

Purposeful Play with Infants & Toddlers

A Companion Guide to
North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines
for Birth to Age 3



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Healthy development is built on the small moments between baby and a loving adult as they interact and experience the world around them.

Unlike the heart, lungs, or kidneys, which are miniature duplicates of adult's, the brain is the only organ that isn't fully developed at birth. Although the brain has cells, the connections that create knowledge and understanding are made throughout life.

Positive early experiences are crucial in early childhood because all of our foundational skills are hard-wired during that time (visual and auditory, language, physical, and social-emotional). In addition, how the world interacts with us is how we understand the world to be! How you think, feel, react, and interact is established early in life.

*The human brain
develops more rapidly
between birth and
age 5 than during any
other period in life.*

What Are Early Learning Guidelines?

North Dakota's Early Learning Guidelines (ND ELG) for Birth to 3 provide a framework for understanding and communicating a common set of developmentally appropriate expectations for infants and toddlers.

Parents, families, and caregivers play an important role in supporting the unique growth of each child. Whether you are new to the joys of infant/toddler experiences or looking for new ways to play and enhance learning; this booklet is created to provide examples of how to implement the guidelines through fun, hands-on, play-based activities.

You can use this information to:

Understand how infants and toddlers grow and learn.

Plan purposeful play that can assist in growth and learning.

Develop daily routines to support children's growth and development.



Purposeful Play Activities

Activities in this book support North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines. These guidelines are research-based, measurable descriptions of the things young children are expected to know and be able to do at each age and stage of development. There are four domains, or categories for learning, for children in ages 0 to 36 months.

Turn to page 44 to learn more about Early Learning Guidelines. ►►

Activity Areas

Social Emotional Development, the base of all other development, is the ability to form close and secure relationship as well as experience, regulate, and express emotions appropriately. How each child accomplishes this is unique, and adult's expectations, reactions, and interactions should support each child's developing abilities.

Language Development involves utilizing communication skills of listening, understanding, gestures, verbal cues, and speaking to share thoughts with others. It also includes emergent literacy skills.

Cognitive Development is the development of the brain and the process of learning to think, reason, and solve problems.

Physical and Motor Development is the ability to coordinate and control the body. It includes large and small muscles, balance, spatial awareness, eye-hand coordination, and development of self help skills.

For young children, learning is incredibly integrated. One activity can assist in the development of several skill areas. For this reason, this booklet arranges activities according to age group. However, because children develop in the same general pattern but at different rates, and skills grow from simple to complex you are encouraged to explore and adapt activities as appropriate for each child's needs. Additional activities of interest to you and your child may be found in the section before or after the age range listed.

Setting the Stage for Success

Various factors can impact children's learning and play. Below are some tips and things to consider as you set the stage for purposeful play with infants and toddlers.

Focus on the child's interests and age-related needs, not yours.

- Keep in mind that play is done with children, not to them.
- Watch children first then decide how you should play with them. For example, do they want you to play next to them, explore materials with them, offer assistance or model play for them?
- Expand play by providing more items, such as providing toy animals along with blocks. Then model how items can be used together.
- Describe children's activities and efforts and ask them questions about what they are doing.
- Acknowledge and praise children for successes and efforts.

The Environment

A quality learning environment should let a child know that:

This is a good place. *"I feel safe and comfortable here. There are interesting, fun things for me to do here."*

The adults are here to help me. *"I am not alone. Someone is here for me if I need them."*

I can explore things here. *"I can look around on my own or with help. This place has items that are interesting and will help me learn things."*

I can choose to be alone or with others. *"There are places where I can be by myself and group spaces where I can play with friends."*

I can find toys and know where to put them back. *"I can find the toys I want to play with and can put them away when I'm done."*

Learning Experiences

Appropriate play opportunities for infants and toddlers involve:

Child choice. Children show preference to materials that meet their learning needs at a specific time. For example, a child learning to pull up will also seek out ways to climb as they develop skills to walk.

Routine times. A day in the life of infants and toddlers is filled with routines - eating, diapering/toileting, washing hands, etc. Utilize these moments by incorporating fun and play!

Repetition. It takes several opportunities to master a new skill. Repeating a fun activity over and over strengthens concepts.

Movement. Children are whole body learners. Swings, exersaucers, and highchairs put children in unnatural positions for acquiring muscle control. Limit the use of these to devices to 15 minutes at one time.

Play-based activities. Above all, activities for infants and toddlers should be fun and playful.

Equipment

Young children enjoy playing with the simplest items. If an item can safely be touched, tasted, smelled, stacked, dumped, sorted or make noise it can be used as a learning tool. Most of the items in this booklet are low cost or can be found in your home.

Keep Materials Interesting

Rotate toys when children seem bored. Bringing out the plastic animals after a few weeks in the closet makes them new again.

Group toys and allow children to do the same. Put plastic animals with playdough, bring play kitchen food and pie pans outside to the sandbox, use nesting cups with cotton balls, etc.

Trade toys with others. Switch out your materials with another adult (parent/teacher/staff). Make sure all items are properly sanitized!

Young Infants

0 to 8 MONTHS

Young infants are in a state of rapid development. Everything they touch, taste, feel, and experience is new. As they unfold from newborns to mobile explorers, children at this stage need security of knowing there are trusted, loving adults who will protect and provide for them. Without this constant reinforcement of safety, babies do not feel confident and secure enough to explore all the new experiences around them.

Safe Positioning is Very Important

Safe positioning is especially important during this stage because young infants have not yet developed the skills needed to reposition themselves on their own by rolling over or pulling themselves up.

It is very important to monitor a young infant's position when sleeping and during the day. Positional asphyxia, a type of suffocation, occurs when the body is put in a position that restricts airflow. For young infants this can occur any time they are in a semi-seated position such as highchairs, bouncy seats, strollers, infant swings, car seats, or infant carriers. Except when being transported in a vehicle, move sleeping babies into a back to sleep position.

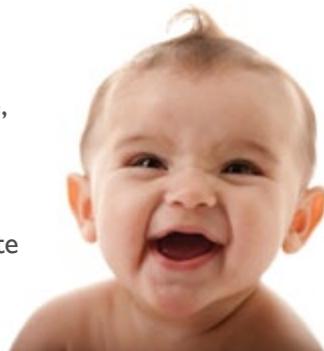
The federal Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued safety alerts regarding the hazards of the concerns of these devices. ALWAYS follow the manufactures directions.

Did You Know?

- Much of human brain development occurs AFTER birth and is therefore greatly impacted by early experiences.
- The senses of sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch are the brain's first learning tools for most babies. Purposeful play helps to nurture these senses.
- Gross/large muscle coordination matures before the fine/small muscles become coordinated.
- Development begins at the head and moves to the feet.
- Development progresses from the center of the body to the arms and legs, and then the fingers and toes.
- It may take a young child anywhere from one to six months to master a new physical skill.
- Although development happens in sequence and in a predictable pattern, it does not necessarily progress smoothly. It may appear choppy – new skills may seem to appear suddenly or learned skills may seem to disappear for a while. This is all part of normal development.
- Development progresses from simple skills toward more complex skills.

Temperaments

Whether they are timid and cautious, easy-going and flexible, or spirited and feisty; knowing and understanding a child's natural reaction to experiences helps you to read cues, anticipate actions and reactions, and plan successful play for each child.



Magical Movement

Soothing movements, soft touches, rocking, and swaying provide sensory, physical, and social-emotional experiences for baby. Swaying back and forth mimics the movements felt in the womb and helps to foster feelings of trust and security. Chant a soothing tune as you sway or rock back and forth.

“Rock-a-bye baby,”



FAST FACT

Swings, bouncers or exersaucers don't provide the social emotional connection and sense of trust that comes from cradling and rocking a baby in your arms. These items can also hinder physical development by placing children in positions that aren't natural for acquiring muscle control.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Babies often have preferred ways of being held. Try different positions such as a cradling, football or upright hold. Add a bounce or rhythmic noise. Share baby's preference with other caregivers.

Peek-at-Me Games

! RESEARCH REPORT

The power of imitation can be seen through interactions with newborns. Because of their fascination with faces and need for connection; we can teach them how to stick out their tongues at only a few hours old.

We also know infants with caregivers who have more animated responses are more securely attached.

“peek-a-boo.”



Babies are born to connect.

- Gaze into baby’s eyes and have an animated and calm conversation by raising your eyebrows, opening and closing your mouth, and smiling.
- Play peek-a-boo by holding a blanket between you and baby. When baby rediscovers you behind the blanket, reward them with excitement and encouragement.
- Introduce mirror play to help a baby discover their own faces and expressions. Alter the peek-a-boo game by helping the baby find objects under a blanket or in a tissue box.
- Routine times, such as diapering and feeding, are ideal for looking and learning! This is built in face-to-face time to connect!

FAST FACT

Being able to hold the image of an adult in their mind is the first stage to the important milestone of object permanence. (When you aren’t around, you still exist). We begin to develop this skill in young infants through the emotional connections we make with them during our face-to-face interactions.

Reading Ready

Infancy is a wonderful time to introduce baby to the joys of reading.

Infants don't yet understand the words at this stage, but they do enjoy listening to you talk about the pictures and what's happening on the page.

"Look at the sheep. The sheep says baa. Yes, you are pointing at the sheep."

At this stage, a child's exploration of the object (book) overrides your need to finish the story. For this reason, washable or board books are good choices.

FAST FACT

Reading builds a variety of skills:

visual through colorful pictures,

social emotional bonds through close interactions,

physical through hands-on exploration,

language through hearing words.



RESEARCH REPORT

Reading to babies builds receptive vocabulary skills (the words they understand).



MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Make books using pictures from magazines, personal photos or take pictures of other things baby likes.

"Yes, that's a sheep... baa."



Making it Happen

FAST FACT

Children discover what things do by playing with them. Early experiments with textures, shapes, sizes, sounds, and tastes provide an opportunity to practice foundational skills of discovery.

Cause and effect leads to discovery.

Children learn about themselves and the world by using their voice, hands and feet to make things happen.

- Rattles, shakers and push/pull toys provide opportunities for baby to learn how their movements can make sounds and move objects.
- Dumping and filling containers teaches size, shape, spatial concepts, and motor skills.

“You can make noise!”



MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Fill an empty tissue box or paper towel roll with ribbons or scarves and encourage baby to pull them out. Help baby create sound by offering them pans and wooden spoons or containers* filled with pebbles, sand, or leaves.

SAFETY TIP

Make sure containers are securely closed and with superglue and duct tape.

Exploring Together

Children need your help to **discover** new places and objects.

Taking baby to different places or showing them objects to look at, touch, and listen to are important experiences you can do together.

You can also help them explore and experiment with the sound of their own voice. Repeating familiar words and singing songs are wonderful ways to help children discover the rhythm of language.

FAST FACT

When you imitate baby's actions and noises, you are telling them that what they do is important. Encourage baby by mimicking to help them develop language and understanding.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Go outside. Feel the breeze, examine the smell and color of a flower or put snow in a plastic bucket and introduce the sound of "brrrrrrr."

SAFETY TIP

Infants are oral explorers. Make sure items used are safe if ingested and don't present a choking hazard.

"The snow is cold... brrrr!"



Tracking Techniques

FAST FACT

As children learn to watch movements in space they will begin to reach out to try to explore the objects.

Learning to follow objects through space

develops hand-eye coordination and depth perception - the basic skills needed for reaching and eventually reading.

- Provide tracking experiences by placing an interesting toy or rattle above the child and moving it slowly back and forth.
- Vary the game by using ribbons, bubbles or the light from a flashlight on the wall as children gain the abilities to move their head and eyes.



MAKE IT YOUR OWN
Babies also track black and white graphics. Make your own tracking picture book by drawing thick black lines, a checkerboard or a large spiral on laminated cardstock.

Tummy Time Fun

Tummy time develops core and neck muscles

a baby needs to sit, crawl, and walk. However, not all babies enjoy this position. Finding interesting ways to develop muscles makes the experience more fun for both of you.

- Place baby horizontally on a rolled up towel, bolster, or ball. Gently rocking side to side assists the development of balance. Most babies will also attempt to lift and turn their heads which helps them build upper body strength.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Chant a song or rhyme to the rhythm as you roll baby back and forth. Try doing the activity in front of a floor length mirror or come around in front of baby to enjoy a face-to-face conversation.

- ✦ **SAFETY TIP**
Provide protected spaces for tummy time to practice muscle development safely. Establish infant only areas with visual barriers (gates, low shelves, bolster pillows, rugs, etc.).



- ✦ **SAFETY TIP**
Hold baby securely. Infants often have jerky reflexes and can move unexpectedly.

Mastering Muscles

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Hang baby's favorite toys or visually interesting objects above the changing table to encourage reaching. Duct tape ribbons on a spoon and hold for baby to bat with arms or legs. Provide toys for baby to reach for, grab at, and hit to help them build upper body muscle control.



SAFETY TIP

Make sure homemade items are safe and do not present a choking hazard.

A newborn's reflex movements become more controlled as their physical abilities expand and develop.

- Place baby on their back and gently move their legs in bicycling motions while talking, singing, or chanting to help practice emerging skills. Encourage them with smiles and applause when they attempt the motions by themselves.
- As children gain control of this movement, make your hands or a tin pie plate the "bulls-eye" for little feet!

“Baby’s legs go round and round.”



Mobile Infants

8 to 18 MONTHS

Mobility and exploration are the defining skills at this stage. Mobile infants' ability to move about increases their ability to discover and learn about the world around them. As they play with toys, materials, and people, they build skills in understanding, awareness, relationships, and language. Mobile infants are eager to explore, but continue to seek out the secure support from a trusted adult.

Children at this stage of development seek:

Encouragement - Help children feel good about their attempts.

Hands-on experiences - Provide opportunities for them to explore with all five senses.

Progressive activities - Build upon skills as children are ready for new challenges.

Practice and repetition - Allow time to explore and discover through trial and error.

Interaction with others - Model and encourage children to imitate your actions and voice.



Did You Know?

Young children do not think or learn like adults.

They don't have the experience to understand and make connections that adults do. They need time to process information, practice it, and truly understand. Think about it: Can you successfully perform a new skill the first couple times you try it?

Learning is acquired in steps.

Just as an infant crawls before learning to walk, so too does a child move gradually from simple thinking skills to more and more complex thinking skills.

Young children learn by doing.

Hands-on interactions with real things and people are more relevant and meaningful. Young children don't have the ability to think about characteristics of things that aren't in front of them. Seeing a picture of an apple doesn't tell them how an apple feels, tastes, smells, etc. They need to have the experience with a real apple to understand those aspects.

Play is the natural way for children to learn.

During play, children can observe, explore, investigate, and experiment. Purposeful planning of the toys and materials helps children learn.

Children construct their own knowledge.

As children develop an understanding of the world, they use play to build new thoughts by trying new things to discover more.

I'm Just Like You

Children are learning as they watch you go about your day. You can help children build body awareness and new social skills simply by letting them mirror your actions.

- Teach body parts by playing matching games. “My nose (*tap, tap*), where’s your nose (*tap, tap*)”.
- Provide children with dolls & bottles, books, toy phones, and washcloths to wipe tables or small brooms that they can use to follow your lead.
- Encourage pretend play by offering hats, scarves, and jackets. Have a mirror available so they can see themselves in their new role.

FAST FACT

You can foster self-help skills by having your child take part in dressing, handwashing, tooth brushing, combing hair and eating with child-safe utensils.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Demonstrate that chores can be fun by putting your work to music and rhyme. “*Clean up, clean up everybody, everywhere. Clean up, clean up everybody do your share.*”



My Turn, Your Turn

FAST FACT

Children build important foundational skills of sharing when you engage them in playing a game of catch, repeat the words of a finger play, or talk back and forth in ways that mimic conversation.

Imitation is a powerful learning tool.

Babies learn through modeling as they pretend to talk on the phone or repeat the words we use.

- Sing simple action songs like “Patty-cake, patty-cake” or “Itsy-bitsy Spider” to build baby’s vocabulary, motor control, and memory.
- Teach the beginning elements of sharing by rolling a ball back and forth and using the words, “My turn, your turn”.
- Sing or chant words along with gestures such as clapping or finger plays to help baby develop auditory memory and rhythm.

“Your turn... let’s share”



Teaching Time

Children need time to learn expectations and shouldn't be disciplined for practicing. Our focus, as adults, should be to teach social emotional awareness, social expectations and guide children to appropriate behaviors through redirection, distraction, choices, and gentle reminders.

- Label emotions by making happy, sad, scared, or mad faces in the mirror.
- Show children how to help each other feel better by modeling nice touches and praising positive behavior.
- Introduce manner words and model by using “please”, “thank you”, turn taking, helping, etc.

FAST FACT

Children learn how to “be” by what and how we teach them. Change your don'ts to dos.

Model using quiet voices instead of yelling.

Model sitting on a chair instead of saying “Don't sit on the table.”

Model gentle touches instead of saying “Don't hit.”

Model using words instead of telling children not to bite.

“I'm sorry you feel sad.”



Wonderful Words

FAST FACT

Self-talk (“I am washing your hands.”) and parallel-talk (“You are making bubbles.”) are critical components to language learning, and linking words, actions, and ideas.



RESEARCH REPORT

Children with fewer word experiences and literacy resources acquire a vocabulary more slowly and learn fewer words.

First words often emerge during this stage.

As language begins to develop, your job is to help children learn the words that represent the experiences or items they are exploring.

- Mirror familiar actions with meaningful words such as “Wash hands”, “All clean”, “Sit down”, “Drink”, etc. Expand descriptions as skills grow such as: “Ball”, “Red ball”, “Big red ball”.
- Choose books with pictures of familiar objects that you can help label. Make sure they are durable and can be mouthed, banged, and repeatedly explored.

“You’re touching my nose.”



Songs & Rhymes

Singing and finger plays provide language experiences in a fun and engaging way. Recall songs from your own childhood, add your own words to familiar tunes or make up tunes to fit the situation.



Five Little Monkeys

Five little monkeys
(Hold up five fingers.)
jumping on the bed.
One fell off and bumped his head.
(Tap your head with your fist.)
Mama called the doctor
(Put hand on the side of your head)
and the doctor said,
“No more monkeys
(shake head back and forth.)
jumping on the bed!”
Continue with:
Four little monkeys (four fingers)
Three little monkeys (three fingers)
Two little monkeys (two fingers)
One little monkey (one finger)
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!
Shhhhhh
(put finger to mouth)
They're finally asleep and resting their
heads. (lay head on hands)

Old MacDonald

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.
And on his farm he had some chicks,
E-I-E-I-O.
With a chick, chick here, And a chick,
chick there,
Here a chick, there a chick, Everywhere
a chick, chick,
Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O.
And on that farm he had a (insert
another animal).

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

I'm a Little Teapot

I'm a little teapot,
Short and stout,
Here is my handle, (one hand on hip)
Here is my spout, (other arm out with
elbow and wrist bent)
When I get all steamed up,
Hear me shout,
Tip me over and pour me out!
(lean over toward spout)



Enthusiastic Explorers

FAST FACT

Children in this stage are continually clearing cupboards, shelves, tables, trays, boxes, etc. This process is actually their way of exploring what they can reach. Young children are also curious about others. People are objects to be discovered and babies will often explore actions and reactions by touching faces, pushing, crawling and pulling on others.

Thinking and understanding grows as children explore objects, space, and situations.

- Variations of “drop and you pick up” games help children discover they can control their environment, and you!
- Moving into, around, and through spaces, tables, tunnels, cardboard boxes, and tents helps baby discover how their body works.
- Children gain understanding as they maneuver, manipulate, touch, taste, shake, and bang items of interest.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Set aside a baby-safe cupboard where children can safely open doors and explore inside. Drape a blanket over the table to create a tunnel for adventures. Place the baby gate on the second or third step instead of on the bottom for climbers.



Wibbly Wobbly

Children begin to act on their balance and muscle control

by crawling, pulling up and then toddling around. Several activities can assist in this process.

- Encourage baby to use their core and leg muscles to kick objects. Hold baby under the arms and swing their legs to kick at the ball.
- Assist in motivating baby to pull up and cruise around furniture by placing favorite toys on top of ottomans, the other end of the couch, coffee tables, or chairs.
- Provide baby with moveable objects that push and pull around easily to practice crawling and eventually walking from place to place.

- ✱ **SAFETY TIP**
Follow baby-proofing guidelines to transform your responses from “no, don’t touch,” into “go and explore.”

FAST FACT

Devices such as walkers, exersaucers, or jumpers can actually hinder, not help, physical development because they place children in positions that aren’t natural for acquiring muscle control.



Mini Muscle Skills

FAST FACT

Holding and rotating knobbed puzzle pieces to make them fit is a great way to introduce problem solving and encourage fine motor, wrist, and hand coordination.



Fine muscle and small motor skills emerge

as children refine their large motor skills. A variety of simple activities provide effective ways to help children develop their ability to grasp, pinch, hold, turn, and twist items.

- Fill a baby bottle with Cheerios* and help baby learn to pour them out and put them back in.
- Have baby pull pieces of fabric from a tissue box or tube.
- Introduce scribbling with fingers by writing in the sand, finger painting, or coloring with crayons and markers.
- Combine storytelling and singing with finger plays and hand or sock puppets.

RESEARCH REPORT

Hand preference is tied to brain development. Children begin to show a left or right preference around age 3, as their nervous system and muscular systems mature. Don't try and make a child use a particular hand. It's best to follow their preference.

SAFETY TIP

Children at this stage are still very oral. Be aware of choking hazards and choose small foods, not toys, to help children develop their pincer grasps.

Toddlers

18 to 36 MONTHS

Older infants and toddlers continue to experience the world around them through hands-on exploration. In addition, they are also exploring their independence and control over their environments, including the people around them. As they seek new ways to make things work they gain verbal, thinking, and physical skills. Although toddlers continually try to do things on their own, they need support of trusting adults to help set boundaries and control their emerging emotions.

Steps for Successful Guidance

Be in tune with each child's needs, preferences, and temperaments.

Build a trusting relationship by meeting children's needs for safety and security. Children need to feel that you love them.

Set up an environment that allows for discovery. Allow for messes and exploration.

Keep children busy by providing materials that interest them and fit their age and skill-related needs.

Provide clear and consistent expectations and age-appropriate consequences.



Did You Know?

Common physical and emotional characteristics we associate with toddlers are also indicators of learning and development.

Messy/Awkward/Clumsy

At the same time they are learning to control their muscles, toddlers are explorers and have an inborn need to discover things around them through their senses. They touch, smell, taste, bang (listen to), and explore (look at) everything to figure out what it does. How do you learn to use new items (phones, tools, gadgets)?

Determined/Willful/Stubborn

They are focused on identity. Think about the milestones they are encouraged to meet. (I'm a boy/girl, I have eyes, ears, a nose, etc., I can use my words to tell you what I want, I can make toys move, I can put on my socks, etc.). Their desire for independence is a good thing. Just remember to set the boundaries they also need.

Frustrated

The transition to knowing what they want and being able to tell you OR being able to do it themselves is difficult. We often misinterpret their attempts to communicate. When needs aren't met, tantrums, hitting, and biting can happen.

*The difference between
a toddler and an adult is that we
have learned muscle control and
strategies to contain our emotions.*

A Letter from a Toddler

I am a toddler. I am a super snooper.

I search and check everything within my reach
and often beyond.

I am curious, too curious at times.

I declare my independence, often quite loudly.

I know I can do it, all by myself.

But, Please stay close.

I need you there,

To help keep me From hurting myself

When I am too curious.

I need you to encourage me,

and allow me to try to do it by myself,

and to help when I can't,

or when I get frustrated.

I need you To hug and cuddle with me.

If I do something you don't like, Tell me.

Show me a better way.

Please don't reject me. Please be patient.

I have really only been in this world a short while.

The world and its ways are still

so very, very new to me.

-from a toddler

Author: Anonymous



Fantastic Feelings

FAST FACT

Toddlers use biting or hitting to express frustration when they lack skills to communicate feelings like: “I need space”, “It’s overexciting here”, “I’m bored”, “I don’t like it when...”

If you understand what they are trying to express, you can respond appropriately and help them learn new ways to deal with their feelings.

Labeling emotions helps

children react appropriately. When you encourage children to identify the cause of butterflies in their tummy, giggles, tears, or a heaviness in their chest you are helping them manage those feelings and regulate reactions.

- Use mirrors to make faces and label the emotions. “Show me a mad face. Good job, you look really mad.”
- Then talk about appropriate ways to work through those emotions. “If you are happy should you jump on the couch? Where can you jump?”
- Reinforce positive behaviors. “I see that you are mad and you sat on the chair instead of throwing the Lego. That was a good choice!”

“Good choice.. high five!”



No... Mine.. I'll Do It

Declarations of independence

have less to do with defiant behavior and more to do with a toddler's exploration of self and identity. As toddlers expand their self-help and self-regulation skills they are figuring out how much control they have over their environments. Our job is to help guide them into appropriate behaviors and responses by offering them play opportunities to explore those feelings of me, mine, and I can do it!

- Provide plenty of dress up clothes and accessories for toddlers to practice what they see you doing. Pretend play with baby dolls and household items (dishes, food, phones, brooms, washcloths, etc.) helps children practice self-help and social skills.
- When playing with groups of children make sure you have multiple toys so several children can participate without arguments.
- Remember it takes several practices to figure something out. Allow children time to button, zip, dress, etc.

FAST FACT

Potty training is a giant self-help and self-control skill learned during toddlerhood. Readiness hinges on physical control and emotional independence, not age. By providing experiences to practice independence (like getting dressed) we can help toddlers gain skills needed to use the potty by themselves.



Language Learners

FAST FACT

Language develops at a different pace for each child. The important part is that they understand and respond to you and they are able to communicate their needs to you.

Toddlerhood is a time for language explosions!

During this stage sporadic words turn into understandable phrases which will turn into choppy sentences. Here are some ways to help toddlers use words:

- Model and expand language by sharing books, made-up stories, singing and talking about what's happening around them.
- Create a photo book of special people, places, and interests. Use the book to stimulate words and conversation by labeling items and objects.
- Encourage a variety of sounds that will turn into words and help children connect sound/words with actions or tasks.
- If children use the wrong word or phrasing, repeat what they said and model the correct word or phrase to expand their language.

“Vrrroom...beep, beep!”



Sort It, Match It

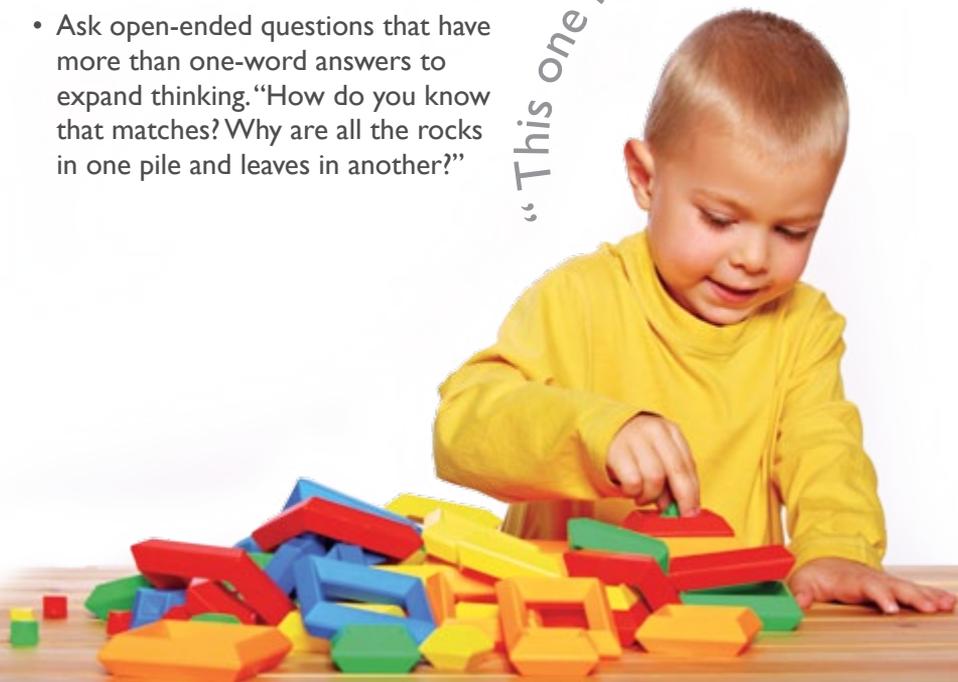
Pre-reading, math and cognitive skills develop when toddlers sort and organize items such as blocks, cars and stuffed animals using concepts of type, size, color, and weight.

- Gather the same types of favorite toys and have children sort items by color and size. For a different twist, use colored plates or paper so child can practice matching.
- Introduce science and classification by collecting and sorting rocks, twigs, and leaves outside.
- Let your toddler organize your sock drawer or shoes. It's great practice in matching pairs and talking about size.
- Ask open-ended questions that have more than one-word answers to expand thinking. "How do you know that matches? Why are all the rocks in one pile and leaves in another?"

FAST FACT

Math concepts of counting, more than or less than, most and least tie in nicely with sorting and classifying. "Are there more blue blocks than red? Let's count them!"

"This one is like that one!"



Fine-Tuning Skills

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Introduce a variety of writing materials to help children practice gripping, muscle control, and creativity. Felt boards, magnetic letters, and shapes cut out of tag board or contact paper provide opportunities to explore language and cognitive concepts while developing fine motor skills.

Busy hands make discoveries and solve problems.

Simple, everyday tasks like buttoning, zipping, turning door knobs, or buckling seat belts prepare small muscles for emerging preschool writing skills.

- Nesting measuring cups and shape sorters provide practice in eye-hand coordination and size/shape discrimination.
- Dropping a ball, small car, or toy through a slanted clear tube or hiding it inside a pot becomes a game of cause and effect.
- Tearing paper is a great way to build small muscles in a toddler's hands. Provide opportunities through art projects to peel stickers or tape, rip paper and pull apart leaves or grass.



“There it is... I found it!”

Move Those Muscles

Large muscle movements are an important part of toddlerhood. Climbing steps with alternating feet, galloping, hopping and jumping with both feet together, dressing - especially coats and jackets - are all milestones children are working towards. You can help by playing games that help them move those muscles!

- Blow and catch bubbles engaging the whole body in physical activity.
- Dance with ribbons or scarves so both leg and arm muscles are moving together.
- Pretend to be animals by mimicking actions and sounds.
- Create obstacle courses with chairs, tape lines, cushions, tables, etc. to practice going around, over, under, into, balancing, hopping, crawling, and any large movement you and your toddler can think of! (This is a great activity for both inside and outside.)

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Bubble Solution Recipe

2 c. water

½ c. Joy or Dawn dish soap

2 tsp. corn syrup

Stir together water, dish soap and corn syrup. Store in a covered container.

Try a variety of homemade bubble wands: pipe cleaners or cookie cutters



Ooey, Gooney, Sticky

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Gather a variety of child-safe containers and accessories. Filling, dumping, pouring, cutting, stirring and mashing are essential parts of this learning experience.

SAFETY TIP

Make your own choke tester with an empty toilet paper roll. Most commercial testers are 3.5 cm and most toilet paper rolls are 4.5 cm so using this method is safe. If the toys fit into the roll it's a choking hazard.

Sensory activities offer fun, new ways for children to practice emerging language/literacy, math, science, motor, and social skills. Toddlers in the 18 to 36 month age group are typically out of the oral exploration stage and ready for some hands-on fun!

- Sculpting and handling a variety of pliable materials like play dough, clay or mud helps children develop small muscles and learn about shapes, textures, colors, and dimensions. The concepts of solid and liquid can also be explored.
- You can buy sensory tables but a plastic tub/container works great too. Fill the container with sand, water, snow, rice, etc. (make sure if material is ingested it's not harmful and won't cause choking).
- Manipulating different types of materials allows toddlers to create and explore with their senses in new ways.

“Look, it’s squishy!”



Recipes



Oobleck

Water

Cornstarch

Food coloring (optional)

Mix equal parts of water and cornstarch together. Add a drop or two of food coloring. If you can stir it, add more corn starch.

Explore the consistency with your hands. Can you make a ball or does it ooze?

Glurch

1 cup glue

1 cup liquid starch

Food coloring

Pour glue into a plastic mixing bowl or container. Add 2 or 3 drops of food coloring. Mix thoroughly.

Add liquid starch to the glue mixture and mix well using your hands. Knead until the mixture becomes rubbery, smooth and is no longer sticky. Your end product will a rubbery, floppy texture and look like shiny play dough. Add more liquid starch a teaspoon at a time if mixture does not seem to firm up.

Foam Fun

With supervision, non-toxic shaving cream can be used to stick small building blocks together, as a new media for “painting” or an interesting alternative to play dough.

Beyond the Brush

Use a variety of items
– from fingers to
leaves to toy cars –
to apply paint.

Playdough

1 cup flour

1/4 cup salt

2 tbsp. vegetable oil

1 tbsp. cream of tartar

Measure the flour, salt, oil, and cream of tartar into a mixing bowl.

Add 2 cups of boiling water.

Stir the ingredients until the dough forms. Then knead the dough with your hands. If the dough is too sticky, add a little more flour to make it smooth.

Clean Mud

Warm Water

Children’s sensitive skin liquid soap

1 roll of toilet paper

Tear toilet paper into pieces. Add warm water and soap. Knead until the consistency is mud-like.



Wild About Water

FAST FACT

Water play fosters development in all learning areas including self-help skills, language development, problem solving, and physical motor skills.



SAFETY TIP

Containers with just an inch of water can be dangerous for a small child. Always supervise water play.

Splash, Squish, Plop, Drop.

Indoors or out, water play provides a full range of learning opportunities as children share space, experience cause and effect, and mirror everyday tasks.

- Promote self-help skills by setting up space for children to wash baby dolls, dishes, and tables.
- Connect actions to new words like pour, dump, squish, and wash.
- Provide containers of different sizes to help children discover concepts of empty/full, more/less, and sink/float.
- Droppers, washcloths, sponges, and funnels strengthen fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination as children squish, stir, and squirt.

“Look... it floats!”



If a child doesn't know how to read, we teach.
If a child doesn't know how to swim, we teach.
If a child doesn't know how to multiply, we teach.
If a child doesn't know how to drive, we teach.
If a child doesn't know how to behave,
We... teach? We... punish?

Why can't we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?

- Tom Herner (NASDE President, Counterpoint 1998, p. 2)

Children use challenging behavior when...

1. They don't know the right way to behave
2. They know the right way but haven't had time to practice and learn a new skill
3. Our expectations don't match their ability
4. The environment doesn't support appropriate behaviors
5. They have an unmet need

We must focus on TEACHING appropriate skills rather than just stopping the behavior.

- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

More Things to Consider

Remember the outdoors

Expand young children’s knowledge of the world by offering opportunities to use their senses outdoors. Young children who spend time outside:

- Have additional information for their growing brains to process and understand their experiences and the world.
- Often remain more active and healthier as they get older.
- Have more experiences with aesthetics and seeing natural beauty.

Let Them Move

Free movement is the most important aspect of outdoor time. It is a prime time for babies and toddlers to roll, crawl, climb, tumble, run, skip, and explore their large muscles.

Outdoor Safety

Infants and toddlers require constant supervision as they explore new territory. Follow these tips when you venture outdoors:

Supervise closely. Watch for potential choking hazards.

Check surfaces for safety. Choose lower slides and climbers, and materials that don’t get too hot in the sun or icy in the winter.

Dress children for the weather. Remember, “There is no bad weather, only bad clothes.”

Nutrition

Proper nutrition is essential to promoting optimal growth and development for infants and children of all ages. A diet that includes the appropriate balance of calories and nutrients can greatly reduce a child's risk for developing several diseases and supports all areas of development. For more information about recommended child feeding and nutrition practices, refer to your child's pediatrician or any of these websites:

- www.healthychildren.org,
- www.kidseatright.org
- www.choosemyplate.gov
- www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org.

Technology & Early Learning

Screen time is the time spent watching or using a TV, computer, hand-held devices or electronic game. Children's exposure to screen time occurs at earlier ages as technology and interactive media increases. When choosing to utilize technology keep this in mind:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics and the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity discourages any screen time for children under 2 years of age and recommends no more than one to two hours of total screen time per day for children older than 2.
- Possible negative outcomes of too much screen time include: irregular sleep patterns, behavioral issues, focus and attention problems, decreased academic performance, negative impact on socialization and language development.

What to consider with choosing media or software

- No physical, social or emotional harm should be portrayed. Messages should be respectful and culturally respectful.
- Media should be interactive and require some kind of action, such as pushing a button, to make something happen. Avoid any kind of media that passively feeds children information or entertainment.
- Media should be developmentally and age-appropriate.
- Media should engage children in social experiences.

Helpful Websites



Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

csefel.vanderbilt.edu

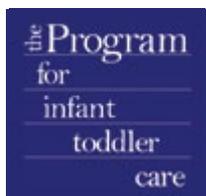
Center on the Social & Emotional Foundation for Early Learning promotes social emotional development and school readiness of young children birth to age 5.



National Association for the Education of Young Children

www.naeyc.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the nation's leading voice for high-quality early childhood education for children birth to age 8, and the world's largest organization working on behalf of young children.



Program for Infant/Toddler Care

www.pitc.org

The Program for Infant Toddler Care seeks to ensure that America's infants get a safe, healthy, emotionally secure and intellectually rich start in life.



Zero to Three

www.zerotothree.org

Zero to Three is a national nonprofit that informs, trains and supports professionals, policymakers and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.

Early Learning Guidelines

Guide to Key Indicators

Y Young Infants
Ages 0 to 8
Months

M Mobile Infants
Ages 8 to 18
Months

T Toddlers
Ages 18 to 36
Months

Turn to page 1 to learn more about Early Learning Guidelines.

Social and Emotional Development

Trust and Emotional Security

- Y M T** Engages in behaviors that build relationships with familiar adults
- Y M T** Shows preference for familiar adults
- Y M T** Responds to unfamiliar adults cautiously
- Y M T** Seeks ways to find comfort in new situations
- M T** Shows emotional connection and attachment to others

Relationships with Other Children

- Y M T** Shows interest in and awareness of other children
- M T** Responds to and interacts with other children
- M T** Begins to recognize and respond to children's feelings and emotions
- T** Begins to show concern for others
- T** Learns social skills, and eventually words, for expressing feelings needs and wants
- T** Uses imitation to pretend

Self-Awareness

- Y M T** Expresses feelings and emotions through facial expressions, sounds and gestures
- T** Develops awareness of self as separate from others
- T** Shows confidence in increasing abilities

Self-Regulation

- M T** Begins to manage own behavior and show self-regulation
- M T** Shows ability to cope with stress
- M T** Shows increasing independence
- T** Understands simple routines, rules or limitations

Language Development & Communication

Listening and Understanding

- Y** **M** **T** Shows interest in listening to sounds
- Y** **M** **T** Listens with interest to language of others
- Y** **M** **T** Responds to verbal communication of others
- M** **T** Responds to non-verbal communication of others
- M** **T** Begins to understand gestures, words, questions or routines

Communicating and Speaking

- Y** **M** **T** Uses sounds, gestures, or actions to express needs and wants
- Y** **M** **T** Uses consistent sounds, gestures and words to communicate
- M** **T** Imitates sounds, gestures or words
- T** Uses sounds, signs or words for a variety of purposes
- T** Shows reciprocity in using language

Emergent Literacy

- Y** **M** **T** Shows interest in songs, rhymes and stories
- M** **T** Shows interest in photos, pictures and drawings
- M** **T** Demonstrates interest and involvement with books and other print materials
- T** Shows confidence in increasing abilities



Physical & Motor Development

Gross Motor Development

- Y** **M** **T** Moves body, arms and legs with coordination
- Y** **M** **T** Demonstrates large muscle balance, stability, control and coordination
- Y** **M** **T** Develops increasing ability to change positions and move body from place to place
- M** **T** Moves body with purpose to achieve a goal

Fine Motor Development

- Y** **M** **T** Uses hands or feet to make contact with people or objects
- M** **T** Develops small muscle control and coordination
- M** **T** Coordinates eye and hand movements
- M** **T** Uses different actions on objects
- T** Controls small muscles in hands when doing simple tasks

Physical Health and Well-Being

- Y** **M** **T** Shows characteristics of healthy development
- Y** **M** **T** Responds when physical needs are met
- M** **T** Expresses physical needs nonverbally or verbally
- M** **T** Participates in physical care routines
- M** **T** Begins to develop self-help skills
- T** Begins to understand safe and unsafe behaviors



Cognitive Development

Exploration and Discovery

- Y** **M** **T** Pays attention to people and objects
- Y** **M** **T** Uses senses to explore people, objects, and the environment
- Y** **M** **T** Attends to colors, shapes, patterns or pictures
- Y** **M** **T** Shows interest and curiosity in new people and objects
- M** **T** Makes things happen and watches for results or repeats actions

Problem Solving

- M** **T** Experiments with different uses for objects
- M** **T** Shows imagination and creativity in solving problems
- M** **T** Uses a variety of strategies to solve problems
- M** **T** Applies knowledge to new situations

Memory

- Y** **M** **T** Shows ability to acquire and process new information
- Y** **M** **T** Recognizes familiar people, places and things
- M** **T** Recalls and uses information in new situations
- T** Searches for missing or hidden objects

Imitation and Symbolic Play

- Y** **M** **T** Observes and imitates sounds, gestures or behaviors
- T** Uses objects in new ways or in pretend play
- T** Uses imitation or pretend play to express creativity and imagination





Need Help Paying for Child Care?

North Dakota Child Care Assistance helps eligible families pay for child care while parents work, attend school or search for a job.

Assistance payments are typically paid directly to child care providers. Eligible providers must be at least 18 years old, and be licensed, registered, self-declared or an approved relative.

Visit www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/childcare.html to learn more about eligibility and assistance criteria.

Looking for Child Care?

Child Care Resource & Referral Helps Families Connect to Licensed Care



We Offer Families:

- A customized list of licensed providers that matches your schedule and location preferences
- A *Child Care Checklist* to help you evaluate child care programs.
- The *Finding and Using Child Care in North Dakota* guidebook
- Information about assistance that may help pay for child care

Friend Us to Stay Informed

Call or log on to search the ND CCR&R Child Care Database

Western North Dakota

701-838-7800 or 800-450-7801

Eastern North Dakota

218-299-7026 or 800-941-7003

www.ndchildcare.org

ND Early Head Start

Early Head Start is a federally funded community based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women.

Early Head Start's Mission is simple:

- To promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women
- To enhance the development of very young children
- To promote healthy family functioning



Early Head Start programs provide comprehensive services and support of the physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language development of each child. The program includes parenting education and the support of a positive parent-child relationship.

Learn about this program and locate a Head Start or Early Head Start program near you:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>

Looking for Parenting Information?

Parenting Resources

NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE

The NDSU Extension Service has resources designed to help parents raise their children.

- Research-based
 - Prevention education
 - Support for North Dakota families
- Extension offices are located in 52 North Dakota counties and on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. Most offices have a Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) agent who provides local programming support and answers questions. A directory of county Extension offices and contact information is available at:
www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/county-extension-offices
- NDSU Extension Service publications are online at
www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/famsci.html
- eXtension Just In Time Parenting is available at
www.extension.org/parenting
- The Parent Education Network* has eight Parent Resource Centers (PRC) located across the state. PRC Coordinators in each region help guide parents to educational resources and provide parenting classes in local communities. Check out each PRC location at
www.ag.ndsu.edu/pen

*The Parent Education Network is a collaboration of entities including the NDSU Extension Service, the Department of Human Services—Child Protection Division, school districts, county commissions, and other local partners.

Glossary

Cognitive Development - How children think, develop understandings about the world, and problem solve.

Domains- Skill areas of learning (social-emotional, language, cognitive, physical).

Expressive Language - Using communication to get needs met through gestures or spoken language.

Fine motor - Development of small muscles and skills such as pinching and grabbing.

Gross motor - Development of large muscles and skills that allow a child to sit, crawl, walk etc.

Language Development - How children communicate their needs, and learn sounds, words, and sentences.

Object Permanence - Knowing something is still there even when you can't see it.

Open-ended questions - Questions that have more than a one-word or correct answer

Parallel Talk - Talking about what you see a child doing. "You stacked three red blocks."

Physical and Motor Development - Large and small muscle skills including balance, spatial awareness, hand-eye coordination, etc.

Receptive Language - Listening and understanding of spoken words.

Self-awareness - knowing about your body, thoughts, feelings, etc.

Self-control and Self-regulation - Being able to control your emotions, actions, reactions etc.

Self-talk - Talking about what you are doing "I'm putting on a jacket." Or for a young toddler "I put jacket on." "I go outside."

Sensory – Dealing with the five senses of hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling and touching.

Social Emotional Development - How children feel about themselves and how they learn to relate to others.

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Children and Family Services Division**

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ND Relay Service: 1-800-366-6888

www.ndgov.dhs

email: dhscfs@nd.gov

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