



Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

33-34

Dear parents: This is the time for memories.

Children love to learn about themselves as babies. This helps them feel important and special. A very nice thing you can do for your child — and for yourself — is to collect and organize reminders of these early years.

You can use photos, birthday cards, certificates, and so forth to start a memory book or box. Add pictures your child draws, a piece of her favorite blanket, an outline of her hand or footprint, her holiday cards, newspapers published on her birthdays, notes from favorite relatives — and anything else you and she want to save. These are just a few ideas. Add your own unique memories.

Let your child know this is a special book you want to keep for both of you. Let her look at it only with you, so you can keep it from getting torn and dirty.

All too soon, these early years pass. A memory book will help you and your child enjoy recalling these special years.

Being strict and being loving

Many parents are afraid to be strict with their children. They worry that if they are strict, their children will love them less and will feel less loved by them. This is simply not true.

Children need to learn that while their rights are important, they are no more important than the rights of others. Your toddler needs to learn this now, or she may become the kind of child who actually is less lovable.

Good discipline is fair, sensitive, consistent, and guided by the parents' love and desire to help the child grow. With this kind of discipline, the child will feel loved and valued. She will easily understand limits you set for her own safety — like not playing with knives. She can also come to understand and accept limits set to keep her from bothering others or breaking things.

Helping your child reduce stress

As your child grows, he will have more and more situations that cause stress. It is not too early to help him learn to recognize and manage stress.

Show your child how to relax by sitting quietly and paying attention to his breathing. Most children like to use their imagination. Help your toddler think about something calm and pleasant — soft rain, a sleeping kitten, a quiet meadow — when he is tense. Help him picture a place he really likes — a park, a beach, a fish pond — and tell him to think about that place. Suggest he can go to that place in his imagination when he is upset.

By teaching your child to relax, you'll be giving him a skill that will help him all his life. Try some of these ideas yourself; they work for everybody!





Why does my daughter stutter?

Q. My little girl is 33 months old and uses a lot of words now. But I've noticed that when she is tense, she stutters. What can I do about this?

A. Like all toddlers her age, your daughter is learning language fast. She is learning about 10 to 15 new words each week. But she may not be learning words as fast as she wants to use them.

Your daughter wants people to understand her. But sometimes, she just doesn't know all the words she needs. This can cause her to stutter, especially when she is upset or excited or when someone tries to rush her.

The best thing you can do to help your daughter stop stuttering is to be patient and relaxed with her. Don't rush her speech or criticize her stuttering. It is not easy to learn to talk. If she keeps stuttering in spite of your patience and help, talk about it with her doctor.



Games for growing

WHERE IS IT?

Help your child learn the **words for positions** like in, under, on top of, beside, and behind.

How to play

Ask your child to move something to a different place. For example, using a ball and a basket, ask him to put the ball **in** the basket, **behind** it, **under** it, or **on top of** it. You can ask him to put his hat on his head, beside his head, under his foot, behind his back, and so forth.

TAKE AWAY

Help your child pay attention to **detail** and **memory**.

How to play

Put a few different things on the table or floor. Ask your child to close her eyes, while you take one thing away. Then, ask her to open her eyes and guess which one is missing.

You can play the game at first using only two items. Later, to make the game harder, you may use more things. Let your child have a turn taking things away for you to guess which one is gone.

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



MATCHING PAIRS

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

How to play

Collect pairs of things that are the same, like two spoons, two bars of soap, two plates, two toothbrushes. Mix the sets up. Hold up one thing, and ask your child to pick another just like it. You can take a turn at guessing, too.

To make the game harder, use a set of pairs of pictures, numbers, letters, or playing cards — things that are more alike than exactly the same. Ask your child to match the one you hold up. As always, take turns leading, and stop before your child loses interest in the game.

Nutrition: Some toddlers don't get enough iron.

Iron is a very important nutrient for healthy blood cells and for energy. Some researchers believe that children have difficulty learning if they don't get enough iron from the foods they eat.

Iron can come from animal foods (meat, fish, poultry) and some plant foods (spinach, dried beans and peas). Vitamin C helps the body use iron, especially the iron from plant foods. So, serve iron-rich foods along with orange juice, tomatoes, or other foods high in vitamin C, such as citrus fruits, peppers, and broccoli.

Foods with iron

- ♥ Meats, such as beef, pork, and chicken
- ♥ Fish
- ♥ Beans, such as kidney beans, pinto beans, red beans, great northern beans, black-eyed peas, navy beans, small white beans, and lima beans
- ♥ Lentils and split peas
- ♥ Dried fruit, such as raisins, apricots, and prunes — Cut these into small pieces to prevent choking.
- ♥ Enriched macaroni, noodles, and rice
- ♥ Whole grain or fortified breads and cereals
- ♥ Broccoli and other dark-green vegetables, such as collard greens
- ♥ Eggs

Read food labels.

As an infant, your child probably ate iron-fortified baby cereal. Now, he probably eats adult cereal. To find out if a cereal is a good source of iron, look for the nutrition label on the side of the box. The amount of iron will be listed as a percent of the total amount a person should eat each day, or the Daily Value.

Choose cereals that have at least 20 percent of the recommended Daily Value for iron. Take your child to a doctor, tribal maternal-child specialist, or clinic for regular checkups and to see if he is getting all the iron he needs.

Important: Unless your doctor recommends it, do not give your child a vitamin with iron supplement. Keep adult vitamins with iron **out of reach**; they can cause life-threatening poisoning if eaten by young children.

Testing eyesight

Eye testing should be a part of every child's regular checkup. A vision test checks each eye's ability to see sharply. When a child is under 3 years of age, the doctor checks to be sure your child can follow an object moving from about 12 to 15 inches from her face to a few inches from her nose. The eyes are tested together and one at a time, by covering one eye and watching the other eye follow the tester's finger.

At 3 years old, most children can learn how to take a formal vision screening test. The most common test is called the Snellen test. It uses a wall chart headed with a large letter E. Some wall charts use pictures of things children know. The child covers one eye at a time, and tells which way the E points, or names what she can see.

Some toddlers have a "lazy eye," or "wandering eye." This problem can cause permanent loss of sight in the lazy eye unless it is found and treated early.

Contact your pediatrician or ophthalmologist right away if you notice: your child's eyes do not look straight, your child does not seem to notice objects, one pupil is a different color, a drooping eyelid(s) or bulging eye(s), fluttering of eyes, excessive rubbing or squinting, or any change in how your child's eyes usually look.

Parents don't always notice vision problems in children. Children don't know when their eyes are not working the way they should, so they don't tell you. Your child's ability to see is essential for learning.



Daily food guide

Use this food guide to plan balanced meals and snacks for your child.

Grains (3-5 ounces per day)

1 ounce equivalents =

- 1 slice of whole-grain bread
- ½ cup cooked rice, whole-grain pasta, or cereal
- 1 cup cold cereal
- 1 tortilla (6-inch)

Vegetables (1-1½ cups)

1 cup equivalents =

- 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables
- 1 cup vegetable juice
- 2 cups leafy salad greens

Fruit (1-1½ cups)

1 cup equivalents =

- 1 cup raw or cooked fruit
- ½ cup fruit juice **plus** ½ cup cut-up fruit (no more than ½ cup of juice per day)

Milk (2 cups)

1 cup equivalents =

- 1 cup low-fat or skim milk
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1½ ounces natural cheese
- 2 ounces processed cheese

Meat and beans (2-4 ounces)

- 1 ounce lean meat, chicken, or fish
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup beans or tofu
- 1 Tbsp. peanut butter*

***Important:** Do not give whole nuts or peanuts to very young children (under age 3). To reduce the risk of choking, spread peanut butter thinly on bread or crackers. Feed children only when they are sitting up. Visit www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers.html to find out ways to teach your child about good nutrition.

Is aggression normal in children?

Yes and no. Most toddlers begin to defend themselves when another child tries to take their toy. This is normal and a sign of positive growth.

Between 2½ and 4 years of age, the children who are most often aggressive also tend to be the most friendly and helpful. These children know how to play well with other children, even though they may fight at times.

By age 5, though, things change. The children who are most aggressive are the least socially skilled. They may become outcasts. Research shows that aggression and crime during adolescence and adulthood often follow aggression during the school years.

So what changes between ages 3 and 5? **The competent children learn how to get what they want without fighting.** They learn to use words to say, “I’m mad” and “Don’t do that!” They learn to share, take turns, and solve their own problems. The children who do not learn these skills depend more and more upon aggression to get what they want.

Children learn these skills from parents and child care teachers. You can help your child learn ways of standing up for himself without being physically aggressive. Tell him: “Don’t hit. Use words. Tell Derrick you don’t like it when he takes your tricycle.” Ask the children: “How can you share the tricycle?” Show them a way, if they need help.

This is a key age to start teaching children how to get along.

Some children are less assertive.

Many toddlers can be challenging to raise, but others are fairly easy. Children who are very adaptable and less active and intense are usually easy for parents. These children “go with the flow,” adjusting easily to changes — like changes in routines, a new babysitter, or starting preschool. They seldom throw temper tantrums and are usually cooperative.

While these toddlers may be easy to raise, they tend to be less assertive with peers. For example, if another toddler grabs this child’s toy he is likely to just find something else to do. Or he may go along with what more assertive children want to do. What can you do to help your child?

At home, start by asking your child’s opinion about things, so he learns to express his needs and desires. Honor his requests when you can. Don’t push him to be more assertive, but teach him the skills to get what he needs. For example, show him how to use words to ask for what he wants. Encourage activities that build on his interests, so he isn’t just going along with what others want.

Look at me!

Your child is still developing her own ideas about who she is. Give her a chance to see and talk about herself with this activity.

The only materials you'll need are a sheet of paper as big as your child and a crayon or marker. You can cut open several paper grocery bags and tape them together. Or, you can buy a roll of paper at office supply or discount stores.

Lay the paper on the floor, and ask your child to lie down on it. Now, use a crayon or marker to draw all around her from head to toe. Draw in between fingers and around ears. Get as much detail as you can! When you're done with the outline, you and your child can color it in.

Name the body parts and clothing as you color them. Let your child look in a mirror so she can draw her eyes, nose, and mouth into the picture. Don't be afraid to be imaginative! Green hair is OK!

When your child's picture is finished, hang it up where everyone can admire it. You can repeat this activity every few months or at each birthday so you can see changes and talk about them: "See how much bigger you are getting," or "Your hair is getting longer," or "You're wearing a dress here."

Problem solving starts early.

One of the most valuable skills we can have as adults is the ability to **solve problems**. Through training and experience, we have learned what is best to do when there is trouble, how to avoid problems, or how to fix something that needs to be fixed. Some people go through life better able to solve problems than others.

Very young children are learning how to solve problems. Whether they learn to solve problems well or not so well depends largely on the help they get as toddlers.

Every day, toddlers face problems and have a chance to practice solving them. For example, what if Jimmy and Julia are building block houses, but neither has enough blocks to finish? Dad could tell them how to solve their problem. But it is better if he helps them learn to figure out how to solve the problem themselves.

To do this, he can say what he sees: "I see two children who both want to finish their houses, but neither one has enough blocks." Then, he can ask them for ideas on how they might solve the problem.

The children learn that he expects them to be able to solve problems. He is also giving them a chance to practice problem solving. At first, he might need to help them come up with ideas. Later, they'll be able to do more problem solving on their own.

Homemade toys that teach

COSTUME BOX

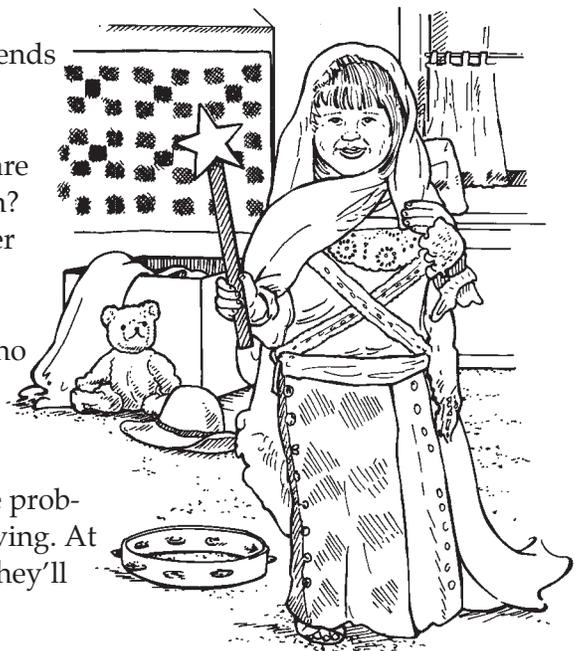
This box of costume makings will help your toddler's **imagination, creativity, and pretend play**.

Materials

- ♥ **Big cardboard box**
- ♥ **Cast-off clothing**, hats, scarves, shawls, and so on

Playing

Your toddler will know what to do with this box of costumes; he has lots of imagination! Help him play pretend by giving him ideas for people he can pretend to be. Suggest that he pretend to be characters you've read about in stories. He may ask you to guess who he is dressed up to be. Sometimes, he'll enjoy having you dress up and pretend with him.



Pretend cooking

Toddlers love to pretend to do what they see adults doing. Make your child a pretend stove by drawing burners on the bottom of a large cardboard box. He will especially like to play cooking if you play with him. He'll take your orders for food, cook the food, hand it to you, and hope you enjoy eating it.

An "almost-3-year-old" can help with real cooking, too. Let your child dump in the chocolate chips or flour when you bake cookies or stir when you mix up pancake batter or scrambled eggs. He probably won't want to help for long. But cooking is a good way to learn how things look, smell, and mix together.

Remember: Always wash hands before and after cooking.

Magic closet

The **magic closet** — or magic box or basket — can be a place full of happy surprises for your child. This is where toys quietly go to rest. You can rotate your child's toys through the magic closet. You can bring out one thing at a time when your child is sick, bored on a rainy day, or when you and she need something very special to do.

Children like to rediscover old toys. A few new toys can be kept in the magic closet, too. Surprises are fun for everyone. You will enjoy seeing your child playing with her magic closet discoveries.

A 3-year-old's birthday party

Your child is old enough to like having friends over. How fancy should a 3-year-old's party be?

The basic rule for a child's birthday party is **keep it simple**. Children at this age can become overexcited at their own parties.

Some people suggest inviting the same number of children as your child's age. Other parents combine a toddler party with a family party. If you do that, ask adults to help out. Give them jobs to do, like helping with a glitter-and-glue art project! It's hard to watch toddlers when you are talking to other adults.

Plan a theme party

Party planning is easier when you have a theme. Talk to your child, and let her help you pick a theme and plan the games.

Here are some theme ideas for a 3-year-old's party:

- ♥ The alphabet — or first letter of your child's name
- ♥ Teddy bear picnic
- ♥ Circus
- ♥ Rainbows
- ♥ A favorite children's book
- ♥ Wild animal park
- ♥ Dress-up

Plan invitations and games to go with your theme — like "Pin the nose on the teddy bear," or "How many triangles (or rainbows or zebras) can you find?" Pick games everyone can win. You don't need to give prizes for 3-year-olds.

Plan 1 to 1½ hours of games, songs, stories, or easy art projects, plus half an hour for food and presents. Be sure all activities can be easily supervised. Keep food simple and child-friendly. Try to include some healthy choices as well as special ones like cake.

Take turns having quiet activities and active games like a candy hunt, balloon chase, or beanbag toss. **Important: Throw out any pieces of broken balloon right away.** Balloons are a dangerous choking hazard.

Plan a quiet activity like modeling dough or a guessing game just before serving the food. This way, the children aren't overexcited when they eat. Remember to take pictures!

Party favors

Small children don't always understand that presents are for the birthday child. You may want to have a small, inexpensive party favor wrapped for each child to open, or give out treat bags when your child opens presents.

Finally, some children are overwhelmed by the whole thing. Most children get a little overexcited at their birthday parties! Try to keep your sense of humor if your child bursts into tears or hides in the closet.

Remember: The party is for your child. Try to help her have a fun celebration.



Too many activities?

Now that your toddler is approaching her third birthday, you may be thinking about signing her up for activities, like dance lessons or language classes. You may have heard other parents talking about their children's activities and don't want your child to be left behind.

Family researcher William Doherty has expressed concerns about the "over scheduling" of today's children. Research shows there has been a major decline in the amount of free time for children between ages 3 and 12. Free time to play is one important way children learn.

In the rush to ferry children from one activity to another, family members end up spending less time talking with each other and eating meals together, both of which are important for children's healthy development.

National surveys indicate children want to spend more time with their families. Does this mean you shouldn't sign your child up for any classes? No, but keep her schedule reasonable. If you spend most of your time in the car running from one activity to another, this is too much. Remember, time with you is number one on her list!

If your blues go on and on...

Feeling "down in the dumps" once in a while is normal, especially for parents of young children. Everyone has days when they have some of these feelings:

- ♥ Sad or empty
- ♥ Crying easily or for no reason at all
- ♥ No interest in things you used to enjoy
- ♥ Worthless or guilty
- ♥ Slowed down or so restless you can't sit still
- ♥ Tired all the time

Sometimes, we have trouble thinking or making everyday decisions. Sometimes, we have sleep problems. Most of the time, these feelings pass in a few days, and we start feeling better. If these symptoms go on and on, they may be signs of depression.

Depression is a medical illness that affects many people. It is not caused by personal weakness or lack of willpower. It seems to run in some families more than others. Early treatment may help keep the depression from getting worse and may also prevent the depression from coming back later. If you have been having these feelings or symptoms every day for 2 weeks or longer, be sure to tell your doctor. This illness is treatable.

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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.

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