

12-24 Months



**Live**  
**Love**  
**Grow**  
**Learn**

Every toddler is unique and develops skills at different rates. Help your toddler develop a positive sense of self and independence. The word “no” is your toddler’s favorite way to assert independence. Redirect a “no” response with positive words that state his independence.

- **Be consistent with rules and discipline.**
- **Be serious with a stern face when you say “no” before serious situations. Redirect with positive words and actions that teach and guide.**
- **Praise good behavior.**
- **Plan play dates.**
- **Make your home safe for toddling around and exploring.**

# Parents help babies develop and reach full potential. Every day, your baby learns from you — from what you do and say.

## Meals

**Toddlers are not growing as fast as when they were babies. They need less food. Encourage good eating habits.**

- Allow your toddler to feed himself. Expect it to be messy.
- Offer several healthy foods at every meal. Let your toddler choose.
- Serve small portions.
- Cut food into small bites to avoid choking.
- Offer new foods – *many times*. Your toddler may suddenly like a food she avoided the first few times it was served.
- Avoid mealtime power struggles. Your toddler may eat well at one meal and less at another.
- Eat together as a family. Make mealtime fun.
- Sit at a table, with your toddler in a high chair or booster seat.



## Play

**Toddlers love to discover and learn. They learn best through play and exploring.**

- Play with your child *daily*.
- Offer two choices of games or toys. Let him choose.
- Direct your toddler's play. "*Let's stack these blocks.*" "*Help me put this puzzle together.*"
- Teach your toddler to scribble. Provide big crayons that are easy to hold.
- Play pretend – cooking, talking on the phone, mowing the lawn.

Do not expect your toddler to share. She will learn between ages 2 and 3.

## Language Skills

**One to two year olds are beginning to understand what you say. Your toddler will know at least 50 words by the end of her second year.**

- Talk to your toddler throughout the day – as you perform tasks. Talk about what you are doing. Ask him questions.
- Read together *every day*. Make reading fun. Let her turn the pages. Talk about what you see.
- Sing songs together. Learn songs that have hand gestures, like "*The Itsy Bitsy Spider*".
- Visit the library. Read books while in the library. Attend parent/child activities. Check out books that your child picks.



## Social/Emotional

**Some toddlers are shy. Others are out-going. Change is fun for some and scary for others. Your toddler will look to you to learn how to cope with all of her feelings.**

- Watch and learn how *your* toddler reacts.
- Help him put a name to his feeling – mad, happy, sad, scared.
- Be patient with her as you teach. She does not have much self-control yet.
- Have a goodbye routine. It helps with separation anxiety that your toddler will experience at some time. For example, give him his favorite item and a hug and kiss. Say goodbye with a special wave. Then leave with a smile.
- Talk about what your toddler does and feels. *“You are happy that it is bath time.” “I know you don’t want to change your diaper.”*
- Give hugs and say *“I love you”* – often.

## Motor Skills

**Toddlers are active – moving from one place or activity to another. They quickly go from crawling to walking, jumping and climbing.**

- Roll a ball to your toddler. Show him how to roll the ball back to you.
- Hold your toddler’s hand as you climb up and down the stairs.
- Chase your child and let her chase you outside in your yard or a park.
- Use plastic utensils and practice cutting and shaping playdough.
- Teach your toddler to hold a cup and drink.
- Dance, clap your hands, bounce to music.
- Use pots and pans or drums to play music.
- Practice pulling up zippers.

## Daily Tasks

**Toddlers are eager to help and learn new tasks.**

- Teach your toddler to do small tasks – washing hands, taking off clothes.
- Let her help around the house – pick up toys, sort socks, wipe up spilled milk.

## Home Life

**The home environment effects a child’s well-being for life. A loving, positive home promotes healthy brain development.**

- Do not argue and yell.
- Provide quiet time each day. Play soft music. Play quietly.
- Do not let the TV play all day long.
- Provide a space for your toddler’s toys and books.
- Continue routines and rituals – morning, bed, bath, goodbye.



# More Ideas to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn

## Help Your Child During a Tantrum

**Tantrums occur when a child has trouble coping with feelings. Every child is unique and handles emotions and situations differently.**

- Observe your child, and learn how she reacts.
- Acknowledge your child's feelings. *"I know you are tired and want to go home."*
- Give him words for what he feels. *"I am tired."*
- Anticipate your toddler's needs – sleep, food, quiet time, hugs.

### **When your toddler has a tantrum:**

- Think before reacting. Figure out what is happening before you act.
- Remain calm and in control.
- Do not yell.
- Take him to an isolated space.
- Lovingly hold her. Speak softly as she tries to calm.
- Do something together after the tantrum is over. Read a story. Take a walk. Play a game.

Visit Parent Help Line at [www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org).

**Find new ideas that help you keep your family safe, healthy and happy.**

- Search for tips on parenting babies, toddlers, school age children and teens.
- Find information on early learning and school readiness. Read the *Live Love Grow Learn* booklets and *Ready In Stages* checklists to promote your baby's healthy growth and development.
- Learn how to teach your child skills that help with school and life success.
- Discover helpful Internet sites.

## Keep Directions and Explanations – Short and Simple

**Toddlers have a limited vocabulary and short attention span.**

- *Use words your child understands.* Do not assume she knows the words you use.
- Look at your child when speaking. Make sure he looks at you.
- *Do not lecture.* Your toddler is not a mini-adult. She will lose interest and cannot understand lengthy explanations.

Short and simple directions help your child learn and remember. They increase your child's chance for success. *"Chairs are for sitting. Please sit down."*

## Praise Good Behavior

**Toddlers are still learning what behaviors parents want and expect.**

- Praise good behavior.
- Teach her what to do and say as you discourage unwanted behavior. For example, *"Pet the dog's head. He does not like it when you pull his tail."*
- Redirect your child if she is misbehaving. Read a story, play another game, go to a different area to play.

**Support • New Ideas • Referrals**

Call Parent Help Line at 217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.

Visit our website at [www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org) and our

Facebook page:

Parent Help Line at St. John's Children's Hospital

