



Parenting the Second and Third Years

MONTHS

25-26

Dear parents: Twos are terrific and...

Twos are terrific, tender, trying, taxing — and very, very exciting. Your child has come a long way in 2 short years, and so have you.

As a parent of a 2-year-old, these are some things you will need this next year:

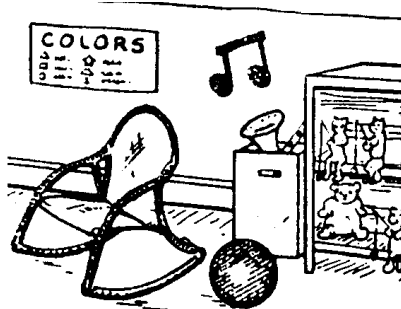
- ♥ **Patience** to help you cope with your child's mood swings — from very cooperative to highly unreasonable.
- ♥ **Awareness** to help you see that your child's surroundings are safe.
- ♥ **Loving firmness** to help you gently apply rules in a consistent way so your child can learn responsibility and self-control.
- ♥ **Humor** to help you laugh at yourself and with your child.
- ♥ **Sense of wonder** to help you see your 2-year-old as the creative, special person she really is.
- ♥ **Enthusiasm** to enjoy and celebrate your toddler's many successes during this year.

Prevent cuts and scrapes.

Small children get minor cuts and scrapes often. These injuries happen when children fall, run into things, or step on sharp objects. Now is a good time to look over your child's play areas again.

Here are some tips for safer play:

- ♥ **Prevent your child from playing** near sharp-edged furniture.
- ♥ **Avoid play areas** where she can climb to high places.
- ♥ **Lock doors** to unsafe rooms, the garage, basement, and yard.
- ♥ **Put shoes and long pants** on your child when she runs outdoors.
- ♥ **Supervise your child closely** when she's on or near playground equipment.



Successful parents

We know that what parents do for and with their young children shapes their development. Dr. Alice Sterling Honig reviewed studies of parenting and child development to find out how parents of competent toddlers behaved with their children.

Toddlers who were *most competent* had parents who:

- ♥ Carefully organized their children's routines.
- ♥ Encouraged their children to help a lot with household chores.
- ♥ Allowed children to do some messy things like washing dishes.
- ♥ Read to their children daily.
- ♥ Severely limited and supervised their children's television viewing.
- ♥ Watched their children closely to keep them safe and to match activities to their development level.
- ♥ Had firm, consistent household rules and gave children reasons for these rules.
- ♥ Saw themselves as their children's teachers and actively helped their children learn.
- ♥ Played with their children often, including pretend play.

What's it like to be 2 and 2½ years old?

How I grow:

- ♥ I like to do things the same way each day.
- ♥ I can walk backwards for about 10 feet.
- ♥ I can jump with both feet off the ground.
- ♥ I can balance on one foot for about a second.
- ♥ I often have to look at my feet to keep from stepping on things that are in my way.
- ♥ I get into things and make messes.
- ♥ I can take lids off jars. Be sure things you don't want me to open are out of reach and have safety caps!
- ♥ I may have learned from adults to fear snakes, mice, and spiders.

How I talk:

- ♥ I like to learn words that describe things like high, big, under, or loud.
- ♥ I'm learning what "front," "back," "side," and "under" mean.
- ♥ I can't say long sentences yet, but I can understand them.
- ♥ I like books. I can point to pictures of things and name them.
- ♥ I still usually talk in two- or three-word "sentences" like "All dirty," "Go to store," or "That mine."
- ♥ I can use plurals like dogs, books, cups.
- ♥ I can sing parts of songs or all of very short songs.
- ♥ I can imitate my parents' voices.

- ♥ I talk mostly to myself and adults, but not much to other children.

What I am learning:

- ♥ I can sometimes draw a pretty good circle.
- ♥ I understand why some things happen, like turning on a switch makes the light come on.
- ♥ I'm getting better at remembering and keeping my attention on things.
- ♥ I can sometimes understand "today" and "pretty soon." But I may not understand "yesterday" or "tomorrow."
- ♥ I'm beginning to understand the difference between one and two.
- ♥ I can sort silverware in a drawer — except knives, for safety.

How I get along with others:

- ♥ I'm good at getting your attention.
- ♥ Mostly, I'm still just interested in myself.
- ♥ I don't usually share toys or play well with other children my own age.
- ♥ I may hit other children, not because I don't like them, but because I just don't know what else to do.

- ♥ I may call other children "baby," men "Daddy," and women "Mommy."
- ♥ If you ask me to do something simple, I can usually do it.
- ♥ I am now more willing to be away from you.
- ♥ I want to do things my own way by myself.
- ♥ I say "No" a lot. I often do what you do not want me to do, just to show you how independent I am.
- ♥ It helps me to feel important if you admire what I have learned to do.
- ♥ I like our routines, like the story and hug you give me before I go to sleep.

What I can do for myself:

- ♥ I can use a spoon and fork pretty well. I still spill some.
- ♥ I can ask to go to the toilet — sometimes.
- ♥ I'm ready to learn to brush my teeth. But you will need to help me until I am older and better coordinated.
- ♥ I'm still better at undressing than dressing.
- ♥ I like to help you put things away and clean things up.

Remember:

Parenting the Second and Third Years describes a typical child at each age. Each child is special, and each child develops at his or her own pace. Perfectly normal children may do things earlier or later than those described in *Parenting the Second and Third Years*. If you are concerned about your child's development, visit with your doctor.

Regular checkups are important.

Toddlers grow fast. As they grow, they need regular health checkups. Your child's checkup will give the doctor a chance to spot problems early. This way, problems can be taken care of to prevent any serious or long-term effects.

Be sure you keep your child's health record in a safe place where you can find it easily. The record from health checkups provides information about your child's health and immunizations (shots). You will need this record when you enroll your child in child care, nursery school, or kindergarten. If your child needs special food or medication while away from home, the health record gives caregivers the right medical information.

The American Academy of Pediatrics Standards for Child Care recommends that a well child examination include the following:

- ♥ History
- ♥ Measurements
- ♥ Vision and hearing screening
- ♥ Developmental/behavioral assessment
- ♥ Physical examination
- ♥ Immunizations
- ♥ Parenting information on nutrition and safety
- ♥ Dental assessment/referral

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends toddler checkups at about 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, and 36 months. Of course, if parents or doctors have special concerns about the child, more frequent checkups will be needed.

If you do not have a doctor for your child, ask your local health department (listed under city or county government in your phone book), tribal maternal-child specialist, or clinic. They can give you the name of a physician or clinic where your child can get a complete examination.



Why does my son still suck his thumb?

Q. My son still sucks his thumb. Is this OK?

A. Yes, thumb sucking is a very common behavior in children under 6 years old. It's one way a young child comforts himself.

Many doctors believe that if you keep a child from sucking his thumb or fingers, he may develop sleeping problems. Thumb sucking usually stops on its own, especially if the child is not pressured to give it up.

Sometimes, parents pull thumbs and fingers out of their young children's mouths because they are worried about teeth problems. Dental problems do not usually occur until the child's permanent teeth come in at 5 or 6 years of age. Even then, there may be no ill effects from casual thumb sucking.

If you are worried about your child's thumb sucking, keep track of how often he sucks and for how long. Take these notes for several days. This record will help you and your doctor or dentist discuss the situation, and decide what — if anything — to do about it.



Learning new words

You can help me learn words.

When we go for walks, take along a bag to collect treasures like leaves, rocks, flowers, or pieces of wood. We can look at these treasures, and name them when we get back home.

Repeat names of things over and over, using simple words and short sentences. Talk to me about what I am doing and what you are doing. Don't use baby talk.

Let me get things for you. Name what you want, and I will even go to other rooms to find it.

Reading to toddlers

By now your toddler probably loves to snuggle on your lap while you read a favorite picture book. She may enjoy books about animals or children who do the everyday activities she does.

Toddlers love to hear their favorite stories over and over. This makes them feel good and helps them learn language. Read books about new things, too, such as taking a trip on an airplane or visiting the zoo.

Build your child's book collection by shopping at garage sales, making your own picture books, or asking relatives and friends to give books as presents. Visit the library often. You'll be surprised at how much fun you have together, selecting books to take home.

Remember: Reading to your child now will give her a good feeling about books and reading in the future.

Games for growing

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Give your child practice **saying her first and last names** and help her **feel good about herself**.

How to play

Say her name to your child in songs and stories — using her last name, too. Make up games where she tells her name. Show her photographs of herself, and ask her to name who is in the photos. Show her how pleased you are when she names herself in her photographs.

HAPPY FACE COLORS

Help your child learn to **solve problems** and **match colors**.

Materials

- ♥ **Cardboard** sheet, about 16 by 11 inches, or one regular size **manila file folder**
- ♥ **Ten sheets of paper** different colors, or **ten crayons** to color white paper different colors
- ♥ **Pencil**
- ♥ **Drinking glass**
- ♥ Nontoxic **marker pen** for drawing happy faces
- ♥ **Scissors**
- ♥ **Glue** — Be sure the label says **nontoxic** or **child safe**.
- ♥ **Envelope**

How to make the game

- ♥ Make your happy face circles by drawing around a water glass. Draw two circles out of each color of paper, or color two circles with each crayon.
- ♥ You will have ten pairs of circles, each pair a different color. On one of each pair of circles, draw a happy face with

eyes open. On the matching circles, draw happy faces with **eyes closed**.

- ♥ Cut out all the circles, and stack them in two separate piles: one with eyes all open and one with eyes all closed.
- ♥ Glue all the happy faces with **open eyes** to the cardboard or open file folder. Put the happy faces with **closed eyes** in an envelope.

How to play

Place the happy face cardboard in front of your child on the floor or at a table.

One by one, give him different colored happy face circles. Encourage him to put each one on the same colored happy face glued to the cardboard. Say the name of the color as your child puts each happy face on the correct color.

When your child has matched all the faces, have him pick up the happy face circles one by one and hand them back to you. Say the color of each circle as he hands it back to you.

FUN DRUMMER

Help your child learn about **different sounds** and **rhythms** and build **coordination**.

How to play

Show your child how to make different drumming sounds by hitting things with a spoon. She can hit a pan, a chair, the floor, a shoe, a bottle, and so forth. Take turns leading the game, with each of you hitting one thing after another in order. Also try drumming to singing or music or mix fast and slow drumming sounds.

Toilet training

During their second year, most children become interested in learning to use the toilet on their own. Having a small potty on the floor that your child can use by himself is a good way to get started.

Don't rush your child into using the potty. But **watch for signs that he is ready** to start learning this new skill:

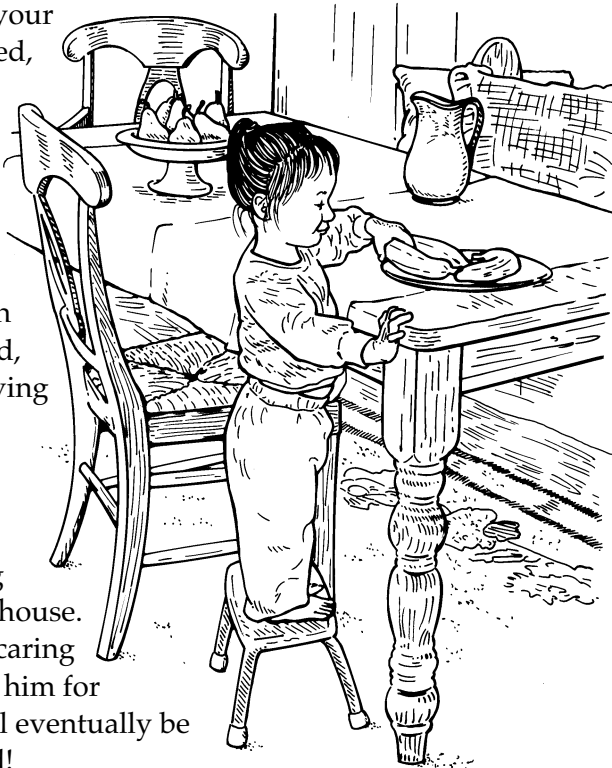
- ♥ Does he have enough small muscle control to be able to pick up a raisin between his thumb and forefinger? Control of hand muscles is a sign that the necessary bowel and bladder muscle control has also developed.
- ♥ Is your child dry for at least 2 hours at a time? Most children will stop having bowel movements (BMs) in their diapers before they stop wetting.
- ♥ Can your child undress himself? This makes toilet training much easier.
- ♥ Is your child showing an interest in the toilet?

If you think your child is ready, have him practice sitting on his potty chair, and let him see someone bigger using the toilet. Let him flush the toilet for practice.

It takes a while for children to get the idea. And once you start, you can expect lots of "misses." Don't scold for accidents. Instead, **encourage** him for every success. Sure, you're eager to get rid of those diapers. But if you don't rush toilet training and you stay casual about it, there will be less stress on everyone, and the process may even go faster.

If you find you or your child are feeling stressed, wait a few weeks and start again. Stress makes muscles tense, and that makes bowel movements almost impossible.

Sometimes children **seem** to be toilet trained, and then they start having accidents again. Most often, this happens when they are feeling pressured, excited, or upset about something like a new baby in the house. Again, be patient and caring and always encourage him for success. Your child will eventually be out of diapers for good!



Food rewards can backfire.

"If you behave at the shoe store, I'll buy you a candy bar."

It is tempting to use food to control your child's behavior, but food rewards can backfire.

Parents often mean well when they say: "You can't have dessert until you finish all your vegetables." They think they are doing something good by getting their child to eat the vegetables.

But the message the child hears is very different. She hears: "You have to eat the 'bad' vegetables in order to get the 'good' dessert." You don't want your child to think of any foods as "bad."

As your child gets older, she will have more control over what she eats. If she chooses a lot of high sugar, high fat "reward" foods, then she will be missing out on foods that are better for her health.

So, what is a parent to do? Do not use any food — even a more nutritious food — as a bribe or reward. Offer your child a variety of foods, and let her choose how much to eat. If the family is having dessert, allow her to eat it too, regardless of how much she ate at the meal. You can make the dessert something healthy like fruit or a fruit juice popsicle.

Reward your child with hugs, kisses, and encouraging words. Try saying something like this: "You behaved well in the shoe store. That made Mommy very happy!" This is a better reward than candy. This reward helps your child feel good about herself.



Learning right from wrong

What's right and wrong to a toddler? Cary A. Buzzelli, a professor of early childhood education, looked at research on how children learn right from wrong. Professor Buzzelli notes that young children begin to understand in two areas that lead to healthy moral development.

By their second year, children can start to:

1. **Understand some of the rules and standards** of their social world — what people call “right” behavior.
2. **Learn that other people have feelings, too.** Children as young as 2 will try to comfort another child who is upset.

How to help children learn right from wrong:

- ♥ **Notice, encourage, and build on...**
 - their natural concern for other people's distress and
 - their growing understanding of social rules.
- ♥ **Set clear and proper standards for behavior.** Tell children how you expect them to behave — not too strict, not too free.
- ♥ **Explain to children...**
 - how their actions cause other people to feel. For example: “When you pull his hair, it hurts him. That's why he cries.”
 - how their good actions help. For example: “When you hold his hand, he is less scared. That helps.”

Be good to yourself: When you're all tied up in knots

Stress can make your body feel bad. Over the long term, stress can cause physical damage. Over the short term, you may feel headaches, tight muscles, backaches, or a stiff neck. Sometimes, stress makes us breathe poorly, and we don't get enough oxygen.

Some exercises you can do any time to relieve the physical effects of stress:

- ♥ **Deep breathing** can make you feel better and give you a sort of “time-out” to help you handle whatever is causing the stress. Close your eyes, and sit up straight. Breathe in, slowly and deeply. Count silently to 2. Hold the air in for another count, then let the air out slowly. Repeat this slow, deep breathing for 5 or 10 minutes. To add enjoyment, take a mini-“mind vacation” to a favorite spot.
- ♥ **Shoulder lifts.** Try to raise your shoulders up to your ears. Hold for a few seconds, then drop your shoulders back down. Repeat.
- ♥ **Shoulder circles.** Rotate your shoulders around forward and backward, one at a time, then together.
- ♥ **Head turns.** Relax your shoulders. Slowly turn your head to the right, glancing over your right shoulder. Hold for a few seconds. Then, slowly turn your head to the left, glancing over your left shoulder. Hold for a few seconds. Repeat a few times.

When your muscles are sore, but you don't have time to go swimming or walking, try these exercises wherever you are. Make sure to **keep breathing** deeply while you exercise.

Give your toddler choices

Toddlers are driven to become independent. So conflicts may occur when you ask them to do something or to stop doing something. What can you do? Give choices!

Giving your child choices lets him have a say in things, so he feels more independent. And it may prevent conflicts. For instance, if you want your child to wear a sweater because it's cold outside, you might say, “Do you want to wear your red sweater or your blue one?”

Make the choices similar to what he's doing. For example, if he's climbing on the coffee table, you might say, “The table is not for climbing on. You could get hurt. Would you like to climb on the sofa or your slide?” Giving your child two choices lets him know what he may do. This helps more than saying, “Go find something else to do.”

When you give choices, remember to say what you mean. If you ask, “Do you want to take a nap?” your toddler will probably say, “No!” If this is something your toddler needs to do, don't make it a choice. Say instead something like, “Would you like to take your teddy bear or your toy dog to bed with you?”

“Help-outs” build self-esteem.

We all want our children to grow up feeling they are capable and lovable. One of the trickiest and most important skills parents must learn is teaching their children in ways that control the bad behavior and help the children feel good about themselves.

This is hard to do when you are angry or upset because your child is causing a problem. At these times, you need practice and a lot of patience not to be critical or accusing. A young child who lives with criticism can come to feel hopeless and may stop trying to cooperate.

When your child misbehaves, he needs “help-outs” instead of “put-downs.” “**Help-outs**” make him feel you love him, and tell him you know he can learn to do better. “Put-downs” do just the opposite.

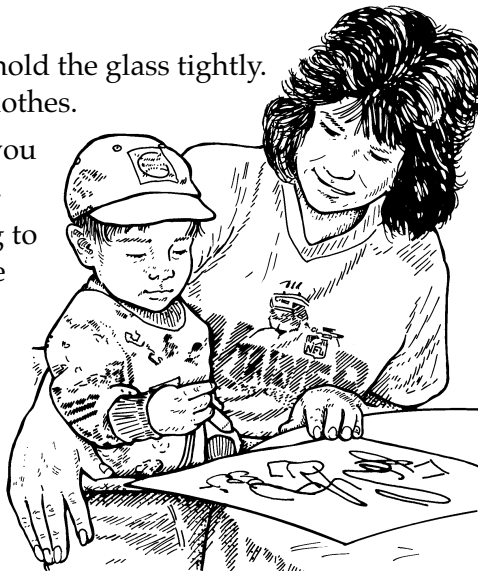
Listen to yourself. Try to substitute “help-outs” for “put-downs.”

Avoid these destructive “put-downs”:

- ✘ I knew that would happen if I let you do it alone.
- ✘ Can’t you do anything right?
- ✘ You’re being a brat.
- ✘ Won’t you ever learn?
- ✘ Why do you always drop things?
- ✘ You never pick up your clothes.
- ✘ Can’t you see that’s dangerous?

Use these “help-outs” instead:

- ♥ Here’s a sponge. I’ll help you clean it up.
- ♥ That’s hard to do. Let me do it with you.
- ♥ I’m proud of you for trying that. Hold it with both hands next time, and it may not fall.
- ♥ Sometimes, it’s hard to wait. Let’s color some until dinner is ready.
- ♥ Next time, remember to hold the glass tightly. Now, let’s change your clothes.
- ♥ I’ll hold the basket, and you put the dirty clothes in it.
- ♥ That is a dangerous thing to do. You could fall. Let me hold your hand.



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