

Wonderful Ones

What should we be helping children learn before kindergarten? This handout gives some information about your child's development and learning, based on the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*. We include ideas for things you can do with your child—in your daily routines of family life—that will help support your child. You can change them to fit your family's needs. If you have questions about your child's development or learning, you can speak with your child's teacher or doctor.

Approaches to Learning

Young toddlers are curious. When they kick a ball, push a button, or bang a drum, they learn by doing and creating an effect. Toddlers often repeat activities over and over to create the same effect.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Encourage your child to try new actions to make things happen, and describe his actions and effects using words. Describe your actions and effects. "Look, I'm turning the light off, and then on. You can do it, too."
- You can teach your child your family routines, and develop some especially for your toddler—like washing hands before eating and wearing a seatbelt/car seat in the car.

Emotional and Social Development

Toddlers are learning about themselves and others. They like to explore on their own, but may often check-in to make sure that a family member is near. Toddlers may get sad or angry when things are difficult.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Watch your toddler as she explores. Let her see that you are close by, and talk about what she is doing. "I see you are trying to open that box. I wonder what is inside."
- You can begin to teach your child how to handle problems. Tell her that you understand how she feels, and ask if she would like help. For example, "I see you are mad that you cannot get that block to stay on top. I sometimes get mad too. What happens if we turn the block this way? Look, you did it! I'm glad you tried again."

Health and Physical Development

Toddlers are growing and developing very quickly. They eat more table food, and can feed themselves when pieces are small. After learning to walk, they begin to climb and explore, and fall often. Most toddlers still need more than 10 hours of sleep per day.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Try to offer a variety of healthy foods to your toddler, and avoid snack foods that are very sweet or salty. Encourage your child to try all the healthy foods, but do not worry if your child chooses some foods and not others.
- Encourage your child to try new challenges, such as climbing steps and running. You may need to help your child if he seems unsteady.
- Develop sleep time routines—you can start with a warm bath, soft music, and a quiet storybook.

Language Development and Communication

Toddlers are learning to listen and talk. They use a few words, and sometimes just a sound, to stand for a word, for example, “B” sound to mean, ball, bath, and banana. They listen to short books, point to pictures, and turn the pages. Toddlers understand and follow simple directions.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Talk to your toddler. Tell her about what you are doing and where you are going. Tell your toddler the name for things and actions. “That is a plane.” “This is a banana. Would you like a banana?”
- Try to read short picture books every day. You can read the words on the page—or make some up. You can talk about the pictures, and ask questions (that you answer). For example, “This is a cow, and it makes a sound like this, ‘Mooooo.’”
- When you tell your child to do something, use just a few words and wait a few seconds for her to do what you said. Repeat, if needed, and then show her what you need her to do. Praise her when she follows a direction. For example, “Time for a clean diaper. Come here. Good listening.”
- Whatever your home language, continue to use it at home and in your community. Learning two languages is good for a child’s brain development.

Cognitive Development

Toddlers use their senses to learn about the world. They watch and copy behaviors that they see. They might pick up keys and pretend to drive to the store, or hold a block up to their ear to pretend to talk on the phone. They experiment with making things happen, such as throwing a towel up and watching it fall, and filling a bowl with toys and dumping them out. Toddlers can tell the difference between more and less, and begin to group things, such as balls and cars.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Encourage pretend play. Talk about what your child is doing and suggest new ideas . “It looks like you are going to the store. Would you like to drive?” Give lots of opportunities to experiment, and talk about what is happening. “I see you putting spoons in the pot, and then dumping them. Oh, you did it again!”
- Use words to describe “how many” or “how much.” “I think you have more cars than trucks—let’s look.”
- You can teach your child to clean up toys and books at home. “Books go in this basket, and your cars go in this box.” You can pick up along with him, and praise his sorting.