



Tips to support play skills with toddlers at 18 to 24 months

PRETEND AND EXPLORATIVE PLAY

Working together to support your baby's development

Play Ideas

Everyday Activities



Physical Skills



Hand Skills



Social and Emotional Skills



How does it help my child?

Helping my child learn through everyday activities and play

- Copying adult activities is great fun at this age – sweeping the floor, wiping, cleaning, pouring and mixing are some ideas to try.
- Name colours and shapes during play: “let’s put the red sock in the washing machine”, “let’s tidy up - put all the toys in the big square box”.
- Name body parts when getting dressed/undressed. Let your child help taking their shoes and socks off.
- Action songs and phrases are also great for learning e.g. “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”, “Ready, steady, go!”, “Peek-a-boo” etc.

Helping my child develop their physical skills

- A push-along walker might help your child gain confidence in walking.
- Placing toys at different levels encourages bending and reaching.
- Walking up and down slopes can be an enjoyable challenge at this stage – offer a hand to hold if needed.
- Have fun with ball games! Once your child is walking encourage them to kick a ball.
- Encourage your child to hold handrails whenever there is one and to use steps and slides in playgrounds.
- Set up small obstacle courses for your child using big empty boxes, hoops, cushion and book stepping-stones etc
- Don’t forget about music and dancing together – always a winner!

Helping my child learn through using their hands

- You might notice that your child is beginning to show a preference to use their left or right hand around this age.
- Building towers or lining up blocks helps with reaching, grasping and pretend play.
- With close supervision, your child will enjoy playing with pennies, pasta, Cheerios or buttons to help them learn to pick up smaller things. Posting pennies into a little bank is fun.
- Encourage scribbling using finger paints, crayons, paint brushes or chalks, naming the colours and shapes as you play together.
- Encourage activities that require your child to use two hands together. Construction toys such as Duplo or stickle bricks are great two-handed activities.
- When playing, give your child materials with different textures (e.g. sand, water, playdoh, food, bubbles, sensory toys etc.) for them to touch and explore.

Supporting Social-Emotional Development

- Talking to your child and involving them in your everyday tasks is a great way for them to learn and be part of what you’re doing.
- Routines can also be a great way to add in new words. When dressing - pause and wait for your child to show or tell you what to do next.
- Encourage pretend and interactive play such as feeding you or the teddy etc.
- Your child might play alongside other children but not yet with them. They might not yet be ready to share toys.
- Getting upset and tantrums are common at this age – your support will help your child manage and make sense of their feelings.
- Give lots of reassurance and talk in a calm voice as this will help your child stay calm and feel secure.
- Be aware toddlers do not deliberately do things to annoy you like throwing their food on the floor – it’s just a normal part of development.
- Your child will show a wide range of emotions and seek comfort as they learn about relationships and how to express their feelings.



A better start for babies

Sensory

Motor

Attention / Regulation

Relationship

Together



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Building skills

Learning to Play Cooperatively



Promote spending time with other children. Let your child explore on their own but always continue to watch your child.

Encourage Everyday Skills



Encourage your child to use a spoon and drink from a cup to promote independent feeding. Let your child help with getting dressed and undressed.

Language: Chat with your Child



Talking lots to your child will help them develop larger vocabularies and more advanced sentences. Comment on what your child is doing and add extra descriptive words to what they say e.g. they say 'doggie' you say 'yes it's a big dog' or 'it's a little black dog' etc.

Remember the importance of ...

Imaginary Play



Let your child play with blocks, play kitchens, boxes, dolls, teddys, cars and trains. Encourage playing house, doctor or a make-believe tea party.

Pretend Play



Help your child with pretend play such as giving teddy dinner and putting him to bed or *"teddy doesn't want to have his nappy changed - let's sing to him instead"*.

Social-Emotional Development



Your child is learning to become more independent and "No" becomes a favourite word.

At this age, children can learn everything they need to from you and their environment.
Continue to avoid screen time – children learn best through being active in their world.

Keeping your baby safe ...

Supervise your child closely



Help your child play on a few small steps. Help your child hold on to the banister or wall when going up stairs and help them crawl down backwards.

Home safety



Keep household chemicals and medicines out of reach. Lock away all dangerous items.

Childproof your home



Children at this age are explorers! Take time to childproof your home. Avoid access to batteries and magnets. Your child will not fully understand danger and risks.

At this age, children have a lot of energy and love climbing – ensure your child is closely supervised at all times. Look at the child accident prevention trust website <https://capt.org.uk/> for advice on how to keep your child safe.

Play is how a child learns. This leaflet was created to provide ideas for activities which can support development of language, cognition and motor skills. The focus is not on specific brands of toys and this is not an extensive list. Development varies from child to child and if you have any concerns about your child speak to your GP or health visitor.