



Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

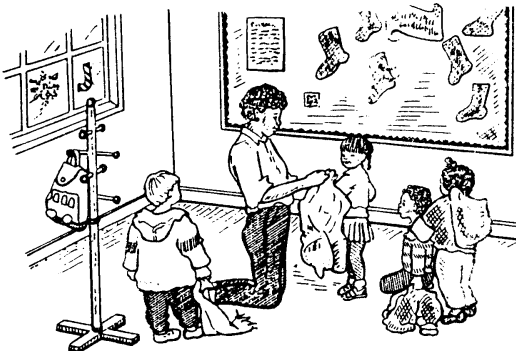
19-20

Your child is special.

Isn't it nice that your child is like no other in the whole world? Parents often worry that their children are not developing as they should. So with every issue of *Parenting the Second and Third Years*, we remind parents that normal children develop at different speeds.

Those who study young children agree that development varies. Normal children may walk as early as 7 months, but many do not walk before they are 18 months old. Normal children may first talk at 8 months or at 24 months, and so it is with all learning.

Your child naturally enjoys learning new skills. You can support and help this learning — not by pushing, criticizing, or comparing your child with other children, but by **teaching, helping, and celebrating** his own successes.



Mealtime routines

By now, your toddler is feeding herself. A high chair can help. Toddlers are such busy little people, they might not want to stop to eat when it's time for a meal or snack. When you put your child in a high chair, she knows it's time to stop what she is doing and eat. Sitting up also helps prevent choking and helps a child focus on eating — at least while she's hungry.

Serve your toddler food at routine times each day, preferably when everyone else is eating. She will learn how to eat by watching you and other family members eat. Don't expect good table manners yet. She will learn these slowly over the next few years.

Spills: Accidents or games?

There will be lots of spills. Most of the time, these will be accidents. If spills happen three or four times in a row, your toddler might be playing or trying to get your attention. This means it is probably time to end the meal.

How can I get my child to eat vegetables?

Surveys show that many children are not eating enough fruits and vegetables.

Here are some tips to help toddlers learn to like and eat fruits and vegetables more often:

- ♥ **Serve the new food often and encourage — don't force — your child to taste it.** Children often need to become familiar with new foods. Eat it yourself without making a big deal of whether she eats it, too. After tasting a new food ten or more times, children often start to like the taste of something they used to think was "icky."
- ♥ **Don't reward children who eat their vegetables with less nutritious foods (dessert).** Studies show that using one food as a reward for eating another teaches the child to like the reward food better than the food you want her to try.
- ♥ **Be realistic and patient.** Everybody has a few tastes they'll never like. If you get frustrated and try to make your child eat vegetables, she will learn to hate them. Family meals may become a battleground instead of a place for pleasant talking and sharing.
- ♥ **Be a good role model.** If you eat different kinds of vegetables, your child probably will, too!

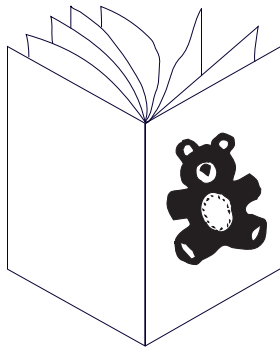
What's it like to be 19 and 20 months old?

How I grow:

- ♥ I explore a lot.
- ♥ I can run without falling too often.
- ♥ I can stand on either foot if I'm holding on to something.
- ♥ I may be able to kick a big ball.
- ♥ I still like to climb on everything.
- ♥ I don't know about safety, so I count on you to keep things safe for me to explore.
- ♥ I like being independent. But sometimes I want to act like a baby.

How I talk:

- ♥ I'm very good at saying "No."
- ♥ I can say about 15 words.
- ♥ I love to name things.
- ♥ I ask a lot of questions, mostly by saying "Why?" or "What's that?" Be patient with me. I am just trying to learn.
- ♥ I can follow simple directions.
- ♥ I like when someone reads to me.
- ♥ I like to listen to nursery rhymes.



What I am learning:

- ♥ I can pull the toilet paper wa-a-a-y out!
- ♥ I can put two pieces together to form a simple puzzle.
- ♥ I can draw an up and down line pretty well.
- ♥ I'm beginning to know what things are for, like a toy hammer is for pounding.

How I get along with others:

- ♥ I love cuddling.
- ♥ I like to help you do simple things.
- ♥ I like to do things without adult help.
- ♥ Even when I'm with other children, I like to play alone.
- ♥ I may treat other children like they are things. I may hurt them.
- ♥ I want to keep my toys to myself, and I may hide them so others can't play with them.
- ♥ I need time to get to know people. I'm afraid of some people.
- ♥ I may be less friendly to adults now, but this will pass.

What I can do for myself:

- ♥ I can feed myself pretty well.
- ♥ I can brush my own teeth. But I won't be able to do a good job for a long time.
- ♥ I may go to bed without complaining.
- ♥ I can let you know when I need dry clothing.
- ♥ I will let you know when I'm going to have a bowel movement — sometimes.

Play I enjoy:

- ♥ I like to play alone, but I like adults to be near me.
- ♥ I like to dress up in adults' clothes and pretend I am an adult.
- ♥ I like picture books, and I love to look at pictures of myself.
- ♥ I like to look at myself in the mirror.
- ♥ I like to have you sing to me.
- ♥ I like to take toys apart.
- ♥ I like rides and walks.
- ♥ I like you to push me on a swing.

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.

Children have different temperaments.

All babies are born unique. Some seem more challenging to parent than others, right from the start. Researchers find that toddlers who seem unusually difficult really are different in some of these ways:

- ♥ **Sensitivity.** Some children notice and get annoyed by sounds, smells, and things touching their skin. Shoes and socks may not feel right, and all tags in clothing have to be cut out.
- ♥ **Activity level.** Some children are always on the go—running, jumping, climbing. They are the ones who seem to “run before they walk.”
- ♥ **Intensity.** Some toddlers seem to talk, laugh, and cry much louder than others. These children tend to get “revved up,” overexcited, or upset more easily.
- ♥ **Adaptability.** All 2-year-olds are stubborn and negative at times. But some children seem to be especially rigid. They get “locked in” to things they are used to and have difficulty handling changes. Even small changes, such as transitions from one activity to another (from sleeping to waking or from playing to coming to dinner) can be hard for them.
- ♥ **Approach or withdrawal.** Some children easily approach new people, places, and things. Others toddlers need time to warm up to new people or situations. They may reject new foods, clothes, or even toys initially, until these become familiar.
- ♥ **Persistence or frustration tolerance.** Some toddlers will keep practicing a new activity or trying out a new toy. Others are more easily frustrated and move on to something else.
- ♥ **Regularity.** By age 2, many children get hungry and sleepy at the same time each day. But some have irregular patterns that make mealtime, bedtime, and toilet training more challenging.
- ♥ **Distractibility or soothability.** Some toddlers are easy to distract and soothe when upset. With others, it is more difficult.

Many parents believe they must be doing something wrong, or their child would have an easier temperament. This is not true. Your actions did not cause your child’s temperament. But if you understand his temperament, you can deal with his challenging behavior in ways that are less stressful for both of you.

To better understand your child’s temperament you can fill out a questionnaire at The Preventive Ounce website (www.preventiveoz.org). This service is free for parents. If you don’t have access to the Internet at home, you can use the computer at your local library. When you get to the website, click on Image of Your Child.

After you complete and return the questionnaire you will immediately receive the following feedback:

- ♥ A temperament profile of your toddler
- ♥ A forecast of likely-to-occur behaviors
- ♥ Strategies for handling behaviors that are specific to your child’s temperament

Remember: Some of the temperament traits that make your child more challenging now may be a strength when he is older. For example, your hard-to-distract (and soothe) toddler may become a school-age child who can easily focus on his homework. Your highly active child may learn to excel in sports. With guidance from you, your “spirited child” can grow up to be a real leader with energy and creativity.

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.



Special toy or blanket

Lots of children have special blankets, teddy bears, or toys. Some children become attached to the strangest things. They claim them and call them their own forever — or at least until someone makes fun of them.

The most common favorite object is a blanket. Your toddler may appear every morning with one thumb in her mouth and the other hand clutching a ratty, tattered blanket.

Don't touch my blanket!

There are some stories about security blankets that would truly surprise you. Heaven forbid that it get lost, stolen (who'd want it?), or washed. That blanket, teddy bear, or toy is a friend who has shared your child's life in sickness and health, in good times and bad. Most of us would welcome such a friend who could do so much for us.

What do you do about these special comforts? Leave them alone. In time, your child will learn the blanket, bear, or other toy isn't going to solve life's problems. She will come to realize she can solve her problems by herself. For now, let her enjoy her comforting "friend."



Be good to yourself: Give yourself a present.

Taking care of a toddler can make you feel like you never have a moment for yourself. If you're feeling stressed out, give yourself a present — **some time just for you.**

Trade baby-sitting with another parent or trade a service like cooking a meal for a few hours of baby-sitting. You've earned this time, you deserve it, and you don't need to be embarrassed to ask for it.

Here are some ideas for spending time on yourself:

- ♥ **Take a long bath**, a walk, or a swim; see a movie; listen to music; or read a book.
- ♥ **Plan your future** — check into classes you might take, jobs you might like, or activities you might enjoy.
- ♥ Spend time with a friend — **without** children along.
- ♥ **Talk to someone** about the stress you feel and what you might do to reduce it.

The time you take just for yourself will help you feel refreshed and ready to face parenthood again.

Homemade toys that teach

MILK CARTON BLOCKS

Block play allows young children to try out **patterns, shapes, and sizes.** They learn how to stack things and what happens when stacks are knocked down. These lightweight building blocks — which cost almost nothing to make — are very popular with children.

Materials

♥ **Milk or cream cartons**, rinsed well

- ♥ **Duct tape**
- ♥ **Adhesive paper or paper and glue** — Be sure the glue label says **nontoxic** or **child safe.**

Making the toy

Take any two cartons of equal size. Turn one over and slip it inside the other so that it makes a block. Tape the edges with heavy tape children can't peel off and swallow. You can cover the blocks with colorful adhesive paper, or paste letters, numbers, or pictures on them.

Safety alert: Avoid burns.

Burns are among the most serious and painful injuries to children. The problems, pain, and scars from a burn could last the rest of a child's life. Most burns to children occur between birth and 4 years.

Most burns to young children are caused by:

- ♥ **Scalds** from hot liquids and foods like coffee, tea, and grease or tap water hotter than 120° to 130° F.
- ♥ **Touching something hot** like a stove, iron, or heater.
- ♥ **Toxic chemicals** such as toilet cleaners (lye).

Burns happen most often in the kitchen when hot liquids are spilled while cooking and serving and when ovens, stoves, pots, and pans are hot. Parents often change their habits and household after a burn, rather than before.

During this age, children grow so fast that parents are often not ready for what a toddler can do. Toddlers can pull hot food off a table or touch a hot stove while they are trying to walk. A 2-year-old will get underfoot in the kitchen, and you can spill hot food on him. He may be able to turn on a faucet or roll a lighter so it starts a flame.

Remember: Your child will surprise you with what he can do.

Expect him to grow and change every day.

Be prepared.

- ♥ **Turn your hot water heater down to 120° to 130° F (low) to prevent scalds in the sink or tub.** Water that is 150° can cause third-degree burns in just 2 seconds. Water at 140° can scald in 10 seconds, and water at 130° can burn in 30 seconds. At 120°, it takes 10 minutes to cause a third-degree burn — which gives you time to prevent pain and scarring. If you live in an apartment, you may need to ask the manager to turn the water heater down.
- ♥ **Check the temperature of the bath water with the back** of your hand or a cooking thermometer before putting your toddler in the tub. Turn off the hot water before the cold, so the faucet cools off and doesn't drip hot water on your child.
- ♥ **Be especially careful when your child is with you in the kitchen.** Don't let a child play in the kitchen when you are not there.
- ♥ **Never leave anything hot on the edge of a table or counter.** Turn pot handles to the back to keep little hands from grabbing. Don't let a coffee pot or fryer cord dangle off a counter. These invite your child to pull on them and could cause severe burns.
- ♥ **Never eat, drink, or carry anything hot when you are carrying your child.** You can't handle both!
- ♥ **Never smoke near your child.** Keep matches and lighters far out of reach.
- ♥ **Store cleaning supplies on the highest shelf of a locked cupboard.**

Give your child a lifetime of happy, healthy smiles.

Your child's first teeth are important for:

- ♥ **Helping her chew and talk.**
- ♥ **Saving space for permanent teeth to grow in straight.**
- ♥ **Helping your child feel good about her smile.**

You can avoid dental problems in your child's future and keep her smiling. Just follow these few easy steps:

- ♥ **Gently clean your toddler's teeth and gums each day** with a damp cloth, gauze, or toothbrush. Use a small, pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste, since children tend to swallow it.
- ♥ **If your child is still using a bottle:**
 - Fill the bottle **only** with milk or water. Do not add sugar.
 - **Offer a bottle only at feeding time.** Do not let your toddler sleep with a bottle.
- ♥ **Avoid sweets.** If your toddler uses a pacifier, never dip it in anything sweet.
- ♥ **Fluoride** — If your drinking water is fluoridated, encourage your child to drink it. If the drinking water is not fluoridated, ask your dentist or doctor about fluoride drops. Fluoride helps strengthen teeth.
- ♥ **Checkups** — Take your child for a dental checkup when she is 1 year of age or within 6 months after her first tooth comes in.



What are the terrible twos?

Most toddlers go through a period at about 2½ years old — some as early as 18 months, some later — when they seem to delight in doing just what you do not want them to do.

This happens because toddlers are learning **independence**. They can do more things on their own and are learning that they can have some power over others. They have learned to say “No” and “I want.” To practice all these new skills, they want what they want **right now**, and they let you know this very clearly.

Sometimes, they want things they shouldn’t have. And sometimes, they ask for things they don’t even want, just to show how powerful they are.

Remember: When your toddler reaches this stage, he is not being nasty on purpose. He’s just showing that he is growing up. Be patient. In a few months, your toddler should be moving out of this difficult period.



Give yourself a break

Don’t get upset at yourself if you sometimes “blow it” and handle your child’s tantrums poorly. Keep trying! Remember: Some children naturally have more tantrums than others because of their temperament, not because you are a bad parent or they are bad children. Soon you may figure out how to head off some tantrums before they start!

Guidance and discipline: Temper tantrums

Sometimes, children between 1 and 3 have temper tantrums. They may cry, shout, hit, bite, throw themselves on the floor, and kick. Some hold their breath. You may not know what started the tantrum. You certainly know you want to stop it!

Reasons for tantrums

Some children have tantrums because they have learned it is a way to get attention or to get something else they want. Children with certain temperaments — more intense and less adaptable — tend to have more frequent tantrums. Tantrums happen most often when children are frustrated, over-tired, hungry, or very excited.

Temper tantrums are normal for children this age. Each situation is different. There is no magic way to handle them. But here are some ideas:

- ♥ **Try to remain calm**, even though this is often hard to do. If you get angry, too, this can make the tantrum even worse.
- ♥ Many times it is best to **ignore a tantrum**. If your child is having a tantrum in a safe place, like the living room carpet, ignore her. Take away her audience.
- ♥ **Keep your child from hurting herself or others.** If she is hitting or biting, you can’t ignore this. Tell her calmly and firmly that it is not OK to hit or bite.
- ♥ **Separate her** from other children or from the place where she’s having her tantrum. Provide a quiet, safe place for her to “cool down.”
- ♥ **Don’t give in.** If you give the child what she wants when she has a tantrum, she will learn to use tantrums to get her own way.
- ♥ When your child has calmed down:
 - **Comfort her, and try to understand why** she had the tantrum.
 - **Briefly discuss the problem.** Lay down your rules, and explain how you expect her to act.
- ♥ **Study your child’s tantrums to see if there is a pattern you can avoid.** If you start to notice signs that your child is getting “revved up,” you can try to head off tantrums by using soothing activities (such as rocking or swinging) or distractions (like humor or a change of scenery) that help her calm down.



Games for growing

BIG AND LITTLE

Teach your child about **big** and **little**.

How to play

- ♥ Put three big and three little blocks on the floor.
- ♥ Pile the blocks up in different patterns and describe what you are doing. For example: "Now, I'll take the big block. Now, I'll put the little block on it," and so on.
- ♥ Now say something like: "We need a big block. Give me a big block." Next, ask for the little blocks, so your child learns big and little. Encourage your child to make up other block games or big and little games you can play together.

TOUCH A WORD

Help your child point to objects named and **learn the words** for these objects.

How to play

- ♥ Turn pages in a picture book, and say to your child, "Where's the car?" or "Touch the horse."
- ♥ Then say: "Now look at this. This is the **word** for car." Point to the word, and then say: "Point to the car. Touch the **word** for car."

Remember: Play this and any game only if it is fun for both you and your child.



Happy dancing

Toddlers like to do things with their parents. They like music, rhythm, and body movement. **Happy dancing** combines all these things.

Turn on some music. Teach your child to do a happy dance. Dance to fast music and to slow music. Hold hands and dance together. Clap your hands to music, tap big wooden spoons together, or beat on something that makes a nice noise.

Show your toddler how to keep the rhythm and play along with the beat. Children grow up to like the kind of music they hear when they are little. Play different kinds of music, and your child will learn to like many kinds.

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