



# Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

15-16

## Your child is curious about everything.

Help your child explore her world. Most 15- and 16-month-old children are moving fast. They crawl, scoot, and walk. How exciting it is for them! Their world is full of new things to touch, throw, climb on — and to fall from or knock down.

Your cuddly baby has become a lively little person. And that means you have to be lively, too. This can be fun, but it can sometimes make you tired, anxious, or angry.

Playpens are OK when you need to rest or to calm down. But keep playpen times short. Children learn more when they explore. Toddlers need to learn about their surroundings to feel good about themselves and their world. Careful childproofing (see pages 4-5) means they can learn safely, and you can enjoy them more.



## Help your toddler learn about movement.

Help me discover how things move. If I like dropping something from my high chair, give me a paper napkin to drop so I can watch how the air moves it. Give me a sponge or soft ball to throw.

I like to hear the sounds things make when they hit the floor. Tell me the names of things and what they do. Roll, bounce, splat! I will soon find out that things that go splat get your attention!

Bounce me gently on your knee or lap, or clap with me in time to music. I like the movement and the music.

Let me have space indoors and outdoors to practice crawling and walking. I am going to be running by the end of the year. Right now, let me practice crawling, standing, sitting, and walking on my own.

## Telling *why* teaches cooperation.

How do parents help children learn to cooperate? To find out, Alice Sterling Honig, a professor of child development, looked at studies of young children. The studies showed that parents usually control and guide toddlers in one of two ways:

1. **Power control** includes spanking, using force, and taking away things or favors. It also includes not hugging, kissing, or talking to the child.
2. **Reasoning control** means telling the child **why** she should act a certain way, in simple words she can understand. Reasoning means pointing out that the behavior could hurt her or others.

For example, if your child throws sand, power control might be yelling or spanking her. Reasoning might be telling her that throwing sand could hurt other children by getting sand in their eyes — or in her own — and she must stop.

## Reasoning works better.

The studies Professor Honig reviewed showed that **parents who used reasoning were better able to control their children's behavior and teach them to cooperate.**

## What's it like to be 15 and 16 months old?

### How I grow:

- ♥ I like to climb on things, and I usually like to do it alone.
- ♥ I can climb up stairs on my hands and knees.
- ♥ I can climb out of high chairs and strollers and maybe my crib.
- ♥ I'm always on the go. I can walk pretty well. I can run a little.
- ♥ I am learning to walk backwards.
- ♥ I like to carry things in each hand.
- ♥ I can turn pages in a book, a few at a time.
- ♥ I want to show you how independent I am by doing what I want, not what you want me to do.

### How I talk:

- ♥ I can say three or four simple words besides "Mama" and "Dada."
- ♥ I am learning to hold real conversations with people.
- ♥ I can follow simple requests like "Give me the ball."
- ♥ I can understand simple directions like "No," "Come," "Show me," and "Look."
- ♥ I can let you know what I want by the way I talk or point.
- ♥ When you ask me to, I can point to my shoes or parts of my clothing.
- ♥ I can point to pictures you name, if the things in the pictures are familiar to me.

- ♥ I don't usually like having a whole story read to me. I would rather point to pictures in a book, and have you tell me about them.
- ♥ I am beginning to say "no" a lot.

### What I am learning:

- ♥ I like to **feel** different kinds of things — smooth things, rough things, soft things. I like soft things and smooth things, but I may not like things that stick to my fingers.
- ♥ I can throw a small ball, but I usually throw it crooked.
- ♥ I can scribble with a pencil or crayon.
- ♥ I may be able to build a tower of two blocks.

### How I get along with others:

- ♥ I like lots of attention.
- ♥ I am easily entertained.
- ♥ I can recognize myself in a mirror or photograph.
- ♥ I like to imitate the way you do things, like sweeping the floor, setting the table, or raking the lawn.
- ♥ If you show me that you like what I do, I will do it a lot.
- ♥ I will get things for you — sometimes.

- ♥ I like to know where you are at all times.
- ♥ I'm not very good at giving, but I like to get things.
- ♥ I mostly want my own way. I don't cooperate much.
- ♥ I'm pretty self-centered.

### What I can do for myself:

- ♥ I like to do things for myself, but I don't do them very well.
- ♥ I may let you know when I have wet or soiled pants. But I'm still too young to be toilet trained.
- ♥ I may be able to use a spoon, but I spill.

### Play I enjoy:

- ♥ I like to turn switches on and off.
- ♥ I like to throw things, push things, and pound on things.
- ♥ I like to spin wheels.
- ♥ I like to play with spoons, cups, and boxes.
- ♥ I like to carry around a soft doll or toy animal.
- ♥ I like to play in sandboxes.
- ♥ I like to roll a ball with you.
- ♥ I don't play very long with any one toy.

### Remember:

*Parenting the Second and Third Years* describes a typical child at each age. Each child is special, and each child develops at his or her own pace. Perfectly normal children may do things earlier or later than those described in *Parenting the Second and Third Years*. If you are concerned about your child's development, visit with your doctor.

## Nutrition: Mealtime and snack time routines

Give your child meals and snacks at about the same time every day. He will feel better if he can expect food at regular times. If he doesn't, he is apt to be crabby and cranky. He might overeat when he finally does get food, because he is not sure when he is going to eat again.

Children have small stomachs and may get hungry every 2 to 3 hours. Nutritious snacks and meals will help take care of his hunger and keep him healthy. Offer a variety of nutritious foods as snacks, just as you do for meals.

There is no reason to buy special junior baby foods and formulas. Your child can now eat many of the same foods you eat. Mash, dice, chop, or shred the food you eat into small pieces so they are easy for your child to chew and swallow.

Many people eat a meal early in the morning, another around noon, and another early in the evening. You can plan mealtimes around your daily routines. Try to stick to a regular schedule of meals and snacks.

What if your child refuses to eat at mealtime, but then asks for a snack immediately afterwards? Tell him he must wait until snack time. Offer water in between meals and snacks.

If your child doesn't want to eat what you've prepared, don't fix something different just for him. Remind him that this is what everyone in the family is eating. Tell him it will be a while before the next meal or snack. If he still insists he is not going to eat, quietly remove his plate. Let him leave the table if he wants to.

Encourage your child to try lots of different foods, but keep serving familiar foods, too. If he doesn't eat a new food the first time you serve it, don't give up. Children often reject new foods the first time around. Serve the food again a few days later. He may try it then. He may not try it until you've served it several times.

By then, he will have seen other people eating and enjoying it, and the food will be more familiar to him.



## Look, Mom — I can feed myself!

By now, your child has become an expert at putting things in his mouth. Of course, lots of things go in his mouth that don't belong there. The good news is that your child can begin to feed himself. And you can eat your own food while it's still hot.

Of course, he will be watching you and trying to do what you do. When he sees you eat with a spoon, he will want to eat with his spoon. Child-size spoons are sold at most discount and grocery stores. But he will still eat most foods with his fingers.

Toddlers are messy eaters. You can bet a lot of food will end up on the floor. If you are worried about the carpet or flooring, put an old sheet or plastic mat under the high chair. You can shake it out after meals.

### These things make eating easier for your toddler:

- ♥ A **spoon** with a short handle
- ♥ A **bowl** with sides to push food up against. One with a suction cup on the bottom is helpful.
- ♥ A **lightweight cup** that your toddler can circle his hands around and pick up. Try to use one that doesn't tip over very easily. A training cup with a lid is very helpful at this stage.

Over time, your toddler will learn to be less messy — but slowly, not all at once. You can help a child learn faster by **praising** small improvements and ignoring small mistakes.



## Games for growing

### NAMING PICTURES

Help your child learn the names of things pictured in a book.

#### How to play

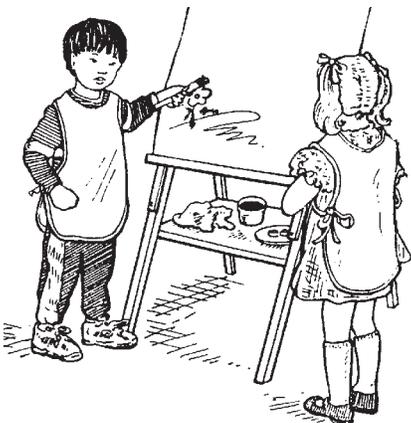
- ♥ Sit with your child on your lap.
- ♥ Read a picture book to him.
- ♥ Encourage him to find things pictured in the book: "Where's the rabbit?" "Find the bird." "What is the boy doing?" "Is he playing with the toy?"

### READING ALONE

Help your child learn to **turn pages** alone and **look at pictures**, so she gets to know magazines as things to read.

#### How to play

- ♥ Ask your child: "Do you want to read a magazine?"
- ♥ If yes, turn the pages of a magazine a few times, and point to some pictures.
- ♥ Let her look at the magazine alone.
- ♥ Keep a special low shelf for your child's books and magazines.



## These are the injury years.

**Most injuries are predictable — and preventable!**

#### Do you know that...

**injuries are the greatest threat to your child's life and health?** Injury causes more child deaths than all diseases put together.

Young children are growing all the time. One day, they can suddenly do things they couldn't do before — like reach a hot cup of coffee and get burned. Injuries often happen because parents didn't keep up with their child's new ability to move fast, stand up, reach, or open bottles.

Be extra careful to watch your toddler when visiting a home that is not childproofed, like Grandma's.

### Falls

- ♥ Use safety gates and window guards.
- ♥ Do not let your toddler stand up in a stroller, high chair, or shopping cart.
- ♥ Do not set your toddler on a table or counter or where she can't reach the floor.
- ♥ Do not leave chairs or beds near open windows or cabinets.

### Crashes

- ♥ Be sure your child sits belted into an **approved car safety seat** on every ride, even if you're just going two blocks to the store.
- ♥ Always place the safety seat in the back seat. All children's car seats should face the rear until they are 2 years old.
- ♥ Always place the safety seat in the back seat.

- ♥ If your child is riding in someone else's vehicle, show the driver how to use the car seat.
- ♥ For more information on car seat safety, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics website at: [www.aap.org/healthtopics/carseatsafety.cfm](http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/carseatsafety.cfm).

### Choking

- ♥ Watch balloon play — if one breaks, throw all the pieces away to prevent choking.
- ♥ Do not give toddlers whole peanuts, popcorn, round hot dog slices, hard candies, gum, raw carrots, or whole grapes. Eat sticky foods like peanut butter in small amounts.
- ♥ Do not let your child run with food in her mouth. Make sure an adult is present and the child is sitting up when eating.

### Strangling

- ♥ Watch out for reclining chairs that have an open space between the chair and the foot rest. These can trap a child's neck. If you have such a chair, close it when you get up — even if for a moment.

### Burns

- ♥ Keep matches, disposable lighters, and cigarettes away from children. Toddlers can start a fire by rolling a lighter along the floor.
- ♥ Avoid scalding your child in the tub or sink by turning the water heater down to 120° to 130° F. Hotter water can cause deadly burns.

- ♥ Keep your child away from stoves and heaters. If necessary, take off front gas stove knobs and keep them in a drawer.
- ♥ Keep pot handles turned inward, away from the edge of the stove.

### Poisoning

- ♥ Always lock doors that lead to dangerous areas like the garage or basement.
- ♥ Never store poisons — like cleaning supplies — in food containers or near food. Put child locks on cabinets with cleaning supplies. Consider using earth-friendly and less toxic cleaners like baking soda or vinegar.
- ♥ Find out if your house or yard plants are poisonous. Put plants up high when you can.
- ♥ Do not leave alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs where children can reach them.
- ♥ Do not allow smoking around your child, and keep ashtrays out of reach at all times. Eating cigarettes can kill a child.
- ♥ **Keep the Poison Control number by the phone.** The Poison Control Center number is 1-800-222-1222.

- ♥ **Do not** use syrup of ipecac if your toddler swallows something poisonous.

### Drowning

- ♥ **A toddler can drown in less than 2 inches of water.** Never leave a child alone around water, even the toilet or the diaper pail.
- ♥ Never leave a child alone in the bathtub — not even to answer the doorbell.
- ♥ Put gravity-latched safety gates around permanent swimming pools. A pool alarm can tell you if something falls in the water.

### Guns

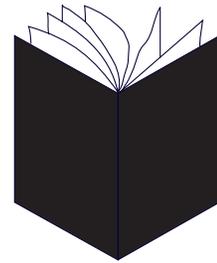
- ♥ Store guns unloaded in a locked cabinet.
- ♥ Use trigger locks on all firearms.
- ♥ Store bullets separately.

### Paper shredders

- ♥ Keep paper shredders up on a desk, away from curious fingers.
- ♥ Keep the shredder turned off when not in use.
- ♥ Never let a small child use the shredder. Even if a parent is supervising, a child may not let go of the paper and get her fingers caught in the shredder.

## Print resources

- Toddlers and Parents: A Declaration of Independence*, by T. B. Brazelton (New York: Dell Publishing), 1989.
- Is This a Phase? Child Development & Parent Strategies, Birth to 6 Years*, by Helen F. Neville (Seattle: Parenting Press), 2007.



## Each child is unique.

Individual differences in children's style of behavior (or **temperament**) may be more noticeable as they become mobile. Highly active children develop large motor skills earlier and so may spend more time running and climbing. Quiet, watchful children develop small motor skills earlier and so may spend more time building block towers and looking at picture books.

Each child's temperament influences the activities he prefers and his skill development. But every child will develop both large and small motor skills as they grow. Watch for the new things your child is learning. Enjoy him for the unique person he is!

## Don't rush toilet training.

Toilet training goes easier if you don't rush it. Children are ready at different ages. Many girls are ready at about age 2 or later, while many boys are ready at about 2½ or later.

Sure, you'd like to be rid of mess and diapers, but be patient. When your child is ready for toilet training, you will probably find it will go quickly and easily. We'll be writing more about this in a few months.

## When there are two languages at home

Most people who have studied language learning suggest that if you have two languages at home, speak both of them to your child from the beginning.

Some experts suggest that one adult always speak one language, and another adult speak the second language. This way, the child can keep the two languages separate, and may be less confused about hearing and speaking them.

A child learning two languages will learn to talk a bit slower at first than a child learning only one language. But within a few months, he should catch up and be able to speak both languages well.

## Guidance and discipline: Rules

Sometime between 15 and 24 months, toddlers may become resistant and defiant. You will probably hear them say “no” a lot.

Toddlers want to test their independence and power and show you how important they are. They may do this by saying “No!” This is a sign they are growing up. Be patient.

### Making rules

Early on, you need to choose some simple rules — a few, not too many. Make rules your toddler can understand and follow. Most important, make rules that you can enforce all the time.

Rules like these help your toddler learn that he can and should follow rules, even if he really doesn’t like them. He needs to know this to grow into a responsible adult.

Be consistent. If you have a rule about only eating while sitting in the kitchen, enforce this every day. Otherwise, you teach your toddler that rules don’t matter or that they can be easily broken.

### Use reasoning.

Explain in simple words **why** you have the rule. Say something simple like: “Hold my hand when we cross the street so I can keep you safe.” This helps your toddler learn that rules have a purpose.

Studies show that children follow rules better when they are given reasons. Understanding the reason helps toddlers remember the rule.

## Homemade toys that teach

Some of the best toys can be those you make from things you have around the house. Each issue of *Parenting the Second and Third Years* will have a section on homemade toys that can be fun and educational.

### TOUCH TREASURE BOX

This toy gives toddlers a chance to collect and learn about **shapes** and **textures** of different objects and materials.

### Making the toy

Print your child’s name in large letters with a crayon on top of a small box, like a shoebox. With your toddler’s help, glue objects of different textures and shapes inside the box. Use nontoxic glue.

You might want to make separate treasure boxes for special kinds of things. For example, make a box of all round things, or things that are all hard, all furry, or all smooth. You can make a treasure box of things from a special occasion, trip, or person. Make sure these things are not sharp, dangerous, or small enough to choke on.

### Playing

Your toddler will enjoy just looking at and touching the things in her treasure box. Encourage her to tell you about the objects. You and she can take turns talking about the objects.



## Health: Prevent lead poisoning.

Lead from paint or plaster, tap water, folk remedies, or contaminated soil can harm your child's brain. Each year, many children suffer permanent brain damage from lead exposure — most often from putting their fingers in their mouths after touching dust from old or broken painted surfaces.

Children with lead poisoning usually don't look or act sick. The only way to be sure is with a blood test.

### Prevention

If you live in an older building — especially one with lead paint or plaster — **take action**.

Lead paint becomes a problem when it chips or turns to dust. Windows and doors create lead dust every time they open and close. It also becomes dust during remodeling or as outdoor paint weathers.

To keep lead dust levels down, wash painted surfaces weekly with warm water and soap, using paper towels. Rinse well. Use wet paper towels to remove paint chips, and throw them away. Wash your child's hands often, especially before eating. And wash their toys weekly.

Painting, wallpapering, or paneling lead-painted surfaces covers them. Replacing lead paint-covered woodwork and frames may be safer than removing the paint. Use a HEPA vacuum (high efficiency particulate air filter). Regular vacuums stir up lead dust.

But to rid your home of danger, you need to remove the lead. This can be hard — and risky. Removing lead improperly can

make the problem worse. You should have trained experts remove the lead paint.

You can find certified lead removal specialists at [www.epa.gov/lead/](http://www.epa.gov/lead/), or by calling your state or local health department. Children and pregnant women should leave until the work has been finished and the area thoroughly cleaned.

Test the soil around your home to see if it contains lead from weathered paint. Keep children from playing in the dirt. Plant bushes around your home to keep children away from the soil. Remove shoes before entering your home.

Never let a child chew on a window sill or a painted toy. Some plastic, vinyl, and painted toys contain lead. Check for toy recalls at the Consumer Products Safety Commission website: [www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html).

If your home has lead water service lines or copper plumbing with lead solder, **flush the tap for 1 minute before drinking, especially in the morning**. This will remove most lead from tap water.

Ask your child's doctor or local health department about having your child tested for lead.

If your child has high lead levels in the blood, your doctor can prescribe a chelating medication to remove some of it. The best plan is to prevent lead poisoning in the first place.

To find labs, contact your local health department or call 1-800-424-LEAD.

### Credits

Copyright © 2012 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System doing business as the division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. All rights reserved. Send copyright inquiries to: Cooperative Extension Publishing, 432 N. Lake St., Rm. 227, Madison, WI 53706, [pubs@uwex.edu](mailto:pubs@uwex.edu).

**Authors:** Jill Steinberg, instructional specialist, University of Wisconsin-Madison; David Riley, professor, Human Development and Family Studies, UW-Madison, and child development specialist, UW-Extension; Dorian Schatell, technical writer, Madison; Susan Nitzke, professor, Nutritional Sciences, UW-Madison and UW-Extension; and Carol Ostergren, Outreach Specialist, UW-Madison and UW-Extension. Illustrations by Nancy Lynch. Cooperative Extension publications are subject to peer review.

**Contributor:** Joseph Schirmer, public health educator, Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services Bureau of Public Health.

Some articles adapted with permission from other Cooperative Extension publications.

**Advisory Board:** Mary Bradley, maternal-child specialist, Public Health Office, Madison, WI; Stan Englander, pediatrician, All-Saints-Kurten Medical Group; Mary Roach, child psychologist, UW-Madison; Susan Uttech, certified health education specialist, Maternal and Child Health Section, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services Bureau of Public Health; and the Family Living Programs Parenting Education Team, UW-Extension.

**University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension**, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties, publishes this information to further the purpose of the May 8 and June 30, 1914 Acts of Congress. An EEO/AA employer, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) requirements. If you need this information in an alternative format, contact Cooperative Extension Publishing or Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 501 Extension Building, 432 N. Lake St., Madison, WI 53706, [diversity@uwex.edu](mailto:diversity@uwex.edu), phone: (608) 262-0277, fax: (608) 262-8404, TTY: 711 Wisconsin Relay.

Funded in part by a federal Title V MCH Block Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Section.

**This publication is available** in English or Spanish from your Wisconsin county Extension office ([www.uwex.edu/ces/cty](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty)) or from Cooperative Extension Publishing. To order, call toll-free: 1-877-947-7827 (WIS-PUBS) or visit our website: [learningstore.uwex.edu](http://learningstore.uwex.edu).

