



## Child Development Service



# Play and Learning 2

## Toddler play: 18 months to 3 years

### Child Development Service

You are your toddler's first teacher and playmate.

- The first years of life are the most **important time for your child's brain development**.
- Toddlers learn best when they are **actively involved** and **having fun with you** during everyday activities, so spend time each day playing, learning and having fun with your toddler.
- Play is important for your toddler's **learning, development, growth and health**.
- **Through play, toddlers learn skills** like moving, thinking, speaking, socialising, and how to manage emotions.

When it comes to play, toddlers:

- **like playing with 'things'** – push and pull along toys, blocks, hammering, sit and ride toys, early puzzles, putting objects in and out of containers, sand and water
- **enjoy talking about play** – 'all gone', 'more cars', 'big ball'
- **need lots of active play** – climbing, jumping and tumbling
- **are still learning how to share**
- may start to play further away from you, but **still like to be able to see you**
- **love to do everything themselves** – 'me do it!' There will be fewer tantrums if you let them have a go and praise their effort.



What you can do

- **Be available** – find frequent, small amounts of time each day to do fun things together. Be on hand to settle disputes if several toddlers are playing together.
- **Let your toddler make choices** about how to play. Get down to their level, show interest and be positive.
- **Allow time for lots of repetition** and don't rush your toddler.
- **Screen time** – toddlers learn best through doing things with you. For children 2 to 5 years, it is recommended that screen time is limited to less than one hour per day. Make the most of playtime – **turn off all screens** including phones, TVs and computers.
- **Join a playgroup** – visit [playgroupwa.com.au](http://playgroupwa.com.au) or phone 1800 171 882.
- **Join a toy library** – visit [toylibraries.org.au](http://toylibraries.org.au)
- **Join your local library** – visit [slwa.wa.gov.au](http://slwa.wa.gov.au)

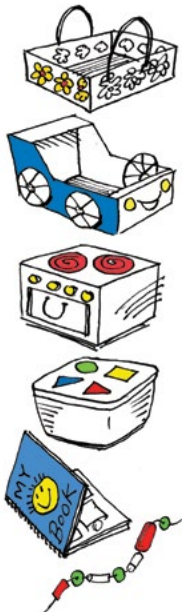


## Some activities to try

- **Be playful** – you are your toddler's best play thing! Blow raspberries on their tummy, let them climb over you, play peek-a-boo, roll and jump on the grass, look for bugs, let them brush your hair, sing songs and look at picture books together.
- **Include play in everyday activities** – while changing nappies, driving, hanging out the washing, and during mealtime and bath time.
- **Pretend play and dress-ups** – show your toddler how to play with dolls, teddies, tea sets, a toy telephone, cars and trains, farm and zoo animals, and dress ups.
- **Get outdoors and active** – simple outdoor activity is ideal for toddlers. Let your toddler have fun on swings, slides and climbing frames. A soft ball is great to practise catching, throwing and kicking.

## Homemade toys for toddlers

Homemade toys are fun, easy to make, cheap, and help to develop your child's creativity. Make toys together – involve your toddler in recycling boxes and containers.



**Teddy/dolly carry basket** – decorate a box, add some handles through holes inside of the box and use a tea towel to make a bed.

**Car/bus/fire-engine** – use a strong box large enough for your toddler to sit in. Add some wheels, controls and a steering wheel, using lids and paper plates. Decorate together.

**Toy stove** – draw or glue hot plates on top of a box – use paper plates. Cut a large flap in one side for an oven door. Attach bottle tops as knobs and make a handle with a short loop of string or a shoelace.

**Posting box** – take an ice-cream container or shoebox and cut the lid to make holes to 'post' different objects like pegs, blocks, and cards.

**Books** – glue pictures, cards or photos on paper with your toddler, and put inside plastic sleeves to make a book. Some ideas are 'me and my family', 'favourite things', 'cars and trucks', 'big and little', 'animals'.

**Threading** – Try stringing pasta, cut up straws, cardboard rolls or ring type breakfast cereals onto thick shoelaces, wool, string or plastic tubing.

## Keeping your child safe

- Supervise your child closely at all times especially around water, play equipment, or when using objects such as scissors, pencils, glue or paint. Avoid flammable or toxic materials.
- Babies, toddlers and young children can choke on small toys and objects. Regularly check toys to make sure they are safe and in good condition.
  - Toys should be bigger than a 20 cent coin.
  - Strings on toys should be less than 20 centimetres long.
- Do a safety check and make sure your home is safe for your toddler to actively explore.

## Find out more

For more information on play, learning, and a range of other topics, visit:

- [playgroupwa.com.au](http://playgroupwa.com.au)
- [bringingupgreatkids.org](http://bringingupgreatkids.org)
- [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)
- [cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childhealthresources](http://cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childhealthresources)



For more information about the metropolitan **Child Development Service** phone 1300 551 827 or visit [cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childdevelopment](http://cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childdevelopment)

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