

Growing & Changing

(Children 18 month - 3 years)

This is quick reference guide to the changes that children experience as they grow and develop through the early years.

It is not meant as checklist but, rather, a tool to help you provide activities for your children as they explore and learn. It is also helpful to know what to expect so that you can gather some playthings and perhaps modify the house and yard according to what the little ones will soon be up to

Socially & Physically active

At this age toddlers are focused on doing things for themselves

Because toddlers are focused on doing things for themselves they do find it difficult to share. It does help if adults can anticipate these difficulties and provide enough equipment and activities so that toddlers can avoid having to wait a turn. For example, have several buckets and shovels in the sandpit.

Some other handy tips to know include:

- Ensure toddlers are not crowded and that there is plenty of space around activities. Toddlers are active and need room to move without bumping others.
- If toddlers need to wait they can sometimes be distracted with another activity. Keep some toys aside for distraction if that is needed.
- Balance the day's play with quiet individual play and play with others.
- Some group activities to try might include making a bus out of chairs and singing the song "Wheels on the Bus", roller-painting a large box together or playing "Ring a Rosie"

In relation to your child being physically active at this age, it is important to know that toddlers will:

- Climb and learn to walk up stairs
- Learn to seat themselves on a low chair
- Run, jump and begin to throw/catch a ball
- Learn to manage toileting
- Begin to use crayons and paint-brushes using a full fist grip and whole arm movements
- Learn to turn knobs and unscrew lids as wrist movement becomes more flexible
- Learn to turn the pages of a book

Physically active - suggestions

- Run with streamers attached to wrists to help toddlers fly, or play horsey with streamers for reins
- Sing jumping songs or try a low trampoline with a cross painted in the middle to show children where to jump safely. Be sure to have safety mats.
- Go to park to play on climbing equipment - helps with climbing stairs.
- Practice hand control with blocks, sand, water play, finger-painting, and play with musical instruments.
- Practice dressing by playing dress-ups or dressing dollies. Keep clothes simple pull-up pants and pull-over tops.

Emotions

During this period toddlers are learning how to manage their own needs

At this age, toddlers begin to learn such skills as toileting, dressing and feeding themselves. They are developing their independence and autonomy.

To build your toddler's confidence it is important to support their efforts with patience, breaking tasks down into manageable parts to avoid frustration, ensuring the equipment they use is manageable, and giving them plenty of time to do things for themselves.

Because toddlers are very active they do get tired so we need to pay attention to their feelings and personal needs. Tantrums can often be avoided if we can anticipate and prepare the way for them to exercise their new-found skills.

At this age, toddlers are not yet able to foresee consequences as they are very focused on their needs and desires in the immediate moment so adults must be vigilant and ensure toddlers are kept safe.

Emotions - Suggestions

- To help toddlers develop their independence and confidence
- Give them plenty of time to feed themselves at meal times.
- Give manageable spoons with short handles and flat-bottomed cups with easy to grip handles. Mealtimes can be messy while they are learning. Be patient.
- Let toddlers dress themselves with easy pull-on pants and pull-over tops. Mark the outside of their shoes with a stick-on spot to help them work out which foot to put them on. And let them see in the mirror afterwards.

- Let them know with words or cuddles when they manage to do things well. Stay calm and if they are not managing encourage them to try again tomorrow.
- Encourage toddlers to rest by offering quiet playthings throughout the day to pace their activity and not become overtired. Try some relaxation activities to help them settle to sleep.
- If toddlers become frustrated and angry, hurting others, we need to acknowledge their feelings but let them know it is not OK to hurt others. We can offer them another activity to help them wait and be sure to let them have their turn when their desired toy is available. Knowing that they will eventually get a turn will help them wait in the future and will also help them understand sharing.
- It does not help a child learn how to behave in caring, appropriate ways if adults yell, swear or hit their children. If an adult becomes angry it is better they walk away and calm down before approaching the child again.
- If you think your toddler is developing some aggressive behaviour problems such as biting, ask for advice.

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Tantrums are extremely common in toddlers and preschoolers. Tantrums are how young children deal with difficult feelings. It helps to avoid situations that trigger your child's tantrums, and to have a plan for managing them. Hang in there – tantrums tend to tail off after children turn four. You'll see fewer tantrums as your child gets older and better at handling bad feelings. Your child will also get better at communicating his wants and needs using words.

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Communicating & Thinking

At this age children will begin to understand the rules of language.

Communicating

At around 2 years of age children will begin to join words together to form simple sentences. They will then begin to understand the rules of language and add "ing" to action words and "s" to words to indicate more than one thing.

Of course, toddlers will make many mistakes, leaving out sounds and mispronouncing words. It's important that adults use full and proper sentences when talking with children so that children can listen to and learn about words and sentence construction.

Throughout this period, children's vocabulary increases dramatically. Toddlers will understand most of what an adult says even though they will not use those words themselves.

During this stage toddlers generally talk more to familiar adults than other children. With other toddlers they will often use their physical skills e.g. grabbing a toy from another child or pushing so they will need to be encouraged to use their words.

And beware, toddlers also use "no" frequently!

Communicating - Suggestions

- Read simple stories to toddlers with simple story line and repetition
- Sing songs and dramatise actions. Join a music class with your toddler.
- Use touch and feel talking bags
- Go on simple excursion and follow up in conversations
- Borrow books from the library
- Encourage toddlers to use their words by responding to their attempts. If you cannot understand ask them to show you. Follow their gestures or interests and add comments.

- Correct gently by repeating correctly their mistakes in the conversation.
- If you think your toddler is not hearing or using words as you would expect then ask for advice.

Thinking

Toddlers at this age are beginning to solve problems for themselves through trial and error, or by remembering how they have seen something done before and imitating that observation. They will begin to match and group objects together and those skills can also help them solve problems.

We can help by encouraging toddlers to keep trying by suggesting or showing them a different way. For example, if a toddler is having difficulty doing a puzzle we can suggest ways to find where the puzzle piece goes without actually doing the puzzle for them. We could look at the shape of the piece and look at the shape of the spaces where pieces might go or we could find a similar part of the puzzle picture that matches that on the puzzle piece.

Try and encourage toddlers to complete tasks themselves. However, if frustration sets in give your assistance so that they feel a sense of satisfaction. That "Hooray! We did it" feeling will encourage them to try again next time.

Thinking - Suggestions

- Offer simple puzzles and boxes for play. Borrow from a toy library
- Block play building towers or making sheds for animals
- Feeling and talking bags
- Drawing and painting equipment
- Pretend play activities based on familiar experiences
- Ride-on bikes or cardboard box cars to ride around to box petrol bowsers
- If you are concerned that your toddlers does not seem to be able to focus on activities and is not learning in the way you would expect ask for advice.

Want more information?

Kids Spot

Teach your baby fun games and activities to play that are simple and enjoyable for baby and you.

<http://www.kidspot.com.au/things-to-do/collection/baby-games-and-nursery-rhymes/GreatStart>

Department for Education and Child Development website with lots of ideas and activities to do with children to make the most of everyday learning opportunities.
www.greatstart.edu.au

The Little Big Book Club

Provides free packs of books for babies and toddlers – available from libraries and the Child and Family Health Service. The website has free Activity Time and Learning Time sheets to complement books and e-books to read online.

www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au

Dads' Read

Information for dads about reading with children.

www.dadsread.org.au

Let's Read

Supports families to share words, rhymes, songs, books and stories with children.

www.letsread.com.au

Parentline NSW

Phone 1300 1300 52

For advice on child health and parenting.

www.parentline.org.au

Raising Children

The Australian Parenting website. For information on raising children, including information for grandparents raising grandchildren.

<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

Local Services

YWCA-NSW - Kids for Life playgroup

Fun and friendly playgroup with a target age from 0-5yrs.

Phone 02 6625 5800

Lismore Toy Library

Low cost access to variety of toys

Phone 02 6622 3424

Story time and Baby Bounce

Lismore and Goonellabah Library

Phone 02 6625 5100

Brighter Futures

Support services for improving emotional, social, health and education development outcomes for families and their children.

Phone 02 6682 4334

Goonellabah Child and Family Health Centre

Phone 02 6625 0111

9am – 4:30pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment.

Refer to Service Listing - Baby and Child Services for more information on Playgroups and Activities