



Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

17-18

Dear parents: Emotions are blossoming.

You have probably noticed by now that your toddler can show strong feelings. You may have seen him become suddenly very excited, frustrated, happy, angry, or fearful.

You can help him understand his feelings by giving them names. When a box won't open or a toy won't roll, he may drop it or throw it in anger. Hold him and say calmly that you know it makes him angry when the toy won't work.

These words show your toddler that you understand his anger. They also give him a word to help him understand his feelings. Show him how the toy works, give him a different one, or just hold him gently. He will know you care about his feelings and will begin to learn to handle them.

It takes many years for a child to understand and cope with feelings. The more help you give now, the easier this learning will be.



Keep exploring safe for your toddler.

Your child must explore to learn. Help her explore safely. She will explore everything around her. She will put everything into her mouth and reach everything she can see. She will crawl or climb onto, into, above, or below anything.

She does not know what is dangerous and cannot remember "no." It is up to you to think ahead for her, to understand that at any time she may suddenly do something that will put her in danger.

As your child learns to do more and more things — like climbing out of her crib or unlocking gates — you may need to childproof new areas. Soon, your child will grow to understand what things are dangerous. But for now, you need to protect her.

How can I avoid spoiling my child?

Most of us think a spoiled child is one who always has to have her own way, even at the expense of others. She is demanding, self-centered, and unpleasant to be around.

You cannot spoil a baby by giving her care, comfort, and attention when she wants it. One-year-olds who have been well cared for are generally secure and trusting.

To keep from spoiling your child during the second and third years, set limits and enforce them all the time. Children get spoiled when parents give in to unreasonable demands, fail to limit annoying behavior, or let their children's minor needs inconvenience others.

When limits are clear and enforced all the time, children learn how to succeed within these limits. This builds self-esteem. Children need and want reasonable limits and rules. These should be rules your child can understand and follow, such as "Stay away from the street," or "Food is for eating, not throwing."

(continued on page 2)

What's it like to be 17 and 18 months old?

How I grow:

- ♥ I like to lug, tug, and drag things.
- ♥ I like to grab anything I can reach.
- ♥ I'm beginning to use one hand more than the other.
- ♥ I can walk up stairs if you hold one hand.
- ♥ I'm learning to creep backward down stairs.
- ♥ I like to run, but I fall or bump into things sometimes.
- ♥ I want my own way almost all the time.
- ♥ When things don't go the way I want them to, I get angry.

How I talk:

- ♥ I can say about ten words, but mostly I use the word "no."
- ♥ I often have long, babbled conversations with myself.
- ♥ I'm getting good at imitating words.

Avoid spoiling *(continued)*

Don't be afraid that your toddler won't like you if you don't always give her what she wants. Let her know you love her, but that you won't let her misbehave.

Help your toddler understand:

- ♥ **what** the rules are,
- ♥ **why** they are needed, and
- ♥ **what will happen** if she does not follow the rules.

Setting and enforcing limits shows your toddler that you will help her to grow up safely, competently, and unspoiled.

- ♥ I understand more words than I can say.
- ♥ I can ask you for what I want, like a banana, by naming it — sometimes.
- ♥ I will do what you ask me to do — sometimes.
- ♥ I try to sing, and I like to have you sing to me.
- ♥ I am beginning to understand the meaning of "now."

Play I enjoy:

- ♥ I like to play with nesting toys and stacking toys.
- ♥ I often run around without any particular plan.
- ♥ I like to push wheel toys, large toy boxes, and other things around the floor.
- ♥ I like to blow bubbles.
- ♥ I may be able to string large, colored, wooden beads.
- ♥ I still don't play very long with any one thing.

What I am learning:

- ♥ I can fit a round block into a round hole.
- ♥ I can build a tower of two or three blocks.
- ♥ I can use a stick to get a toy.
- ♥ I can point to one or two parts of my body if you name them.

- ♥ I can copy the simple lines you make on paper.
- ♥ I may be able to match circles and squares on a form board.
- ♥ With your help, I can turn pages of a book.
- ♥ I am beginning to remember where things belong.

How I get along with others:

- ♥ I still love to show off and get attention.
- ♥ I'm still mostly just interested in myself.
- ♥ I may be grabby and greedy.
- ♥ Sometimes, I'm stubborn and bossy. And sometimes, I'm loving. In a few months, I'll be calmer and friendlier.
- ♥ I may be afraid of some things, like thunder, lightning, and large animals.
- ♥ I may have temper tantrums when I'm tired, angry, or frustrated.

What I can do for myself:

- ♥ I can help put toys away.
- ♥ I may be able to turn on some faucets.
- ♥ When I'm ready for bed, I may bring you my pillow or my favorite stuffed 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.

Learning to share

Your toddler will enjoy playing near other children and watching them. But most toddlers don't understand sharing until they are a little older.

Learning to share takes time. But you can begin to teach it now.

- ♥ Avoid problems by having duplicates of some toys.
- ♥ Toddlers need your help if they must take turns. Here is a trick: They will share more easily if you use a kitchen timer for their turns.
- ♥ Teach sharing with your own example, and describe it in words. Have a snack with him and say, "I'm sharing my apple with you."
- ♥ Explain to toddlers how their actions make others feel. "When you let Maria have a turn, then she wants to play with you."
- ♥ Children learn to share first with best friends. Later they can share with others.

Learning by helping

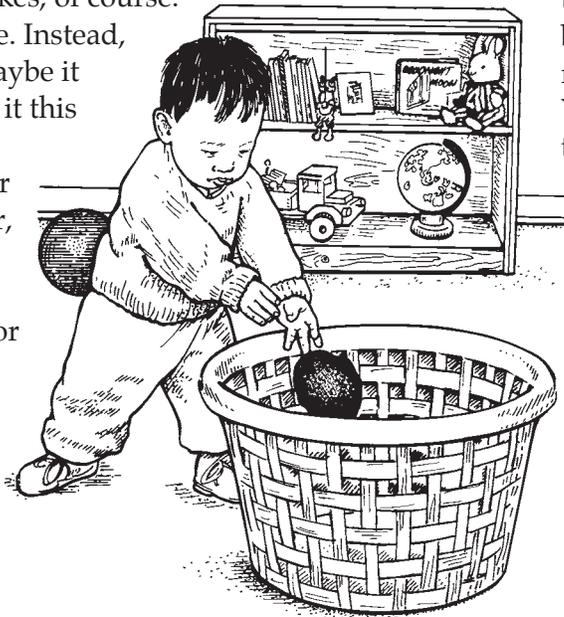
Toddlers spend up to 20 percent of their time just watching, listening, and staring at you. They're learning how to copy things you do. When you let your child help you, you are offering a chance to practice what he learns.

Children learn best when parents do simple tasks with them, like cooking, cleaning, and other chores. When your child tries to help you, look for ways to make helping fun for both of you. That way, your child will enjoy helping and will want to help more.

Children can learn how to pour milk from a small pitcher by watching you. They can learn how to sweep the floor; pick flowers, fruits, or vegetables; sort clothes; and put away toys.

Children will make mistakes, of course. But don't scold them for these. Instead, say: "That was a good try. Maybe it would work better if you did it this way."

Take the time to help your child succeed now. Then later, he will be willing and able to do more things alone and for you. This is time well spent for both of you.



Homemade toys that teach

TOSS BAGS

Toss bags can help your child develop muscles and coordination.

Materials

- ♥ Clean scraps of cloth or old adult-size socks
- ♥ Scissors, needle, and thread
- ♥ Crumpled paper or short strips of cloth rags

Making the toy

Make the bag by sewing squares or other shapes out of cloth or by tying the ends of adult-size socks. For safety, double the bag covers and make the bags at least as big as tennis balls — the size of your fist. Fill your bag or sock with crumpled paper or torn rags. Then sew up or tie the opening.

Playing

Toss bags are fun just to throw at targets, into wastebaskets, or to other people. You can tie a string to the toss bag for drop-and-pull-back games. Keep this one out of reach when not playing together. Your toddler needs you to play tossing and cord-pulling games safely.

Research in brief: Pretending

Researchers who have studied children all over the world find that most toddlers start **pretending** by the time they are a little more than a year old. Usually, it's hard to see at first. Your child may quickly touch a play telephone to her ear or brush a bottle past a doll's mouth. Pretty soon, she pretends to do things she does every day, like sleeping or eating. Eventually, you will see her using objects such as blocks or sticks in creative ways while she pretends.

Jean Gowen has studied how pretend play develops. She suggests that **pretending** is very important for children to develop:

- ♥ **thinking skills,**
- ♥ **creativity,** and
- ♥ **memory for a series of events.**

So it's a good idea for parents to support pretending when they see it. You can say things like: "Oh, you're feeding your baby! You're such a good mommy," or "You're driving your car. I'd better get out of the way!" Besides being fun, this also helps children learn new words and ideas.

Print resources

Food, Fun n' Fitness: Designing Healthy Lifestyles for Our Children, by Mary Friesz (Designs for Healthy Lifestyles), 2002.

Fit Kids: A Practical Guide to Raising Active and Healthy Children, by Mary L. Gavin, Steven A. Dowshen, and Neil Izenberg (New York: DK Publishing), 2006.

Toddler shots reminder

Doctors recommend a series of shots to protect your child from 15 serious diseases. Some may be due now. Get the latest schedule for toddler shots from your doctor or clinic, or online at www.aap.org/immunization/IZSchedule.html.

These shots protect your child from the following diseases:

- Hepatitis B
- Polio
- Diphtheria
- Measles
- Tetanus
- Mumps
- Pertussis
- Rubella
- Haemophilus influenza B
- Chicken pox
- Influenza
- Pneumococcal
- Rotavirus
- Hepatitis A
- Meningococcal (at 2-3 years)

If you get behind on the shots, don't worry. It's easy to catch up at any time. Shots are available from your child's doctor or at a clinic. Free shots are available in most places. Ask your health department, tribal maternal-child health specialist, or clinic.

Keep a written record showing when your child gets each shot. You will need this record to show as proof before your child starts child care, preschool, kindergarten, or camp.

Outdoor play

Playing outdoors is good exercise for toddlers and great fun, too. A park or backyard offers many opportunities for exploring and moving about.

Before playing outdoors with your toddler, make sure the area is safe. Your yard should be clear of rubbish, tools, and hazardous materials, such as paint, chemicals, and insecticides.

If your yard is not fenced, show your child the boundaries of the play area. Teach her not to go in the street or driveway. Never leave your toddler unattended, even in your own backyard.

Outdoor areas are perfect for large muscle activity, such as riding kiddie cars, kicking a ball, climbing, and running. Some small playground equipment, such as low slides and swings, can be fun and safe with your supervision. A clean sandbox with pails, spoons, and assorted containers will keep a toddler happily occupied. Keep the sandbox covered when not in use.

Guidance and discipline ideas

Those who study young children's development generally agree that spanking and other physical punishment — like shaking, pinching, biting back, and hitting — are not necessary for discipline and may harm the child. Shaking can also be deadly.

Physical punishment — or the threat of it — is not likely to teach children to control themselves. In fact, it may help them learn to be sneaky, aggressive, and fearful. It can also teach that hitting or hurting others is OK.

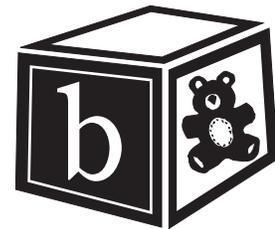
Don't hold back love.

It is harmful to punish a child by saying you will leave her or stop loving her. This threat can make your toddler feel she can't trust you or is not important to you. She may feel afraid, insecure, and less willing to cooperate with you.

Here are some guidance ideas that work for many parents:

- ♥ **Catch your toddler being good and encourage her.** We often forget to do this! Encouraging her for good behavior helps her understand what you like. Don't let your child think you only pay attention to bad behavior.
- ♥ **Tell or show your toddler what you want her to do.** "Carry your coat this way" is more helpful than "Don't drag your coat on the ground," for example.
- ♥ **Plan ahead.** Before special visits and trips — like parties, shopping, or visits to a restaurant or Grandma's home — tell your toddler what to expect and how you want her to behave.
- ♥ **Take toys along** on trips to fight boredom and fussiness. Keep surprise toys or snacks on hand for hungry or crabby times.
- ♥ **Set things up to help good behavior.** Remove things you don't want your child to touch. Put special toys away before a playmate comes over. Limit visits with other children if you expect fights. Be sure your toddler gets enough rest and eats regular meals and snacks.
- ♥ **Tell, don't ask.** If your child doesn't have a choice, don't give one. Say, "It's time to go to the doctor," not "Do you want to go to the doctor now?" At cleanup time, say, "Let's put the toys away now," not "Do you want to put your toys away?"
- ♥ **Help your toddler want to do what she needs to do.** If you want her to pick up her toys, make it a game that you play together. If she resists bath time, tell a story in the bath.
- ♥ **Give her another idea.** When she is doing something you don't want her to do, suggest something else she might like: "You can throw the ball outside, not in the house," or "You can pour water in this tub, not on the kitchen floor!"

- ♥ **Offer real choices.** Sometimes, choices can help toddlers cooperate and exercise their growing independence. Let her choose one of two things she can do: "Will you put that in the basket or in the box?" or "Do you want to wear your sweater or your jacket?"
- ♥ **Take time-out** if you find yourself getting very angry at your child. Put your toddler in a safe place and say that you are upset and need to be quiet for a few minutes. Then, go to another place and try to relax. After this, it will be easier for you to guide her calmly and sensitively. If you must discipline your child, have her spend a few minutes alone in her room and take a time-out.



He or she? Him or her?

Parenting the Second and Third Years gives equal time and space to both sexes. That's why we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." **Please note:** When we use he or she, we include all children.

Show your toddler he's important to you.

We feel better about ourselves if we think we are important to others. This is also true of toddlers. They are forming opinions about themselves. Whether they feel loved, capable, and important depends on how they are treated by people who care for them.

Show your toddler you care about him and respect him. Let him know you love him just for being himself — not for what he does. Tell him you thought about him during the day while you were gone. Tell him that you like his smile, his laugh, his toes, and ears. Show him you're proud of all the things he is learning to do. Tell him how much you enjoy doing things with him.

Don't assume he knows all this just because you take care of him. Take time to put your affection into words. Loving words that come from the heart can never be said too often.



Choosing child care

If you want to stay home to rear your toddler and are able to do so, then you certainly should. You and your child will gain from your time together. However, if you work outside the home, you need to find child care you can trust.

Here are two important questions to ask yourself before you decide on a caregiver:

1. **First, is the caregiver very fond of your child?** Toddlers need lots of love and attention.
2. **Second, will the caregiver be there during the hours you need in the months to come?** Toddlers need to form close bonds with people and can suffer if they have too many caregivers.

Children do best when their parents are happy and when they have caring, sensitive caregivers at home and in child care. Take time to visit and talk with anyone you are thinking of hiring as a child care provider. You can tell a great deal by watching a provider with children for an hour or more, and then checking references.

You may worry about leaving your child in someone else's care. The more you trust your caregiver, the more secure you will feel. Here are some things to look for as you decide on a child care arrangement:

Does the caregiver...

- ♥ Have child-rearing attitudes like yours?
- ♥ Talk naturally with children about what they are doing?

- ♥ Join children for meals and at play without disrupting or dominating the activity?
- ♥ Set reasonable limits for children and enforce them calmly and consistently?
- ♥ Understand what children can and want to do at different stages of growth?
- ♥ Spend time holding, playing with, and talking to each child?
- ♥ Have enough time to look after all the children in his or her care?
- ♥ Welcome visits from parents at all times?
- ♥ Care for no more children than state regulations allow?

Does the home or center have...

- ♥ A clean and comfortable look?
- ♥ Equipment that is safe and in good repair?
- ♥ Nutritious meals and snacks?

Are there opportunities for children to...

- ♥ Be held, cuddled, rocked, smiled at, talked to?
- ♥ Relax and rest when they need to?
- ♥ Walk and explore safely?
- ♥ Play with things that develop their senses of touch, sight, and hearing?
- ♥ Learn language? Does the caregiver talk to the children, name things, describe what she or he is doing, respond to the children's actions?
- ♥ Play actively each day?

It's OK to eat a little or a lot.

Were you told to eat everything on your plate as a child? No one wants to see food wasted. But it's not a good idea to force your child to eat.

Some days, your child will be very hungry and will want more than you've put on his plate. Other days, he will be less hungry and won't want as much. Only your child knows how hungry he is, so put a small amount of the food being served on his plate and let him decide how much to eat.

Many parents worry that their toddler isn't eating enough. But most toddlers eat enough for growth and health. Don't bribe, beg, or reward him for eating more.

Don't punish your child for eating too little or too much. If you do, your child will feel ashamed of his appetite and will begin to feel guilty about food. If you find there is always food left on his plate, you may be giving him too much in a serving. Cut back a bit.

If your child asks for more of a food and you don't have any more of it, say you're sorry there isn't any more. Then offer more of the food that is left. It takes a lot of patience to help children this age learn to eat well.

Help your toddler develop healthy eating habits

- ♥ Offer your child a variety of foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- ♥ Be a role model for your children. If you want them to eat vegetables, then you should eat vegetables, too.
- ♥ Serve regular meals and snacks and offer water when children are thirsty between meals.
- ♥ Remember that children may not like a food the first time they try it. Serve a new food many times to encourage them to learn to like it.
- ♥ Give children limited choices. For example, when eating at a fast food restaurant ask, "Do you want milk or water to drink?" This approach gives children choices but does not give them the opportunity to choose soda pop.
- ♥ Prevent problems when possible. If you do not want your children to eat sugary cereals, keep your cupboard stocked with more nutritious cereals.

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.

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.

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, 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) or from Cooperative Extension Publishing. To order, call toll-free: 1-877-947-7827 (WIS-PUBS) or visit our website: learningstore.uwex.edu.

