

# 20 Activities to Support Development

## Ages 2-3 Years

### Science & Discovery

At this age, toddlers are full of questions and love to experiment. These activities tap into their natural curiosity, build early STEM thinking, encourage observation, and help little learners make sense of their world through hands-on discovery.

01

#### Volcano Eruption

**Materials Needed:**

Small bottle, tray, clay/playdough, baking soda, vinegar, food coloring

**What to Do:**

Help your toddler build a volcano by molding playdough around a bottle on a tray. Add baking soda and food coloring inside. Pour vinegar in and watch the bubbly lava overflow! Encourage your child to pour, watch closely, and describe what they see.

**Educational Benefits:**

Introduces early chemistry concepts like reactions, cause and effect, and observing change. Builds curiosity and early scientific thinking.

02

#### Rain Cloud in a Jar

**Materials Needed:**

Clear glass, water, shaving cream, food coloring

**What to Do:**

Fill a glass with water and top it with a fluffy shaving cream cloud. Help your toddler drip food coloring onto the cloud and watch it slowly fall through, creating "rain". Talk about how clouds hold water in the sky and what happens when they get too full.

**Educational Benefits:**

Helps toddlers understand how clouds fill with water and why rain begins to fall when they get too full. It's a simple, hands-on way to spark early conversations about weather, clouds, and the world above them.

03

## DIY Lava Lamp

### Materials Needed:

Clear bottle, vegetable oil, water, food coloring, Alka-Seltzer

### What to Do:

Help your toddler fill a bottle two-thirds with oil and the rest with water. Add a few drops of food coloring, then drop in broken pieces of Alka-Seltzer, and watch the colorful bubbles float and fall.

### Educational Benefits:

Encourages curiosity and helps toddlers explore colors, movement, and simple cause-and-effect.

04

## Fizzy Drops

### Materials Needed:

Bowls, vinegar, baking soda, food coloring, droppers

### What to Do:

Mix the vinegar with food coloring in a small dish. Spread baking soda on a shallow tray. Show your toddler how to use a dropper to drip the colored vinegar onto the baking soda and watch it fizz and bubble.

### Educational Benefits:

Introduces basic reactions, strengthens fine motor control through squeezing and dripping, and boosts curiosity.

05

## Float or Sink

### Materials Needed:

Bowl of water, various small objects (mix of items that will float and sink)

### What to Do:

Gather safe household items and let your child predict whether each one will float or sink. Drop them into the water together and sort them into groups.

### Educational Benefits:

Builds early problem-solving, encourages prediction-making, and teaches real science concepts like buoyancy in a playful way.

# Creative Arts & Crafts

Imagination takes off during the toddler years. These activities inspire creative expression, build fine-motor skills, strengthen confidence, and let little artists explore colors, textures, and ideas in a playful, hands-on way.

## Bubble Painting

06

### Materials Needed:

Cup, water, dish soap, non-toxic paint, straw, paper

### What to Do:

Mix water, dish soap, and paint in a cup. Show your toddler how to blow bubbles through the straw (reminding them to blow, not suck!). When the bubbles rise above the rim, gently press a piece of paper on top to make a print of the bubble patterns. You can also mix different paint colors in the cup to create brand-new colors and watch how they swirl together in the bubble prints.

### Educational Benefits:

Encourages creativity as toddlers explore bubbles, patterns, and swirling colors. Mixing paints helps them discover how new colors form, while blowing bubbles strengthens oral motor skills that support early speech development.

07

## Self Portrait

### Materials Needed:

Mirror, paper, markers, yarn, paper scraps, glue, googly eyes

### What to Do:

Give your toddler a mirror to explore their features. Talk about their eye and hair color, eyebrows, and smile. Help them draw a circle for their head, add googly eyes, string for hair, a nose and a mouth. Let them take the lead and create a portrait that reflects how they see themselves.

### Educational Benefits:

Builds self-awareness, early body recognition, and fine motor skills as they draw, glue, and place materials on the paper.

# Sock Puppets

08

## Materials Needed:

Old socks, markers, optional: googly eyes, felt scraps, glue

## What to Do:

Help your toddler turn old socks into puppets by adding eyes, hair, and fun details.

Show them how to slide their hand inside and make the puppet "talk," then encourage them to put on a puppet show. Let their imagination run wild. Puppets can sing, dance, or tell silly stories.

## Educational Benefits:

Encourages imagination, storytelling, and pretend play. Builds language skills and emotional expression as toddlers can use their puppets to share ideas, feelings, and conversations.

09

# Nature's Paintbrushes

## Materials Needed:

Sticks, leaves, flowers, pine needles, rubber bands, paint, paper, tape

## What to Do:

Head outside with your toddler and collect nature treasures like leaves, flowers, pine cones, and pine needles. Tape each item to a stick to make your own nature paintbrushes. Let your child dip them in paint and explore how each brush makes different marks and textures.

## Educational Benefits:

Supports sensory exploration, creativity, and fine-motor skills. Encourages early scientific thinking as toddlers compare textures and notice patterns.

10

# Pipe Cleaner Color Match

## Materials Needed:

Egg carton, markers, pipe cleaners, tool to poke holes

## What to Do:

Color each egg carton hole a different color, then poke one hole in the top of each cup. Offer pipe cleaners that match the colors and invite your toddler to thread them through the holes. They can weave, bend, or twist them into fun designs while matching the colors.

## Educational Benefits:

Strengthens fine-motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and color recognition. Builds problem-solving as toddlers figure out how to push, pull, and weave the pipe cleaners through the holes.

# Brain Boosters

Toddlers are naturally eager problem-solvers. These activities build early thinking skills, support memory and attention, introduce simple math concepts, and help them feel proud as they figure things out on their own.

11

## Counting Fingers

**Materials Needed:**

Paper, marker, beads, string, scissors

**What to Do:**

Trace your toddler's hands on paper and cut them out. Glue the palms onto a larger sheet of paper, leaving all the fingers loose so they can lift and wiggle. Thread 10 beads onto a piece of string and glue each end of the string onto the paper so the beads move freely. Then count together, sliding the beads one by one and lift the matching number of paper fingers.

**Educational Benefits:**

Supports early math concepts and counting. Encourages using both hands together and strengthens fine motor skills through sliding beads and lifting fingers.

12

## Mr. Potato Head Match

**Materials Needed:**

Mr. Potato Head, printed pictures of Mr. Potato Head accessories or pictures of body parts (arms, eyes, nose, etc.)

**What to Do:**

Mix Mr. Potato Head pieces in a bowl. Show your toddler a picture of a body part, like eyes or ears, and let them find the matching piece and attach it. Celebrate each match and talk about what each body part does.

**Educational Benefits:**

Builds body awareness, matching skills, and fine motor coordination. Talking about what each body part does introduces the idea of our five senses and helps toddlers connect body parts to their functions in a simple, playful way.

13

## Playdough Teeth Cleaning

### Materials Needed:

Empty plastic bottles, glue, paper, scissors, playdough, toothbrush

### What to Do:

Cut the bottoms off plastic water bottles and glue them upside down on a piece of paper to create a row of teeth. Press playdough into each one to act as plaque. Give your toddler a toothbrush and let them scrub the playdough away. Keep it playful. Celebrate each clean tooth and make the activity fun and engaging.

### Educational Benefits:

Supports fine-motor strength and coordination. Encourages early hygiene habits and builds independence skills.

14

## Sweeping Game

### Materials Needed:

Tray, small broom, dustpan, dry pasta, cereal, or pom poms, tape

### What to Do:

Tape a small square on a tray and sprinkle the dry materials around it. Show your toddler how to sweep everything into the square, then scoop it up with the dustpan and dump it in a bowl. Add more pieces as their confidence grows.

### Educational Benefits:

Builds focus, sequencing, and planning. Strengthens fine-motor skills and provides calming sensory input through rhythmic sweeping. Encourages independence and responsibility.

15

## Mystery Bag

### Materials Needed:

Bag, familiar small objects (feather, spoon, lego, block, ball, etc.)

### What to Do:

Place a mix of objects into the bag. Ask your toddler to reach in without looking and describe what they feel. Prompt with questions like, "Is it soft or hard? Big or small? Smooth or bumpy?" Have them guess the item and pull it out to check, then sort items into groups based on their properties.

### Educational Benefits:

Strengthens tactile exploration, descriptive language, and early classification skills. Encourages comparing and contrasting, important building blocks for math and science.

# Active Play

Movement becomes more purposeful and confident in the toddler years. These activities build balance and coordination, strengthen growing muscles, and give little movers fun ways to explore what their bodies can do through joyful, energetic play.

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## Balloon Toss Up

### Materials Needed:

Balloon

### What to Do:

Blow up a balloon and gently tap it into the air. Help your toddler keep it off the ground by reaching, stretching, tapping, or chasing after it. Challenge them to use only elbows, heads, or knees for extra fun.

### Educational Benefits:

Boosts coordination, balance, body awareness, and reaction time, all while encouraging full-body movement and active play.

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## Bean Bag Toss

### Materials Needed:

Bean bags or soft toys, baskets or tape

### What to Do:

Place several baskets or taped shapes at different distances around the room. Call out a color, number, or shape and have your toddler toss a bean bag into the matching target. Celebrate each throw and increase the difficulty as you go.

### Educational Benefits:

Strengthens hand-eye coordination, aim, and spatial judgment. Reinforces early learning concepts like colors, numbers, and shapes.

# Animal Rescue Run

18

**Materials Needed:**

Stuffed animals, basket (optional)

**What to Do:**

Hide stuffed animals around the room and give your toddler a rescue mission for each animal. Your toddler crawls, hops, tiptoes, or spins to save each animal and return them to the basket or starting point. Add fun storylines: “The bunny is stuck in the forest! Go help her!”

**Educational Benefits:**

Builds gross-motor strength and coordination. Encourages imaginative play, endurance, and following simple movement instructions.

19

# Sensory Goalie Game

**Materials Needed:**

Couch, soft floor space

**What to Do:**

Sit on the floor in front of the couch like a playful goalie. Encourage your child to try to get past you while you gently block, scoop, or tip them onto a soft landing. Follow your child’s pace to keep the game safe and fun.

**Educational Benefits:**

Provides sensory input through gentle pressure and movement. Strengthens core muscles, balance, and agility while deepening connection through joyful, rough-and-tumble play.

20

# Step & Sort Pathway

**Materials Needed:**

Painter’s tape or paper shapes, small colored objects, matching bowls or baskets

**What to Do:**

Use tape or paper shapes to create a colorful path across the floor (straight lines, zigzags, or use stepping stones). Scatter matching colored objects along the path. Encourage your toddler to walk, hop, or tiptoe through the course, collecting each item and sorting it into the matching basket. Add playful prompts like, “Can you hop to the blue one?” or “Tiptoe to the next circle!”

**Educational Benefits:**

Strengthens balance, coordination, and color recognition while encouraging problem-solving and purposeful movement.