

FAMILY RESOURCE

C O N N E C T I O N

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“*The fundamental job of a toddler is to rule the universe.*”

-Lawrence Kutner



Understanding Toddler Behavior 101

Toddlers are so adorable! Well, most of the time they are! Toddlers are in a stage of rapid growth and exploration. They are absorbing their world, while at the same time stretching, sometimes painfully, our nerves. Toddlers can be a handful for any parent, no matter how patient you may be. It is a mighty big and overwhelming world for such a small person. Sometimes it helps to see the world from your toddler's point of view to gain an understanding of what your child is going through.

1. **Throwing temper tantrums.** This is when your child has extreme outbursts of foot stomping, body squirming, running rampant, and more. Many toddlers throw temper tantrums every now and then. They are at a stage where they are beginning to understand what you are saying, but they do not have the ability to express themselves verbally by piecing thoughts and words together. Since they desperately want to convey their thoughts, but are limited, they can get frustrated, which can come out as a tantrum.
2. **Biting.** Toddlers may bite for a variety of reasons, including teething, being over- or under-stimulated, space issues, or for a quick fix to get a reaction out of whomever they are biting. It could happen when another child steals a toy or if they do not get their way. It gives them a sense of power to draw this reaction and boy, can it hurt! Monitor the biting habit and try to “nip it in the bud” immediately. This is a good scenario in which to sternly use the word “no” or to say “no teeth!”
3. **Mine!** Toddlers are very egocentric and do not consider or understand the concept of sharing. If your toddler sees a child with a toy they want, they may grab it, not realizing the consequences. All you can do is teach them what is appropriate behavior, and over time they will learn to take turns. You may

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opt to tell them that it is “my turn, then your turn” rather than saying “share.” Waiting is a challenge for toddlers, so avoid making them wait too long and then increase the time as they develop.

4. **Time.** Your toddler will not understand when you tell them you will go outside to play in ten minutes. They have no concept of that time frame and will become confused and frustrated when they try to do it immediately and you repeat, “I told you in ten minutes!” Use an alternate tactic such as, “When Mommy is done washing the dishes we can go outside and play.”
5. **Prepare them.** Did sitting on Santa’s lap terrify your child instead of excite them? It is not every day a strange, big, round man in a bright red suit with white fur covering his face walks around for them to see and experience. Before taking your child to these types of events, prepare them. Show them pictures and tell them stories. Let them know what they are about to see. It may help calm their anxiety when the event takes place.
6. **Imitating you.** If you are doing it, why can’t I? Your toddler is trying to learn independence and imitate your many moves. If you are folding laundry, your toddler may think they are helping by taking it back out of the basket. Teaching your toddler “no” or “do not touch”



should be reserved for safety issues. Be patient with your toddler and let her experience her way of helping. It may cause you more work but will cause less frustration for her. Success for both of you may be to give your toddler her own laundry basket of socks to match and “fold.”

7. **Throwing things.** After awhile you get used to your toddler testing the laws of gravity by dropping things from the high chair and leaning over to see how they fell. It can even be pretty cute at times. Then she learns to throw things, which mostly is just for fun, but when she starts to throw things during a fit of rage at other toddlers or even at you, then it is not so cute anymore. If you see your toddler throwing things, give your child something appropriate to throw like a soft ball or crumpled newspaper and tell them that these are the only things they can throw.
8. **Playtime.** Toddlers are typically more active at this age than at any other time in their lives. Much of their play involves figuring out how things work, such as taking things apart and putting them back together. They are generally quite independent and self-centered and enjoy playing near other children or adults, but not always with them. Toddlers feel safe to explore and try new things when they feel secure in their environment and with their caregivers.
9. **Activities.** Toddlers need to investigate, carry things, fill things, bang on things, climb on things, sing, talk, and laugh every day. Here are some ideas for wonderful toddler activities that you can start today, and best of all, they are free!

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101 Activities To Do With Toddlers

1. Color
2. Blow bubbles
3. Play hide and seek
4. Play peek-a-boo
5. Play chase
6. Do finger-plays
7. Sing a song
8. Collect rocks in a basket
9. Make an obstacle course out of cushions and/or furniture
10. Make a fort out of cushions and sheets
11. Go for a walk
12. Make a car out of a box
13. Read a book
14. Go to the park
15. Finger paint
16. Play with clay dough
17. Toss bean bags into a bucket
18. Play the shell and pea game
19. Dance to music
20. Download games for toddlers from the Internet
21. Practice putting things in and taking things out of boxes and bags
22. Make a temporary slide out of a table leaf and your couch
23. Roll a ball back and forth on the floor
24. Scoop dirt or sand into a child's bucket (or use a serving spoon and bowl)
25. Practice climbing by stacking cushions on top of each other
26. Put on a puppet show
27. Go fishing with a yard stick and yarn
28. Make a horse shoe game
29. Make a shape puzzle
30. Play paper basketball with crumpled newspaper and a laundry basket
31. Run through a sprinkler
32. Play with a bucket of water and a sponge or a paintbrush
33. Make a drum out of an oatmeal box
34. Play with a kazoo
35. Wash windows together
36. Bang on pots and pans with a wooden spoon
37. Brush each other's teeth
38. Play dress-up with stuffed animals
39. Stack canned or boxed food
40. Stack mixing bowls inside each other
41. Make a playhouse
42. Play with stickers or Band-Aids
43. Make sticker finger puppets
44. Play instruments
45. Go on a smelling hunt
46. Frost cookies
47. Plant a flower
48. Roll a tennis ball into an empty bucket
49. Draw onto a mirror
50. Play hide and seek with stuffed animals

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51. Have a splash party
52. Put a leash on a stuffed animal and take it for a walk
53. Record each other on a tape recorder
54. Make paper hats
55. Give a piggy back ride
56. Play horse
57. Talk into an electric fan
58. Play tug of war
59. Collect flowers
60. Make a camera and go on a safari
61. Play games with frozen juice lids
62. Disconnect your phone and pretend to make calls to friends and family
63. Reconnect your phone and really make calls to friends and family
64. String beads onto shoelaces
65. Squirt each other with squirt bottles
66. Glue shapes onto paper
67. Make sock puppets
68. Make paper puppets
69. Fill an old purse with toys
70. Use a paper towel tube as a megaphone
71. Use toilet paper tubes as binoculars
72. Put snacks in different containers
73. Act out a story from a book
74. Walk on a balance beam
75. Draw with sidewalk chalk
76. Sketch an outline of the child on the sidewalk
77. Paint child's hand and press on paper
78. Put lipstick on the child and have them kiss the mirror
79. Make a puddle on cement and splash barefoot in it
80. Let child decorate and eat an open peanut butter sandwich
81. Make a toilet paper barricade
82. Do the hokey-pokey
83. Make a super hero costume
84. Do knee bouncing rhymes
85. Play "red light, green light"
86. Make a shoe box train
87. Make a pillow pile
88. Make a felt puzzle
89. Make bracelets
90. Learn numbers from a deck of cards
91. Play a matching game with a deck of cards
92. Make a domino chain
93. Have a picnic in the park
94. Play dress up
95. Make a tin can telephone
96. Make a nature collage
97. Imitate each other
98. Make a "Mummy Mommy or Daddy" with toilet paper
99. Make a tape recording of short music selections and instructions to move in different ways
100. Take a walk along a toilet paper trail
101. Take a nap

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