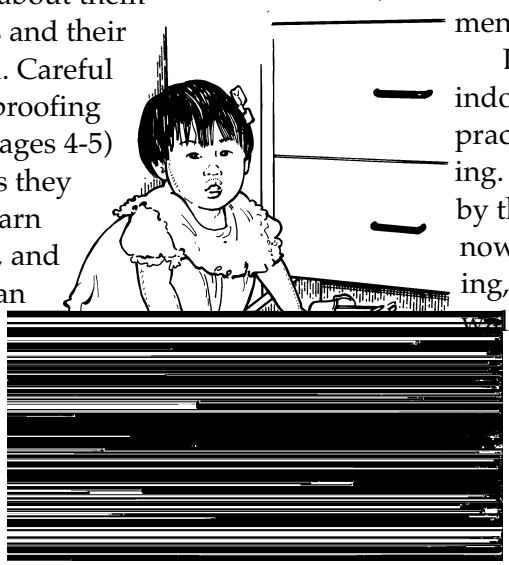
15-16

Your child is curious about everything.

Help your child explore her world. Most 15- and 16-month-old children are moving fast. They crawl, scoot, and walk. How exciting it is for them! Their world is full of new things to touch, throw, climb on — and to fall from or knock down.

Your cuddly baby has become a lively little person. And that means you have to be lively, too. This can be fun, but it can sometimes make you tired, anxious, or angry.

Playpens are OK when you need to rest or to calm down. But keep playpen times short. Children learn more when they explore. Toddlers need to learn about their surroundings to feel good about themselves and their world. Careful childproofing (see pages 4-5) means they can learn safely, and you can enjoy them more.



Help your toddler learn about movement.

Help me discover how things move. If I like dropping something from my high chair, give me a paper napkin to drop so I can watch how the air moves it. Give me a sponge or soft ball to throw.

I like to hear the sounds things make when they hit the floor. Tell me the names of things and what they do. Roll, bounce, splat! I will soon find out that things that go splat get your attention!

Bounce me gently on your knee or lap, or clap with me in time to music. I like the movement and the music.

Let me have space indoors and outdoors to practice crawling and walking. I am going to be running by the end of the year. Right now, let me practice crawling, standing, sitting, and walking on my own.

Telling *why* teaches cooperation.

How do parents help children learn to cooperate? To find out, Alice Sterling Honig, a professor of child development, looked at studies of young children. The studies showed that parents usually control and guide toddlers in one of two ways:

1. **Power control** includes spanking, using force, and taking away things or favors. It also includes not hugging, kissing, or talking to the child.
2. **Reasoning control** means telling the child **why** she should act a certain way, in simple words she can understand. Reasoning means pointing out that the behavior could hurt her or others.

For example, if your child throws sand, power control might be yelling or spanking her. Reasoning might be telling her that throwing sand could hurt other children by getting sand in their eyes — or in her own — and she must stop.

Reasoning works better.

The studies Professor Honig reviewed showed that **parents who used reasoning were better able to control their children's behavior and teach them to cooperate.**

- Keep your child away from stoves and heaters. If necessary, take off front gas stove knobs and keep them in a drawer.
- Keep pot handles turned inward, away from the edge of the stove.

Poisoning

- Always lock doors that lead to dangerous areas like the garage or basement.
- Never store poisons — like cleaning supplies — in food containers or near food. Consider using earth-friendly and less toxic cleaners like baking soda or vinegar.
- Find out if your house or yard plants are poisonous. Put plants up high when you can. This also keeps curious little fingers out of the dirt!
- Do not leave alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs where children can reach them.
- Do not allow smoking around your child, and keep ash trays out of reach at all times. Eating cigarettes can kill a child.
- **Keep the Poison Control number by the phone.** Look inside the front cover of your phone book, or call directory assistance to get the number. The Wisconsin Poison Control number is (800) 222-1222.

Drowning

- **A toddler can drown in less than 2 inches of water.** Never leave a child alone around water, even the toilet or the diaper pail.
- Never leave a child alone in the bathtub — not even to answer the doorbell or the phone.
- Put gravity-latched safety gates around permanent swimming pools. A pool alarm can tell you if something falls in the water.

Guns

- If guns of any kind are kept in the house, store them unloaded in a locked cabinet.
- Use trigger locks on all firearms.
- Store bullets separately.

❤ ❤ ❤

Don't rush toilet training.

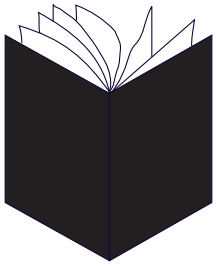
Toilet training goes easier if you don't rush it. Children are ready at different ages. Many girls are ready at about age 2 or later, while many boys are ready at about 2½ or later.

Sure, you'd like to be rid of mess and diapers, but be patient. When your child is ready for toilet training, you will probably find it will go quickly and easily. We'll be writing more about this in a few months.

Print resources

What to Expect: The Toddler Years, by A. Eisenberg, H. E. Murkoff, and S. E. Hathaway (New York: Workman Publishing), 1994.

Toddlers and Parents: A Declaration of Independence, by T. B. Brazelton (New York: Dell Publishing), 1989.



Each child is unique.

Individual differences in children's style of behavior (or **temperament**) may be more noticeable as they become mobile. Highly active children develop large motor skills earlier and so may spend more time running and climbing. Quiet, watchful children develop small motor skills earlier and so may spend more time building block towers and looking at picture books.

Each child's temperament influences the activities he prefers and his skill development. But every child will develop both large and small motor skills as they grow. Watch for the new things your child is learning. Enjoy him for the unique person he is!

When there are two languages at home

Most people who have studied language learning suggest that if you have two languages at home, speak both of them to your child from the beginning.

Some experts suggest that one adult always speak one language, and another adult speak the second language. This way, the child can keep the two languages separate, and may be less confused about hearing and speaking them.

A child learning two languages will learn to talk a bit slower at first than a child learning only one language. But by his fourth or fifth birthday, he should catch up and be able to speak both languages well.

Guidance and discipline: Rules

Sometime between 15 and 24 months, toddlers may become resistant and defiant. You will probably hear them say "no" a lot.

Toddlers want to test their independence and power and show you how important they are. They may do this by saying "No!" This is a sign they are growing up. Be patient.

Making rules

Early on, you need to choose some simple rules — a few, not too many. Make rules your toddler can understand and follow. Most important, make rules that you can enforce all the time.

Rules like these help your toddler learn that he can and should follow rules, even if he really doesn't like them. He needs to know this to grow into a responsible adult.

Be consistent. If you have a rule about only eating while sitting in the kitchen, enforce this every day. Otherwise, you teach your toddler that rules don't matter or that they can be easily broken.

Use reasoning.

Explain in simple words **why** you have the rule. Say something like: "Hold my hand when we cross the street so I can keep you safe." This helps your toddler learn that rules have a purpose.

Studies show that children follow rules better when they are given reasons. Understanding the reason helps toddlers remember the rule.

Homemade toys that teach

Some of the best toys can be those you make from things you have around the house. Each issue of *Parenting the Second and Third Years* will have a section on homemade toys that can be fun and educational.

TOUCH TREASURE BOX

This toy gives toddlers a chance to collect and learn about **shapes** and **textures** of different objects and materials.

Making the toy

Print your child's name in large letters with a crayon on top of a small box, like a shoebox. With your toddler's help, glue objects of different textures and shapes inside the box. Use nontoxic glue.

You might want to make separate treasure boxes for special kinds of things. For example, make a box of all round things, or things that are all hard, all furry, or all smooth. You can make a treasure box of things from a special occasion, trip, or person. Make sure these things are not sharp, dangerous, or small enough to choke on.

Playing

Your toddler will enjoy just looking at and touching the things in her treasure box. Encourage her to tell you about the objects. You and she can take turns talking about the objects.

Health: Prevent lead poisoning.

Lead from paint or plaster, tap water, folk remedies, or contaminated soil can harm your child's brain. Each year, many children suffer permanent brain damage from lead exposure — most often from putting their fingers in their mouths after touching dust from old or broken painted surfaces.

Children with lead poisoning usually don't look or act sick. The only way to be sure is with a blood test.

Prevention

If you live in an older building — especially one with lead paint or plaster — **take action.**

Lead paint becomes a problem when it chips or turns to dust. Windows and doors create lead dust every time they open and close. It also becomes dust during remodeling or as outdoor paint weathers.

To keep lead dust levels down, wash painted surfaces weekly with warm water and soap, using paper towels. Rinse well. Use wet paper towels to remove paint chips, and throw them away. Wash your child's hands often, especially before eating. And wash their toys weekly.

Painting, wallpapering, or paneling lead-painted surfaces covers them. Replacing lead paint-covered woodwork and frames may be safer than removing the paint. Use a HEPA vacuum (high efficiency particulate air filter). Regular vacuums stir up lead dust.

But to rid your home of danger, you need to remove the lead. This can be hard — and risky. Removing lead improperly can make the problem worse. You should have trained experts remove the lead paint.

You can find removal specialists under "Lead Abatement" in the Yellow Pages® of the phone book or through your state health department. Some larger cities have lead removal programs. Call your local health department. Children and pregnant women should leave until the work has been finished and the area thoroughly cleaned.

Test the soil around your home to see if it contains lead from weathered paint. Keep children from playing in the dirt. Plant bushes around your home to keep children away from the soil. Remove shoes before entering your home.

Never let a child chew on a window sill or a painted toy. Toys are recalled each year because they have lead paint.

If your home has lead water service lines or copper plumbing with lead solder, **flush the tap for 1 minute before drinking, especially in the morning**. This will remove most lead from tap water.

Ask your child's doctor or local health department about having your child tested for lead.

If your child has high lead levels in the blood, your doctor can prescribe a chelating medication to remove some of it. Good nutrition — including foods such as milk and meat — can help prevent some of the damage. The best plan is to prevent lead poisoning in the first place.

To find labs, contact your local health department or housing authority, or call (800) 424-LEAD.

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