



Explore Through Movement and Play

WHY?

Movement and play are good for children's coordination, strength and overall health. They are also ways that children explore and learn about the world. Each stage of development comes with new opportunities for learning. For example, an infant might explore by touching, grasping, chewing or crawling. A toddler might explore by walking or climbing.

Young children are like scientists—curious and excited to explore their surroundings. See where your child's curiosity takes them. The more you pay attention, the more you will learn about the person they are becoming.

Tips for Toddlers (12-36 Months)

Follow Them

Toddlers learn a lot by experimenting on their own. If your child looks like they are concentrating on something, like pouring water in the bath or stacking blocks, stand back for a moment and let them problem solve for themselves. This is exercise for their brain!

Help Them Build

Use blocks to build a tower. How high can you go? What happens when you knock it over? What other shapes can you and your child build? You don't need to buy blocks to do this. You can also use cardboard boxes or plastic cups.

Make Art

Drawing is a good way to exercise little hands and be creative. Put out some crayons and paper. Your child can also experiment with tearing and folding the paper.

Roll A Ball

Roll a ball or a bottle back and forth to develop coordination and teach about cause and effect.

Play Obstacle Course

Make a simple obstacle course. You can use blankets, pillows or boxes. See if your child can go over, under, around and through these objects.

Play Hide and Seek

Your child can hide behind the couch or under the table. Or, you can hide objects around the room. This is a great activity for developing their thinking skills.

Use Position Words

In all of these activities, use words like “over, under, near, far, through, around.”

Take a Walk

Everything is new for young children, so an activity as simple as a walk around the block offers lots of opportunities for exploration. Stop and examine rocks, bugs or plants. Talk about what you see.

On and Off

Help your baby push buttons or turn things off and on (with supervision). Think doorbells, light switches and faucets. Talk about what they did and what happened.

Fast and Slow Dancing

Play a fast song for your child to dance to, then a slow song. Talk about the different speeds and how your child's dancing changes with the music. Join in if you could use a dance break!

Keep It Simple

Simple objects provide opportunities for using imagination. Provide your child with simple toys and objects to use creatively. What would they do with a cardboard box and a paper towel tube?

Move Like Animals

Invite your child to move like different animals. Can they hop like a frog? Flap like a bird? Slither like a snake? Burn off some energy and have fun choosing new animals to imitate.

Mystery Bag Play guessing games. For example, put a few objects in a bag and have your child guess what's inside without looking. They can feel, smell and shake the bag.

Act It Out Toddlers will start to imitate grown-up activities, like putting a doll to sleep or giving it a shot. Follow their lead and play along or watch as they play independently.