



# Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

21-22

## You are still #1 with your more sociable toddler.

You know by now that the very best plaything your toddler can have is a caring adult. In other words, she needs someone like **you** who will play with her and enjoy her learning.

Your toddler will be watching other children playing and may even follow after them. At this age, though, your child is more interested in you, her own play, and her own toys than in other children. Poking, touching, and pushing are her ways of showing interest in other children.

## Making friends

She may develop interest in a special friend her own age, if that friend is with her a lot. You will notice your child will smile more and fight less with this friend than with a strange child.

From 2 to 3 years of age, your child will become more social and will enjoy playing with other children. Groups of children play best when they have the same toys. Two toddlers will fight less if there are two blue trucks the same size or two dolls instead of one truck or one doll.

## Playing together

**Play** is the main activity of childhood. It is the way children learn about themselves, their family, and their world. Let your child play alone sometimes. But also make time to play with her. You'll learn about her, she'll learn about you, and you will be helping her to grow.

## Help your toddler play with others.

Help me learn to play with another child. I may push or poke to say "hello." You can show me how to touch gently, and use words to say "hello."

Stay near me while I play, so I can come back to you quickly. Don't force me to share my favorite toys. Help me look for toys that my friend can play with.

I still may take the toys away. This isn't because I want to play with them. I'm just not sure I want the other child to have them.

If we go to another house to visit, let me take a few of my own toys with me. I'll feel better if I know I can take them back home.

## My toys!

Your toddler is just now becoming attached to certain toys. He may sincerely hug his teddy bear. Then, when another child comes near, he may clutch the bear tightly and scream: "Mine!"

Rather than see this as selfish, agree that the bear is, indeed, **his** bear. Ask him to show his friend how nicely he can kiss his bear. Instead of scolding him for not sharing his favorite toy, suggest that he choose another toy for his visitor to play with.

You may even be able to avoid some squabbles by letting your child put away his most special toys **before** a friend comes over. Remind him that he needs to share his other toys, but **all his toys** will stay in your house when his friend goes home.

When you respect your child's right of ownership, you tell him that he is an important person. Toddlers who have been respected as individuals with rights of their own can become the most generous of 3-year-olds.

## What's it like to be 21 and 22 months old?

### How I grow:

- ♥ I love to run, throw, and climb.
- ♥ I can walk up stairs with both feet on each step, while holding a railing.
- ♥ I am probably using one hand more than the other.
- ♥ If you fold a paper, I can imitate you.
- ♥ I can help with simple tasks.
- ♥ I can follow about three directions.
- ♥ I'm becoming a little less self-centered.

### How I talk:

- ♥ I can say about 20 words.
- ♥ I can ask for things by name.
- ♥ I can point to body parts on myself or my doll.
- ♥ I like to have you sing me rhyming songs.
- ♥ I like to hear stories.
- ♥ I like to look at books. But if you don't watch me, I may tear them.

### What I am learning:

- ♥ I'm interested in very tiny things, especially bugs. Watch what I put in my mouth!
- ♥ I love to build and knock down, empty, pull apart, feel, twist, and squeeze everything I can get my hands on.
- ♥ I can build a tower of four or five blocks.
- ♥ I am really curious about people, animals, birds, and everything that I see.

- ♥ I can recognize and name people I know from photographs.
- ♥ I can recognize a picture in a book, even when the book is upside down.
- ♥ I can put together a puzzle, if it has only two or three big pieces.
- ♥ I like listening to nursery rhymes. And if you help me, I can repeat them.

### How I get along with others:

- ♥ I'm developing a mind of my own. So I don't respond so quickly to requests and often do the opposite of what I'm asked.
- ♥ I can understand what's mine and what's yours.
- ♥ I try to tell people what I have seen and done.
- ♥ I can show love to you and other favorite people.
- ♥ I'm beginning to be sympathetic to other people, and I can sometimes cooperate with others.
- ♥ I'm becoming easier to get along with, but I still get demanding at times.

- ♥ I am continually testing the limits you set and trying to get my own way.
- ♥ My feelings are easily hurt by criticism.

### What I can do for myself:

- ♥ I can wash and dry my hands.
- ♥ I can hold a cup and drink from it.
- ♥ I can pick up and put away my toys, if you help me.
- ♥ I like to sweep, dust, mop, hammer, vacuum, shovel, scoop, or rake, because I have seen you do these things.
- ♥ I may be able to put on my shoes. But I can't tie them, and I may put them on the wrong feet.
- ♥ I may be able to put things where they belong.

### Play I enjoy:

- ♥ I like to fit things together.
- ♥ I enjoy using a toy telephone.
- ♥ I like to pull things around in a wagon or cart.
- ♥ I like to play tag with you or an older child.
- ♥ I can put rings on a peg toy.
- ♥ I like to pretend, like wrapping up my doll or stuffed animal and putting it to bed.

### 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.

## Choose good child care.

### Will child care hurt the bond I have with my child?

Many researchers have young children of their own, so this question has prompted much research. The findings show that the parent's sensitivity to the child is most important, regardless of whether child care is used. Child care alone does not predict the strength of the parent-child bond — or the “security of attachment,” as researchers call it.

On the other hand, for parents who are not the most sensitive, the child care setting really matters. Combined with inconsistent or uninvolved parenting, low-quality or unstable child care — or many hours of child care each week — predicts problems in parent-child bonding.

If the child has either a sensitive and responsive parent or a sensitive and responsive child caregiver, then the parent-child bond is not hurt by child care. In fact, high-quality child care has even been shown to help the child's bond with parents who are not sensitive initially.

If we are concerned with the child's intellectual development, then high-quality child care has been shown to be a big help for some children — especially those from low-income families. This is the idea behind programs like Head Start.

### The two key findings are these:

- (1) Your own sensitive interactions with your child are most important.
- (2) High-quality child care can help your child and the parent-child bond.

We like to say that finding a good child care provider is like having a terrific aunt living down the street who cares for your children just as you do.

So choose carefully!  
See “Choosing child care,”  
*Months 17-18.*



## Homemade toys that teach

### SIMPLE PUZZLE

This toy will help your child learn about **shapes** and **sizes**. It will also help him learn how to **solve problems** and to **fit things together**.

### Materials

- ♥ **Stiff paper**
- ♥ **Colorful, simple picture** from a magazine or calendar
- ♥ **Glue** — Be sure the label says **nontoxic** or **child safe**.
- ♥ **Scissors**

### Making the toy

Glue the picture onto the stiff paper, and cut it into two or three pieces.

### Playing

Help your child learn to fit the pieces together to make the picture. If this becomes too easy for your child, you can make it more challenging by cutting the picture into more pieces.

## Happy routines

If you can do the same thing in the same order every day, your child is likely to feel more safe and comfortable. He'll know what's coming next. He'll know what he should do.

Have quiet time and bedtime at the same time every day. Help your toddler get used to routines by telling him that when he has finished lunch, it will be time to rest, or that after you read one more book, it will be time for bed.

### Here are some other routines you can set up:

- ♥ Get your child dressed first thing in the morning.
- ♥ Wash his hands before eating.
- ♥ Brush his teeth after breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- ♥ Pick up toys before dinner or at some other good time.
- ♥ Say "good night" to every member of the family — maybe also dogs, cats, and toys — before going to bed.

You can help your child learn about routines and time by saying: "The mail comes at ten o'clock," or "We go to the grocery store on Saturday," or "Mommy comes home at six o'clock."

## 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.

## Be good to yourself: Bad days happen to *all* parents.

All parents get weary. We get upset at times. Sometimes, we say and do things that are less than our best — things we wouldn't say or do if we were calm, peaceful, and had all the time in the world.

**Allow yourself a few mistakes each day, guilt free.** Young children need parents who try to do their best. But that doesn't mean we succeed all the time. Accept your mistakes, talk them over, laugh about them, shrug them off, and move on.

When you're feeling down, stop worrying about trying to be a "super-parent." Comfort yourself, knowing that everyone makes mistakes and that children are durable and forgiving.

Give yourself credit for what you **do** achieve. Praise yourself often — not for moving mountains, but for climbing molehills. Think: "Good for me, I got through the day without yelling at anybody!" Make up with your children if there have been stormy times. Loving parents can make the next day happier, even if today has been full of gales.

## Games for growing

### HARD AND SOFT

Teach your child to **group objects by touch** and **learn words** to describe the way things **feel**.

### How to play

- ♥ Put hard and soft things together in a pile. For example, you may use blocks, plastic bottles, and so forth as **hard** things, and **soft** toys or pieces of cloth as soft things. Show her how to tell which things are soft and which are hard.
- ♥ Ask your child to place hard things in one pile and soft things in another pile.
- ♥ If your child cannot do this, take the hard things and say: "These are hard. Put them in this pile." Help her sort out the hard things from the soft things. Then, show her how the new hard pile is different from the soft pile that's left.
- ♥ Mix the objects all together in one pile again, and repeat the game.

### Other grouping games

You can ask your child to group fuzzy and smooth objects separately, sticky and clean objects, wet and dry, or heavy and light things. Change the game to keep it fun for your child and you.

## Putting words and actions together

You can help your toddler learn words by talking about what you and she are doing. If you're making cookies and she's watching, tell her about what you're doing. You might say: "First, we put the flour in the bowl. Now, we add the eggs. Plop! Plop! Now, we mix and mix and mix. Then, we'll scoop cookies out, plop them in the pan, and pop them into the oven."

**Use words with your child just as you use toys.** Your child will hear the words "plop," "mix," "scoop," and "pop." These are fun words to hear and say.

None of us grows and develops in only one area at a time. Your child uses her eyes to watch you, her mouth and tongue to put words to your actions, and her small and large muscles to copy your actions. Putting words and actions together can help her develop these skills.

## Learning about emotions

Parents want to raise children who are responsible and moral. How can you accomplish this? By teaching your child about emotions. Empathy is key! Empathy is the ability to share in another person's emotions (to feel what they feel).

Family researcher John Gottman found that empathetic parenting provides the foundation for emotion teaching. Parents who feel empathy when their child experiences negative emotions — anger, sadness, fear, etc. — understand how their child feels and are able to help him learn about his emotions. Here are five steps to follow:

- ♥ Pay attention to your child's emotions. How is he feeling?
- ♥ View emotions as an opportunity for teaching. When your child is upset, it is a time he can learn about his emotions and how to handle them.
- ♥ Help your child name the emotion. She may not know what emotion she's feeling.
- ♥ Validate your child's feelings. Let your child know you understand why he feels this way. You might say, "You seem to feel sad since Grandma left. I miss Grandma, too."
- ♥ Help your child problem solve, rather than suggest what to do. Ask your child for his ideas: "How can you both play with the toy?"

Parents may be afraid that by talking about negative emotions their child will grow up to be unhappy. In reality, children who learn about emotions are better able to calm themselves, cope with their negative feelings, focus their attention, and solve problems. Research shows that "emotionally intelligent" children get along better with other people, even in difficult situations.

## Helping at home

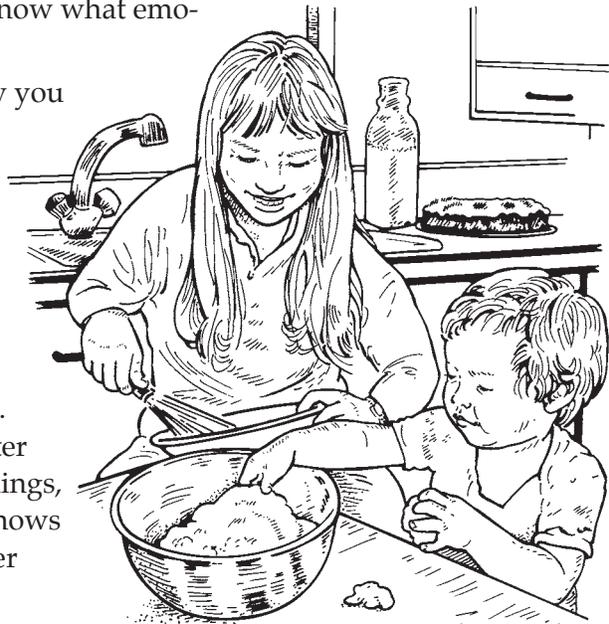
Help your child become a proud working partner in your family. Even young children can help with some chores. In helping, your child will begin to learn responsibility and will develop pride in being useful.

Begin by helping your child with the task. Keep each task simple. Tell your child what a good job he's done.

### Here are some tasks a toddler can do:

- ♥ **Pick up toys** and put them in their proper place.
- ♥ **Put books and magazines** on a low shelf.
- ♥ **Put napkins and silverware** on the table — except knives.
- ♥ **Help clean up** the floor after eating.
- ♥ **Help wipe up** after accidents.

**Remember:** Don't expect more than is reasonable from your toddler. Do expect him to help and do encourage him to try.



## Chewing isn't easy without all your teeth.

By now, your toddler has some — but not all — of her baby teeth. She probably will not have all 20 baby teeth until she is about 2 to 2½ years old.

Your child doesn't have enough teeth to chew well. So she might swallow large pieces of food that could cause her to choke. Choking on food is a real danger for toddlers. For this reason, **cut all food into small, bite-size strips.**

### Tips to prevent choking

The foods toddlers choke on most often are **hot dogs, hard candy, nuts, raw and baby carrots, and grapes.** If you serve hot dogs, first cut them the long way in fourths, then slice off bite-size pieces. Never cut hot dogs into circles, because they can get stuck in your child's throat. Cut grapes in quarter sections, too. Cook firm vegetables like carrots until they are soft, then cut them into bite-size pieces.

Never give whole nuts — especially peanuts — to toddlers. Don't give your child candy either.

Other foods that sometimes cause choking are popcorn, chewing gum, and lollipops. Since these foods aren't very nutritious, do not give them to your toddler.

Children should sit with an adult while eating. Avoid letting children eat in cars.

### What to do for choking

If your child is coughing, let her cough. This is a natural way to expel anything caught in the throat. Do not stick your fingers in your child's mouth to try to pull out the object — unless you can plainly see it. Otherwise, you might push it in farther.

If a conscious child is choking, but **can breathe:**

- ♥ Keep the child calm.
- ♥ Have the child sit down and cough.
- ♥ Do not slap the child on the back.
- ♥ Do not give the child a drink.
- ♥ Do not hold the child upside down.

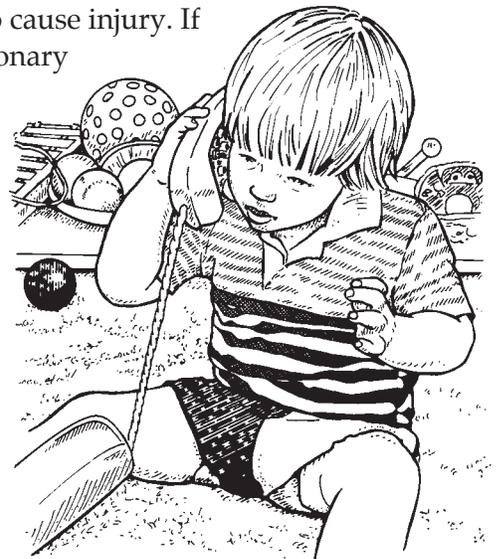
If the child **cannot breathe** — is not coughing or crying and is turning blue — **call 911 or the rescue squad.**

Until help comes, here is how you do the Heimlich maneuver:

- ♥ First, get behind the child. Circle your arms under her arms and around her.
- ♥ Make a fist with one of your hands. Place the thumb side of that fist against the middle of her stomach — slightly above the belly button, but well below the hard tip of her breastbone. Do not press your fingers on the child's ribs.
- ♥ Grasp the fist with the other hand. Make a quick inward and upward thrust. This forces any air trapped behind the object to push it out.
- ♥ Keep making inward and upward thrusts until the object comes out of the child's throat.

### The child needs to see a doctor, even when the object comes out and breathing returns.

Be forceful, yet careful. Abdominal thrusts can save your child's life, but they can also cause injury. If you can, take a CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) class to learn and practice these steps safely. To find out about CPR classes, contact your local hospital, Red Cross, or American Heart Association. You can also sign up for class online at [www.redcross.org/](http://www.redcross.org/).



# Safety alert: Avoiding danger

Your toddler is becoming a real explorer. She climbs, runs, walks — and rarely sits. You need to protect her in special ways.

## Three dangers to avoid:

### 1. Poison

Your toddler explores with her mouth. Everything goes in her mouth. Keep all medicines, tobacco, alcoholic drinks, and household products away from your child. All medicines should have safety caps. Even so, lock up medicines and vitamins, because many children can open safety bottles with their teeth. Keep houseplants out of reach, since some may be harmful.

Tape the Poison Control phone number and your doctor's phone number by your phone. The Poison Control toll-free hotline is 1-800-222-1222.

Doctors no longer recommend using syrup of ipecac for poisoning. Research failed to show that ipecac helped children who took it.

### 2. Crashes

**Always** put your child in a car safety seat in the **back** seat of the car and buckle both the car seat and your toddler. Children's car seats should face the rear until they are 2 years old. Every rider should wear a seat belt for every ride. Never hold your child in your lap in the car. You will not be able to hold a child in a crash. Anyone not belted in will fly up and may be thrown out of the vehicle. A 150-pound person will hit with a force of 6,000 pounds in a crash at 40 miles per hour.

Besides, seat belts are the law. Play a game to hear all the belts click before the car can start. Make a rule that the car will not start until everyone is belted in. Tell your child she must sit in her car seat because you love her and want her to be safe.

When you are taking your child to and from the car, make sure you are holding her hand. Toddlers are unpredictable and may quickly run out into traffic.

Many parents enjoy bicycling with their toddler seated in a bike seat or cart. A toddler should **always** wear a bicycle helmet while riding in a bike seat.

Buy a helmet for your child and yourself, if you haven't already. It will come in handy over the next few months as your child discovers riding toys.

### 3. Water

Many children love to play in water. But toddlers have heavy heads and weak necks. This means they can drown in even a small amount of water — like a mop bucket or toilet bowl.

Never leave a toddler alone in the bathroom or tub — or near any water. If the phone or doorbell rings, either ignore it or take your child with you.

Even if your child is learning to swim, he is not water safe. Water wings or other inflatable toys will not keep him safe in the water, since they can deflate suddenly. If you have a pool, there should be a 4-foot high fence around it with a self-closing latch door to keep children away when adults are not present.

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