



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



18 Months

CURIOSITY & PERSISTENCE

Your Child at 18–24 Months

Toddlers love to pretend, which makes life fun and often very funny.

What your child can do

Your toddler is learning new words every day:

- They may say as many as 50–100 words by their second birthday
- They may even start putting two words together to make their first sentences

Your toddler is also learning self-control — and that takes time:

- They understand "no," but still cannot always control their feelings and actions
- They may get frustrated when they cannot do something on their own — this is completely normal

What you can do

Turn your child's words into sentences. When they say "more milk," you can say, "May I have more milk? Yes, of course!" This teaches more language.

Talk as you read. Ask your child questions about the pictures and stories you read together.

Put your child's feelings into words. "I know you're really mad that I turned the video off. It's okay to feel mad. Would you like to read or play with blocks instead?"

Read stories about feelings. When children learn words to describe their feelings, it helps them learn to manage them.

Every child develops at their own pace. Your child may reach milestones faster or slower than other children and still be growing just fine.

Your child's imagination is taking off

Your toddler is beginning to use their imagination:

- They may feed a doll pretend food or make *vroom* noises when playing with cars

Your toddler is also a little scientist who loves to test things out:

- They love to fill and dump, open and close things to see how they work
- They may start to sort objects — putting all their trains in one pile and all their cars in another

Your toddler is becoming an even better problem-solver:

- They may blow on their food when you say it is hot, or try to put their own jacket on



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What you can do

Play pretend with your child. You might be a puppy, barking and running after a ball.

Jumpstart their imagination with dress-up clothes, animal figures, blocks, and plastic food and dishes.

Help your child practice sorting. Ask them to help sort laundry — socks in one pile, shirts in another.

Use math words throughout your day — big/small, tall/short, fast/slow. Count steps or food items to teach numbers.

Help your child solve problems, but don't do it all for them. The more they do, the more they learn.

Other things to know and try

Testing limits is a normal and healthy part of toddler development. How you respond makes a big difference in what your child learns. When setting limits:

- Be clear and specific. Say "Please put the blocks in the box" instead of "Clean up your toys." Toddlers need clear directions because their memory is still growing.
- Be consistent. Use the same response each time. This helps your toddler learn cause and effect.
- Stay calm. All children test the rules. The calmer you stay, the better you can teach your child self-control.

At this visit

The care team will measure your child's length, weight, and head size, and check their heart, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Your healthcare provider will discuss vaccines with you at today's visit. The team will talk with you about your child's development, sleep, eating, and safety — and there will be time for any questions or concerns you have.

What comes next

Between 2 and 3 years, your child's language will grow quickly, and they will become much better at expressing their feelings in words. Pretend play will become richer and more creative, and you will see them starting to play alongside other children.

Big emotions are still common at this age. Consistent, calm responses from you continue to be the most powerful tool you have.

Have more questions?

Talk to your child's healthcare provider or one of the professionals supporting your family.

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