler and encourage him to find you by listening to your voice.
49. Give your toddler pictures of items from your grocery list and ask her to find the item while you are shopping. (Hint: cut pictures off of empty boxes.)
50. Collect a paper or gift bags in a variety of sizes that your toddler can carry around, fill and dump, or store his treasures.
51. Tape two toilet paper rolls together (after all paper is used) to make binoculars. Take your

toddler on a nature walk and encourage her to look at nature through the binoculars.

52. Cover the front of old greeting cards with clear contact paper. Punch holes in the card. Provide a clean shoelace for him to “sew” the card.
53. Freeze small objects in a block of ice; encourage your toddler to discover what is inside.



54. Tape a strip of masking tape to the floor. Encourage your toddler to walk across the “balance beam.”
55. Play “follow the leader”... with your toddler as the leader.
56. Play “Tug of War” with a scarf. (Hint: be sure you are the one to “fall.”)

57. Lay a blanket down outside and lay on your back with your toddler. Talk with her about what you see.
58. Provide a box large enough for your child to sit in and crayons. Encourage him to color inside (and outside) the box.
59. Tape a sheet of construction paper to the bottom of your kitchen table (coffee table may work too). Encourage your toddler to color on the construction paper.
60. Cut a piece of construction paper so it will fit inside a Frisbee. Put a little paint on the paper. Encourage your toddler to roll a golf ball through the paint and around the paper.
61. Butterfly wings: encourage your toddler to put a little paint on half a sheet of construction paper. Fold the paper in half to smear the paint. Unfold the paper and let dry.
62. Drip food coloring over clean, flattened coffee filters *or* fold clean coffee filters and dip in food coloring; unfold and let dry.
63. Write your own stories: tape old/duplicate family photos into a small spiral notebook. Ask your toddler to help you write a story about what she sees in the pictures. Read the story to her or ask her to read to you.
64. Make pom poms out of shredded paper. Encourage your toddler to shake the pom poms to a musical beat.
65. Draw an incomplete picture of a familiar object (don’t draw part of the object) and ask your toddler to identify what is missing in the picture.

We hope this list helps you find new ways to engage your baby or toddler in play. In addition to the language development that we highlighted in a few places, the play ideas listed above support the development of math skills (i.e. matching, sorting, puzzles) and science skills (i.e. experiencing the properties of water, bubbles, nature). Feel free to adapt or extend these activities according to your baby or toddler’s interests – after all, play is *fundamental* to your baby or toddler’s development! Enjoy!