



Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

27-28

Toddler years are busy years.

No one needs to tell you that the toddler years are busy years. They are busy for your toddler, who is into everything, and busy for you, because you have to chase, protect, and teach her.

With all this activity and stress, it may be hard to remember that these first 3 years are probably the most important time in your child's life. You have the chance now to help her become a healthy, responsible, loving, and accomplished person.

Try to enjoy these busy, important years. Be good to yourself. Take time out when you can and share child care with others when you need a break. Enjoy your child's growth and celebrate her new skills with her. Reward yourself, too, for your successes. And don't be hard on yourself for mistakes. All parents make them.

Believe it or not, when these busy toddler years pass, you will probably look back on this time with pleasure. For now, do all you can to make the most of these important years.

Re-check safety.

Give your house a safety re-check today. Children can get into new dangers as they develop new abilities. Cover electrical outlets. Make sure everything dangerous is locked up or out of reach.

As toddlers learn to climb, they can open cabinets that they could not reach before. They can also climb up bookshelves and tip them over. You can make bookshelves safer by attaching them to the wall.

Each home is different. Parents can make their load easier if they stay alert to changing safety risks, and take action as soon as new ones are found.

Keep by each phone the numbers for the nearest Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222), your doctor, and other emergency numbers like 911.



Turn win-lose into win-win.

Your toddler's growing independence may be a big source of stress in your life right now. Sometimes, you may feel like you're in a war with your child, trying to win every battle. Some battles end so that you both lose. When you win, your child might fight back even harder. When she wins, you might feel angry, defeated, or guilty.

One way to reduce this stress is to handle these battles so **both of you win at least a little**. Maybe you can't talk about compromise with a stubborn 2-year-old. But you can figure out how to end up with no one feeling like a loser. If you refuse to get caught up in a battle, then your child can't lose — and neither can you.

For example, your daughter demands that you read her a story, and you want her to help pick up her toys. Maybe she can pick out the story before cleanup, and you can read it when the room is picked up. Or, maybe you can read half the story before cleanup, and read the rest after. You'll both feel better for it.

When there's never enough time **TV tells toddlers about cereals.**

Stress can be caused by feeling that you have too much to do and not enough time. You can't even get all your chores done, much less play with your child or take time for yourself.

Managing your time better can help prevent this kind of stress. Here are some ideas:

- ♥ **Make a list** of everything you want to get done for 1 day or 1 week. Decide which things are most important and which ones can wait or don't have to be done at all. Be reasonable about the number of things you can do in the time you have.
- ♥ **Write out a schedule** for your day, so you can aim for a time to finish each task. Think about how you'll do the task in the time you've planned.
- ♥ **Group chores** together if they need similar tools. Group all the chores that involve going out or the ones for which you need someone else to care for your child.
- ♥ **Figure out how much you really can do** in the time you have.

Don't be afraid to say "no" to people who want more of your time than you want to give. Make sure you build in time for the most important people in your life!

Has this happened to you yet? You are pushing your grocery cart down the aisle and your toddler sees a certain brand of cereal. He begins calling out the name of the cereal. He wants you to buy it. You are amazed. You've never bought that kind of cereal, and he's never eaten it. How did he find out about it?

He probably learned about the cereal from television. Toddlers don't **seem** to pay much attention to TV but are often aware of what is happening on the screen. Commercials are very appealing because of the action and noise. Cereal is a food that is advertised a lot during children's programs. Some of these cereals are nutritious, but others are not. In fact, some cereals have more sugar than three chocolate chip cookies or one donut. Cereals like Fruit Loops, Lucky Charms, Cocoa Puffs, and Honey Smacks are high in sugar.

How can you tell if a cereal is high in sugar? Look for the ingredient label on the box. The ingredients on a food label are listed by those found in the greatest amount to those found in the least. If "sugar" is the first or second ingredient listed on the label, it likely has too much sugar. Other names for sugar are:

- Agave nectar
- Brown sugar
- Cane crystals
- Cane sugar
- Corn sweetener
- Corn syrup
- Crystalline fructose
- Dextrose
- Evaporated cane juice
- Fructose
- Fruit juice concentrates
- Glucose
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Invert sugar
- Lactose
- Maltose
- Malt syrup
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- Sucrose

If your child is unhappy you aren't going to buy the cereal he wants, move away from the cereals. Go on to do the rest of your shopping. You can spend time reading labels when you are shopping alone or by visiting websites of some cereal companies.

Bedtime is not always sleep time.

Q. My 2½-year-old won't go to sleep when I put him to bed.

What can I do?

A. Bedtime is not always sleep time.

Young children need regular bedtimes, and special **bedtime routines** — like teeth brushing, stories, and hugs. Parents need regular bedtimes for their children, so they can have some time alone.

You can expect your child to go to bed and be quiet at set times. Don't worry if he does not always go to sleep as soon as he goes to bed. When he isn't sleepy, let him have some quiet time in bed looking at books until sleep comes.

Homemade toys that teach

PLAY PLACE

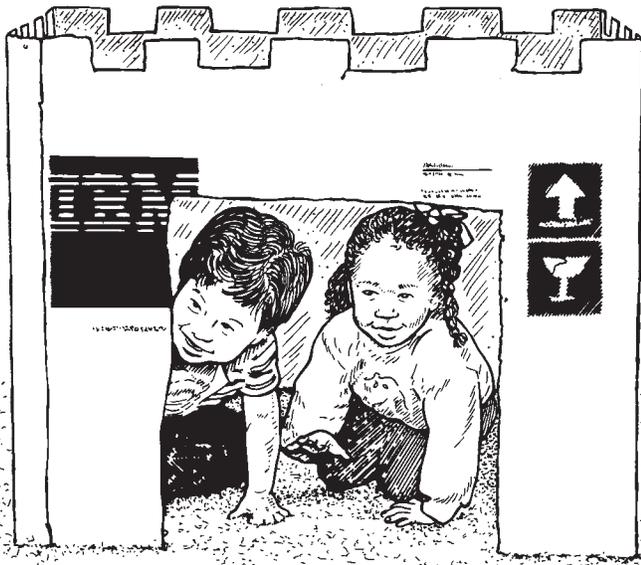
Isn't it nice to see your child's imagination grow? When your toddler pretends he can be as powerful, as big, and as important as he wants to be, this is a good feeling. He can practice being like members of his family, a king, a teacher, or a police officer.

Imagination and pretend play are important. They help your child cope with his world and prepare for his future. At this age, your child learns about others' points of view — their feelings and thoughts — by acting them out. What he cannot yet do mentally, he now does physically, by pretending to be another person. You can encourage his imagination and be a part of his pretend play by making a carton play place with him.

Materials

For the carton play place, you will need:

- ♥ **Large card-board box** from grocery or appliance stores — Your carton should be big enough for your toddler to crawl inside. Make sure the box is free of staples.
- ♥ **Utility knife** — Use this to cut the card-board box. Keep your toddler away from the knife. Put it away as soon as you've finished.
- ♥ **Crayons**, colored paper, streamers, and so forth, for decorating the play place



Making a play place

The box can be whatever your toddler wants it to be — a house, spaceship, boat, cave, fort, puppet theater, or all of these. Place the box so the open end is on the floor. Cut windows, portholes, or whatever your toddler wants on the sides and back of the box. Let your toddler decorate the box however he wants. He may want you to write his name on the box or put a message or sign on it.

Watch out for toxic plants!

Many kinds of plants are poisonous if eaten. Know the plants in and around your home and neighborhood. Your local Poison Control Center has information on toxic plants in your area.

It may confuse a young child if you offer something from the garden when nearby plants — such as nightshade berries or Jerusalem cherries — are harmful. Don't let your child eat leaves or berries while playing or helping you garden. Watch for mushrooms, which pop up quickly.

If your child eats any part of a plant or other poison:

- ♥ **Call Poison Control.** Post the phone number by your phone. The national toll-free Poison Control number is 1-800-222-1222.
- ♥ If your child needs emergency treatment, **bring a piece of the plant or substance your child ate with you.**

Brushing teeth

Keep brushing your child's teeth with a tiny, pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste.

Use only small amounts of toothpaste because young children tend to swallow it. If your water supply is not fluoridated, your child's doctor may recommend fluoride drops to help strengthen teeth.

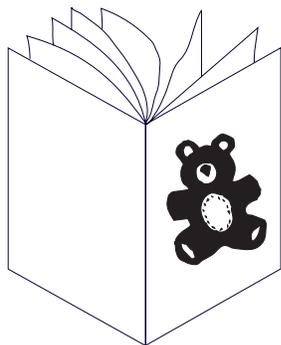
Schedule a dental checkup for your child every 6 months or as often as your dentist advises.

Choosing books for toddlers

When you select books for toddlers, look for these features:

- ♥ **Familiar subject** — The book should have things your child knows about.
- ♥ **Simple plot** — Some books have only pictures with labels on them. These can also be fun for toddlers. Your child will enjoy turning the pages with you, seeing the pictures, and talking to you about them.
- ♥ **Clear, simple words** — There should be just a few words on each page. Toddlers like books with words that are fun to say and repeated phrases.
- ♥ **Large, clear, brightly colored pictures** — Toddlers often like drawings better than photographs, because they are easier to understand.

See if you can find **sturdy cardboard books** (“board” books). You can buy these or borrow them from your library. Your child can turn the pages of these books more easily, and the pages will not tear.



Discipline with “time-out.”

Used right, “time-out” can be a good way to handle those times when your toddler seems determined to disobey, and nothing you do will stop her. **Time-out** means putting your toddler in a safe place away from you for a few minutes. This gives you a chance to calm down if you both need it. This lets your toddler know it is not OK to continue her naughty behavior.

When you use time-out, be sure you let your toddler know you love her and that you do not want to hurt her. Here are some important things to do to keep time-out as a guidance and discipline method, not a punishment:

- ♥ **Tell your child about time-out.** Tell her ahead of time — before she breaks a rule — what time-out is and how you will use it.
- ♥ **Choose the time-out place carefully.** Use a safe, non-scary place like a bedroom, a chair, the bottom stair, or part of a room. Never use a closet or place that is dark, dangerous, or frightening to your child.
- ♥ **Tell your toddler WHY** you are using time-out, and **how long** it will last. Before time-out, explain to her why she is being disciplined. Tell her how long time-out will be, and tell her you will come to get her when the time is up. **Keep your promise.**
- ♥ **Keep time-out short.** For a toddler, time-out should last no more than 3 minutes or **1 minute for each year of age**. Set a timer, and be sure you follow your time limits. When the time is up, go in to her, give her a hug, and invite her to be with you.
- ♥ **Keep calm.** When you use time-out or any kind of discipline, stay calm. Explain clearly to your child why you are limiting her. Follow through firmly, but also show that you love and care for her.

Does my child need to nap?

Q: My child doesn’t want to nap. Is a nap necessary?

A: At this age, many children take one 2- to 3-hour nap after lunch, instead of several shorter naps.

Each child is different. Some 2-year-olds are nearly ready to give up napping entirely. Others sleep deeply for several hours every afternoon.

Unless he seems irritable and overtired, don’t force your youngster to sleep during nap time. **Do** be sure you have some quiet rest time every day, though. Your child can look at books or play quietly in his room. Set a routine, and stick with it. Your busy toddler really needs this quiet break — and so do you!

Learning at home

How would you like to start a school in your home? If you're thinking this means books, a chalkboard, and rows of desks, that's not the idea. This school is not only *in* your home. This school *is* your home, your family, and your daily activities. Actually, you've been teaching your child since birth.

You might say, "But I don't know how to teach." You don't need a teaching degree. You just need to remember your "ABCs":

- ♥ **A** child's first and most important teachers are his parents.
- ♥ **B**e alert to the new situations your child faces each day.
- ♥ **C**onduct short, simple lessons many times during the day.

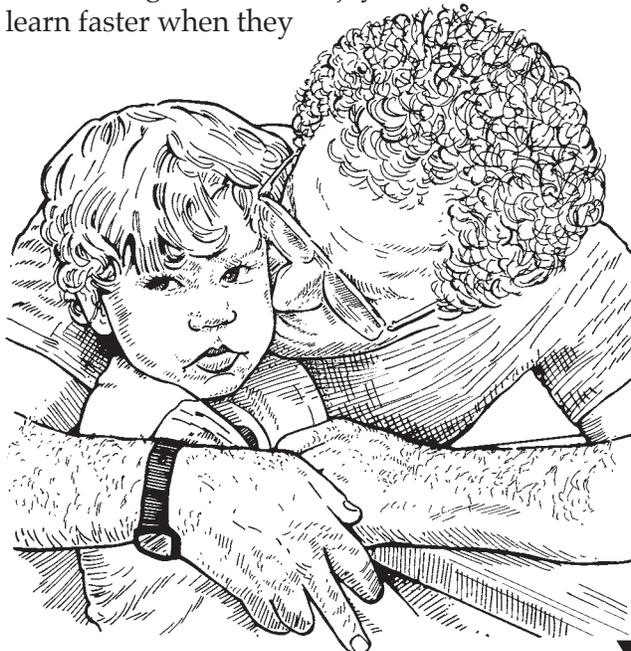
Now, here is how to **conduct** your school. Keep learning fun! Teach by playing games and talking to your child in a friendly way.

Here are some teaching ideas:

- ♥ **Teach colors.** As you set the table, talk about the red dishes or the blue tablecloth. As you sort the clothes, talk about the blue jeans or the white shirt.
- ♥ **Teach shapes.** Talk about shapes of toys or furnishings in your home — the round mirror or the square table.
- ♥ **Teach alike or different.** Help your child sort spoons and forks in the drawer.
- ♥ **Teach words.** Teach about language and books by showing pictures and reading short stories to your child again and again. Talk with him about the story.

Remember: Your child's first school is in your home. The lessons you teach will prepare him to learn even more when he starts pre-school and kindergarten.

Children who have been taught at home enjoy learning and usually learn faster when they start school.



Toddlers show their feelings.

Toddlers naturally show you and tell you that they love you. Welcome and enjoy these feelings. You'll want to show your feelings to your toddler, too, with words and hugs.

But just as naturally, toddlers sometimes also say and show that they dislike you. Parents understandably find these angry words and actions hard to take. It is much nicer to hear "I love you" than "I hate you." But both kinds of feelings are common with toddlers and are part of growing up.

Try to handle these actions and feelings with **understanding**, instead of arguing or punishing. Your toddler's angry words and actions do not mean you have been a bad parent or that she really dislikes you. Understand that her anger is temporary and normal.

Show your child that you care for her even when she is angry and that angry feelings are OK. Do not let her turn her feelings into angry actions such as biting, kicking, or hitting. And don't give in to unreasonable demands just to prevent angry outbursts. You might try to talk to her and find out more about **why** she is feeling angry.

Be patient. The good and loving relationship you have with your toddler will keep these angry times short.



Change can be hard.

Some children adjust easily to changes in routine or plans. Others adapt more slowly.

Parents may expect children to have difficulty with big changes, like moving to a new house or getting a new baby brother. But even small changes, like transitions (shifts from one activity to another) or changes in plans, can be challenging.

For example, you ask your toddler to come to dinner now. He says, "No!" This really means, "I can't change activities that quickly." He needs time to switch from playing to eating.

Here are some ways to help your child handle change:

- ♥ **Tell your child about changes ahead of time**, but not too far ahead.
- ♥ **Provide transition time between activities.** For example, give your child 10-minute and 5-minute warnings before he needs to stop playing and have dinner. A timer works great!
- ♥ **Stick to daily routines.** This helps your child know what to expect, so he feels more secure.
- ♥ **Offer choices.** This lets your child have some control, which reduces the number of changes he must adjust to.
- ♥ **Set clear, consistent limits.** Slow-adapting children test limits often, to check if they've changed.
- ♥ **Make sure your child gets enough sleep.** A tired child has a harder time handling changes.

Preparing your toddler for special occasions

Parents are often eager to have their children join in the fun of celebrations. For the young child, these occasions may be happy, or they may be scary and upsetting. Your young child may not want to talk to a strange Santa Claus or shake hands with a clown. He will probably not laugh if a neighbor child in a witch costume swoops down upon him. He might not enjoy meeting new relatives at a family gathering, either.

You can't protect your child from every frightening situation. But here are a few things you **can** do to prepare him for special occasions:

- ♥ **Talk to your child** about where you are planning to go. Tell him what he will see and do there.
- ♥ **Practice ahead of time**, if you can. Show your toddler pictures of Santa before visiting him. Let him play with masks before Halloween. Before the family party, show him photos and tell him about the relatives he may see.
- ♥ **Watch with your child from a safe distance** before entering a gathering. Let him watch other children meeting Santa or a clown and reassure him with hugs and words.

Then, let your child take his time getting acquainted, and let **him** decide whether to participate. Don't force him to get close to unfamiliar or scary people or characters.



Games for growing

SORTING GAME

Help your child learn how things can be **alike** or **different**.

How to play

Find three or four each of about four different things, like four playing cards, four ribbons, four spoons, and four leaves. Mix these up, and put them in a pile or a bowl.

Ask your child to sort them into piles of things that are **alike**. If your child wants, you can take a turn at sorting, too. To make the game harder, you can make all the things almost alike, such as four small paper squares, four medium-sized paper squares, and four large paper squares.

Remember: Play this and any game only as long as it's fun for your child and for you.

FIRST NUMBERS

Help your child learn the difference between **one** and **two**.

How to play

Show your child groups of things that have one, two, three, or more in them.

You can use small toys, books, paper cups, flowers, milk caps, or other small, safe things for this game. Encourage her to pick out the group that is **one**. Put two objects together and ask her how many. Put one object out and ask her how many. Then let her ask you.

Playing make-believe

Imagination is a wonderful thing. We can help our children develop it. Children love to pretend they are someone important and powerful, like a super hero, doctor, teacher, or parent.

This is a good, healthy part of growing up. It helps children practice for the future. It gives them pleasure and comfort.

Dr. Burton White found in his studies that well-developed young children often pretended they were someone else — usually an adult. He also found that most of these children had received a lot of encouragement from their parents to do fantasy play.

Join your child in fantasy play. You will make this important play even more special for your toddler and encourage her creativity.

Left- or right-handed?

Most children change hand preference several times before settling down to a left or right hand preference. Some continue to have equal skill in both hands throughout their lives.

Hand preference is already present in the child's brain at birth. If your child shows a preference for left-handedness, don't try to force her to change. Pressure to change may confuse her and affect her self-confidence and learning. If your child is left-handed, she won't be alone. Fifteen percent of the U.S. population is left-handed.

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