

Child Development for 2-3 year olds



2-3 year olds can be stubborn and frustrating at times, but it's also a delightful age – toddlers have so much innate curiosity, creativity and pure joy. NICMA have put together some top tips to share with you. Whether you're a childminder or parent, if you deal/work with two year olds, we think you'll find our suggestions helpful:

- allow yourself to be led by your child's interests
- try to stand back and let them do things the way they want
- listen to your child and try to treat them as an equal partner – listen more than you talk is a great maxim
- make as much use as possible of household and natural materials, and objects that cost little or nothing
- remember the process is much more important than the end product when it comes to play and craft activities with toddlers
- get your kids outside as much as possible in all weathers - there's no such thing as inappropriate weather, only inappropriate clothing

Communicating and playing with 2 -3 year olds



With toddlers famed for their tantrums, communicating with a 2-3 year old can often seem particularly challenging. And providing activities for this age group can often feel daunting. The secret is to take a step back and let the child take the lead:

- however strange it may feel, try approaching a 2-3 year old as an equal partner – he or she will feel valued rather than spoilt
- crouch down to the child’s level and make eye contact when you’re talking with them
- listen more than you talk – and try not to interrupt
- let the child take the lead by giving them a choice of activities and being flexible in your approach
- support and encourage children when they’re playing, but try not to disrupt the natural flow of play
- avoid the temptation to constantly intervene in children’s play – it’s the right time to get involved when:
 - ❖ you’re invited by the children
 - ❖ they seek your advice
 - ❖ the play has become unproductive or some children lack interest in it
 - ❖ you need to support children during a disagreement or when they are in danger

No cost and low cost activities



It's easy to get seduced into believing that you must invest in expensive purpose-built toys for your child. But they can actually get a great deal out of a host of ordinary objects and materials which you can find around the house, or in your garden or local park. And, by allowing them to explore the properties and possibilities of basic and natural objects, you'll be enhancing their creativity and learning.

Here are some suggestions for no cost and low cost activities for toddlers' play and learning:

- providing saucepans and utensils to make musical instruments
- food items can be used for a pretend shop
- making a den using old sheets and blankets
- using old clothes, hats, scarves, boots, shoes etc for dressing up
- making shapes from vegetables for painting activities
- using empty cartons, twigs, pasta, cardboard boxes, glue, scissors, masking tape etc for junk art activities
- playing in sand, mud, clay or water
- sorting/counting buttons/pegs
- using scissors to cut pictures from magazines to make pictures
- letting your child help you with simple chores such as sorting clothes in the laundry basket, setting/clearing the table, hanging out the washing, washing dishes
- giving your child cups, large spoons and bowls for mixing, sifting, stirring and shaping

Enhancing a toddlers' creativity



To nurture toddlers' creativity, we have to allow them to get messy. They need time to explore the characteristics of different media (paint, paper, clay etc.), to develop their ideas and to work at their own pace. They also need to feel their efforts aren't going to be judged – the focus should be on enjoying the process rather than worrying about the end product.

- give toddlers the opportunity to explore paint and clay using their hands, fingers and feet
- let them try a range of ways of applying paint – brushes, their fingers and feet, sponges, potato shapes, blowing paint through straws
- allow them to try using child-size scissors for cutting and glue for sticking – you'll be surprised what they're capable of if they're given a chance!
- give them complete freedom to create what they want – rather than telling them what they should be making or painting
- provide them with junk art materials – cardboard, kitchen paper and toilet roll tubes, glitter, paint, crayons, paper plates
- a sandpit or bowl of lentils plus a few utensils offers a 2-3 year old lots of creative possibilities
- toddlers often prefer to play and create things on the floor, rather than on a table top

Outdoor play



Most 2-3 year olds love the outdoors, and aren't bothered if it's raining or a bit cold. Getting toddlers out as much as possible is essential for their development, learning and enjoyment. The maxim to remember is: 'There is no such thing as inappropriate weather, only inappropriate clothing'. Here are some tips for facilitating valuable outdoor play for 2-3 year olds:

- allow toddlers the opportunity, whenever possible, to be messy outdoors – whether they're splashing in puddles, making a mud pie or using a hose – children learn a great deal through such activities
- give them opportunities to be creative outdoors – digging in a sandpit, 'painting' with a bucket of water and a brush, making circles in fine gravel, drawing with chalk on a patio
- let 2-3 year olds help with simple gardening activities such as planting and watering – allow them to do as much by themselves as they can
- 2-3 year olds often love painting outdoors and it can be easier to clean up outdoors than inside!
- while the degree of risk must always be assessed, try not to be over-cautious when toddlers are outside – children need to experience the occasional tumble if they are to gain in confidence and learn to assess risk for themselves