



The Bright Baby Toolkit

(18-24 months)

♥ [thebabyprotocol](https://thebabyprotocol.com)

First Words + First Moves (18–24 months)

At 18 to 24 months, toddlers are highly active and learn primarily through hands-on exploration and play, rather than formal worksheets. They are experiencing a burst of new skills and a growing desire for independence. The best activities focus on sensory engagement, movement, and repetition to help develop language, fine motor, and problem-solving skills.







Give your child more chances to use words and follow simple directions. Keep play on the floor with short, happy rounds. Build control in hands, feet, and mouth with everyday tasks.

- Coach one-step actions with gestures + wait: “Give cup,” “Push car.”
- Echo and expand two-word talk: “More milk” → “More milk please.”
- Run point-and-name games; stack, poke, and place into bins.
- Practice spoon and open-cup sips; wipe and reset often.
- Track new words, one-step follows, stacks before a knock, and open-cup sips.

Daily Rhythm & Activity Planner

Date _____

Child's name _____

 Wake Time ___:___ <input type="checkbox"/> Plan _____ Notes _____	 Meals Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner <input type="checkbox"/>
 Nap Time ___:___ <input type="checkbox"/> Plan _____ Notes _____	 Outside Play Time ___:___ <input type="checkbox"/> Plan _____ Notes _____
 Outside Play Time ___:___ <input type="checkbox"/> Plan _____ Notes _____	 Story Time Time ___:___ <input type="checkbox"/> Target bedtime: ___:___

Caregiver tip: Keep meals and nap within a 30-60 minute window. Use a 10-minute wind-down before nap and bedtime (dim lights, one book, quiet song). Predictable cues = easier transitions.

Cognitive Development Mini-Checklist

How to use: Check one box each week.

☺ Language & Concepts

- | | Yes | Not Yet |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Follows a simple request | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Points to share/ask | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Names people or things | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Says 10+ words | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puts two words together
("more milk") | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Points to body parts (nose, tummy) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matches simple shapes/colors | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finds 3 pictures in a book | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |











★ Thinking & Problem-Solving

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tries shape sorter or rings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completes 2-3 piece puzzle | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plays cause and effect toy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finds a hidden toy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Caregiver tip: Keep play short and joyful.
Model words. Use simple books.

Emotional Development (Feelings & Self-Regulation) Mini-Checklist

How to use: Check one column each week.

	Yes	Not Yet
 Names basic feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Uses simple feeling words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Canks comfort from caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Calms with help (ideep breaths, hug)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Accepts 'no' with support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Waits briefly (with reminder)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Transitions with warning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Uses comfort object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Uses comfort object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
 Recovers within ~10 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Caregiver Tip: Keep routines simple and positive; label feelings; model a deep breath; praise small steps.

Social Development (Interaction & Imitation) Mini-Checklist

How to use: Check one column each week.

♥ Connection & Communication

	Yes	Not Yet
Shares smiles/interest		
Brings/shows to share	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waves, high-fives, blows kisses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses gestures to say hi/bye	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies actions (clap, wipe, stir)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looks to you when unsure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

★ Play with Others

	Yes	Not Yet
Plays near other kids	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Takes short turns (with help)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hands you a toy for help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Responds to name or looks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Points to show you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Simple pretend (feeds doll, phone)		<input type="checkbox"/>

Caregiver tip: Keep play short and joyful. Use short scripts.

Turn-Taking Mini-Scripts

My turn.

Wait—
then go.

Help
please.

All done—
clean up.

Can I
have a turn?

Let's
share.

Gentle
hands.

Stop,
please.

More,
please.

First
—, then _

Thank
you.

Caregiver Tip



Say the script first, then model it. Keep voice warm. Use the same words every time. Praise attempts.

Color & Shape Match

What you'll need:



Crayons



Toys



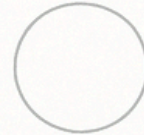
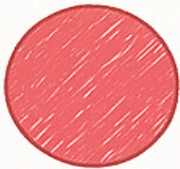
Place each color & shape



Tape

How to use:

1. Point & match
2. Place toy on a match
3. Name each color & shape

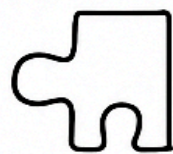


Caregiver Tip: Name it as you point: "Red circle."
Offer choices: "Do you want blue or yellow?" Praise tries.

Simple Puzzles (Match & Complete)

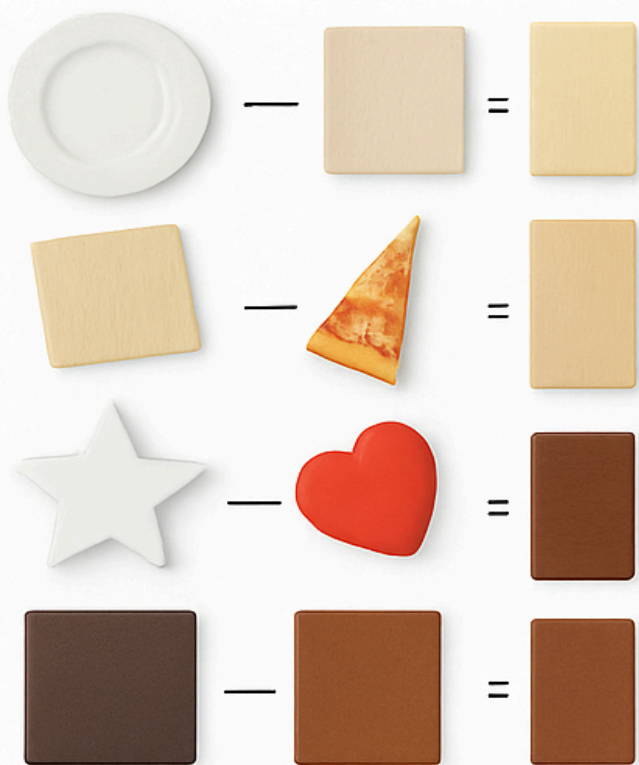
How to use:

1. Print on white paper and cut along dotted lines for puzzles. (For a no-cut version, draw lines to connect matches.)
2. Introduce one set at a time.
3. Model language like "match same" and "fit together."
4. Praise and join in the fun!



We tried it!

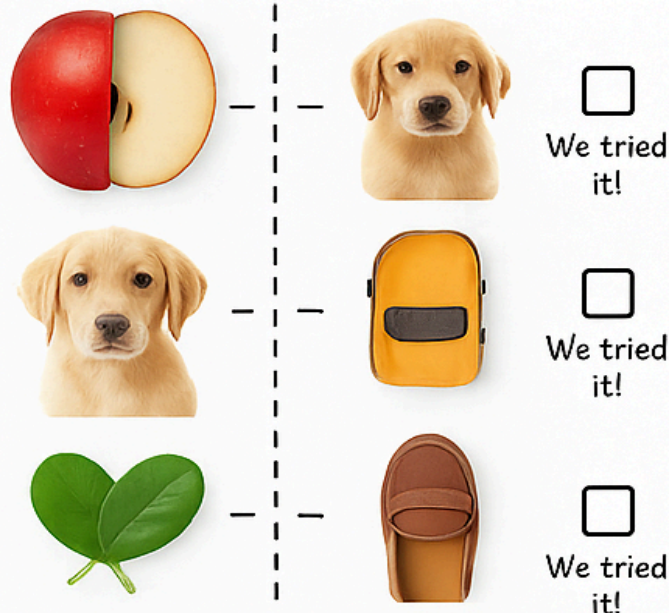
Match the Shape



Color Match We tried it!



Complete the Picture



At home options

- Make puzzles from old magazines.
- Tapp outlines to floor, match socks, lids to caps.

Caregiver Tip: Keep sessions short (2-5 min.), repeat favorites, end with success.

Picture & Word Flashcards

(Cut & Play)



dog



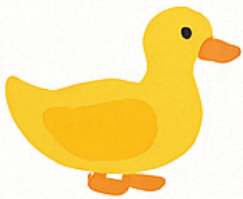
cat



bird



fish



duck



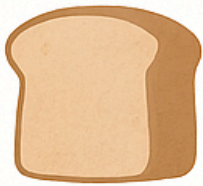
cow



apple



banana



bread



car



ball



cup

How to use:

1. Point and say the word together.
2. Match picture to toy or object.
3. Sort by animal/food/toy; colors; big/small.
4. Hide & find.

Caregiver Tip: Keep it playful; one minute sessions; model words:

Bubble Play

Bubble play Blowing bubbles and having your toddler chase and pop them is a great way to encourage running and jumping.

How to use:

- Set up:
Bubble solution + wand

- We did it!
 - Chase/catch the bubbles
 - Count pops: "1-2-3 POP!"
 - Freeze and pop, stomp to pop

Try this:

- Take a break after 5-10 minutes.
- It's clean-up time!

We did it!



Targets:

- Motor: runn
- Jump: reach
- Balance

Safety Tip:

Slippery outside?
Play on grass or
a non-slip mat.

Caregiver tip: Keep scripts short and joyful.

Dance & Move



Mini Activity

How to use: Mark a box each time you try a move.







How to use:

1. Play 1-2 a songs.
2. Choose 3-5 moves do 15-30 seconds each.
3. Say short cues: “up, down; fast, slow; stop, go.”
4. Pause for water; end with big stretch

Movement menu

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> March | <input type="checkbox"/> Tiptoe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stomp | <input type="checkbox"/> Jump (small) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spin | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Freeze |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shake | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reach up/down |
|  Side steps | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Animal moves
(hop like bunny, waddle like duck) | |
|  Follow the leader | |

Action songs

-  Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes
-  If You're Happy and You Know It
-  The Wheels on the Bus
-  Hokey Pokey
-  Row, Row, Row Your Beat
-  Baby Shark

Caregiver Tip: Keep it short (2-5 min). Mirror your child. Use the same simple words. Praise effort.

Homemade Sensory Bins

How to use:

- Pour base into tray
- Add 3-5 large scoops/cups, bowls, spoons
- Hide 5-8 safe items. say simple scripts: "scoop, pour"
- End with clean up



♥ Tools to add

Muffin cups, scoops bowls, funnels, tongs, trucks, animals, usa truck test.

♥ Always supervise.

Avoid small parts under 125 in (-8,2 cm) – use a toilet paper tube test. Keep materials away from mouth. Stop if throwing.

Plan today: Base ___
Toys ___ Minutes ___

Bin ideas

Dyed rice



1c + 1sp vinegar.
food coloring.
dry in bagipan

Pasta



large shapes

Oats



store-bought
or hanse-made:
8 sand + 1-
starch + water

Kinetic sand



8 flour + 1 oll



Play prompts

- Find & match
- Scoop & pour
- Sort by (color)shape)
- Fill the cup
- Glve a res-cue

Clouap



Use a sheet,
roll corilers
Hand broom
Store in sedled
tub
Wash hands

Caregiver Tip: Keep
Keep sessions short! (2-5 min)
model simple words, end with ~






Mess-Free Painting

(Bubble Wrap Squish)

Mini Activity



Materials:

-  washable paint
-  thick white paper/card
-  piece of bubble wrap
-  tray
-  wipes/old shirt

Peel to reveal art; stamp bubble wrap to make prints

Caregiver Tip:

Keep it short (2-5 min).
Model simple words; praise effort, not the picture.

Try these words:

press

squish

pop

slide

mix

colors

blue + yellow = green

Variations:

- use zip bag instead
- tape to floor for feet
- add paper shapes under
- use large bubbles vs small

Safety:

Close supervision
non-slip surface
keep paint away from mouth; wash hands

Sticker Peeling

Mini Activity

How to use:

1. Peel from easy to harder
2. Start large, simple paper stickers
3. Model "peel, place, press"
4. Use pincer grasp, place on target dots or shapes 2–5 minutes, end with success

Materials:

- paper
- easy-peel dot stickers
- painter's tape



Variations:

- vertical surface
- bath letters



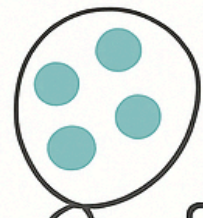
Caregiver Tip:

Narrate. "peel, press, pat"
praise effort not perfect.

Target dots



Target shapes



Safety:

Supervise - avoid mouth
Use largerihan 1.25"
for toddlers. Test
surface first.

Stacking Blocks

(Build & Knock)



Mini Activity

Materials:

- 6-12 large blocks (soft/wood).

How to use:

1. Pick 6-12 large blocks (soft/wood). Clear space.
2. Model 1-2 at a time: “stack, stack” - build a 3-5 block tower together.
3. Pause to count “1-2-3”; invite toddler to knock; “ready...go!”
4. Repeat; vary height, color, shape; switch roles “my turn, your turn”

Caregiver Tip:

Keep it short (2-5 min).

Use the same simple ods. Praise effort.

Try these words:

stack • tall • higher
balance • careful
fall • again • more
stop/go my turn

At-home variations:

- Sort by color before building
- Make a road/bridge/wall
- Use cups/boxes as blocks
- Put a toy on top to rescue


Safety:

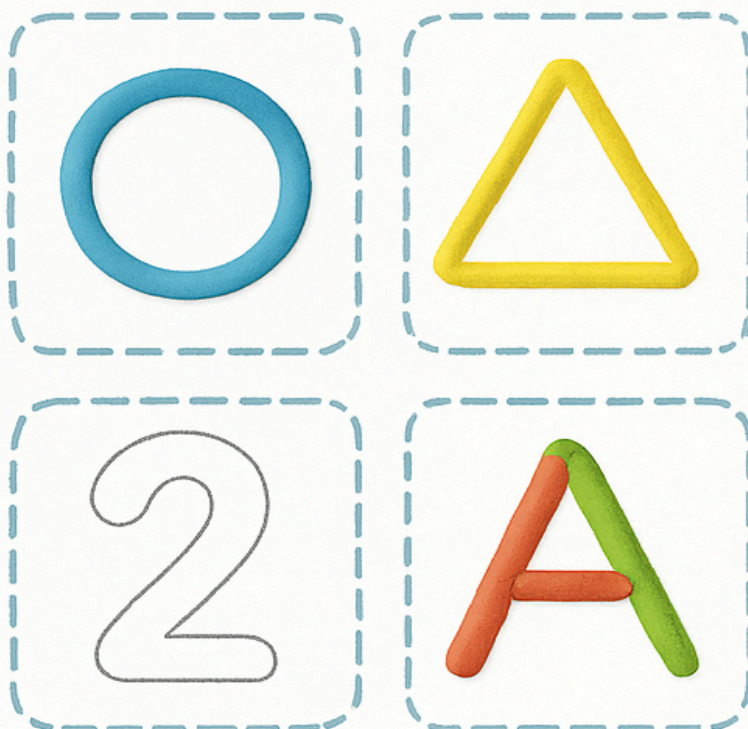
Supervise: avoid small pieces (<1.25 in).
Watch toes/fingers.

Playdough Mats


Shapes • Numbers • Letters

How to use:

1. Print or slip sheet into protector.
2. Roll playdough “snakes” to trace outlines. 
3. Pinch, press, poke.
4. Start with shapes, then numbers/letters.



Try these words:
roll press squish
pinch curve straight
circle line big/small
more

Caregiver Tip:
Keep balls small: 
model short words;
praise effort, store
dough sealed.

At-home options:

- use beads for line of dots
- include cookie cutters
- trace child's name
- color match dough to outline
- “count & cover” numbers

Safety:

Supervise: avoid mouth; check for allergies: use large pieces >1.5 in; surface washable after

Find free mats: Planes & Balloons

Find free mats:
Planes & Balloons

Narrate Your Day

How to use: Say one short sentence as you act. Use present tense. Point and name things. Pause 5-7 seconds.

♥ How to Narrate

- ✓ Keep sentences short (4-6 words).
- ✓ Use present-tense verbs: "I am..."
- ✓ Say it once as you do it.
- ✓ Point and name objects.
- ✓ Pause 5-7 seconds; let child respond.
- ✓ Match child's focus; follow their lead.
- ✓ Repeat key words 2-3 times.
- ✓ Keep your tone warm and fun.

Say this while you do it:

- ✓ Mommy is washing the dishes.
- ✓ Now we are putting on our shoes.
- ✓ I am pouring the milk.
- ✓ Daddy is zipping your jacket.
- ✓ We are washing hands.
- ✓ I am opening the window.
- ✓ We are reading the book.
- ✓ We are getting in the car.
- ✓ Daddy is turning off the light.

★ Caregiver Tip:

Keep it short (2-5 min).
Mirror your child. Repeat the same simple words.

Expand Their Words

When your toddler uses a single word, repeat it back and add more words.

How to Expand

- Repeat child's word first.
- Add 1-2 words.
- Match what they look at.
- Keep it simple.
- Pause 5-7 seconds; let child respond.
- Follow their lead.
- Repeat key words 2-3 times.
- Keep it warm and fun.

Say this while you do it:

juice → Yes, more juice.
ball → Big ball.
car → Blue car.
up → Up, please.
dog → Dog is running.
open → Open the door.
more → More crackers.
book → Read the book.
mama → Mama is here.
bye → Bye-bye, Daddy.



Caregiver Tip: Small additions grow language. Try expansions during play, meals, and routines.

Read Together

Use short sentences while you read.
Ask and point. Pause 5–7 seconds.

♥ How to read together

- Keep sentences short (4–6 words)
- Label and point
- Ask 1-choice questions only at time
- Pause 5–7 seconds
- Follow your child's focus
- Cheer any try

Say this while you read:

- Where's the dog?
- Point to the ball.
- Find the red car.
- Show me baby.
- Touch the big apple.
- Where are the shoes?
- Point to eyes.
- Find the sleeping cat.
- Show me open door.
- Point to two ducks.

♥ Caregiver Tip: Pause 5–7 seconds; model gesture; follow child's focus; keep sentences 4–6 words; label + expand.

Sing Songs & Rhymes

Use short, bouncy songs with actions.
Pause 5-7 sec for child's turn.

✓ How to Sing

- ✓ Keep it simple (4-6 words per line)
- ✓ Sing slow and clear
- ✓ Exaggerate rhythm
- ✓ Use actions: point, tap, clap, stomp
- ✓ Pause for child's turn
- ✓ Repeat favorite lines 2-3 times
- ✓ Swap in child's name
- ✓ Use gestures more than questions
- ✓ Keep sessions 2-5 min
- ✓ End with smile/high-five

Try these (action songs)

- 🎵 Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes – touch body parts
- 🎵 If You're Happy and You Know It – clap/stomp
- 🎵 Open, Shut Them open-close hands
- 🎵 Row, Row, Row Your Boat – row arms
- 🎵 The Wheels on the Bus wheels/doors
- 🎵 Itsy Bitsy Spider finger spider
- 🎵 Twinkle, Twinkle finger stars
- 🎵 Old MacDonald fingers count

Caregiver Tip: Keep beat with taps, slow tempo so child can join; model and wait.

Get Creative with Art Quick Experiments

✂ How to set up

- Stay with your child
- Use washable, non-toxic supplies
- Avoid small parts under 1.25 in.



Two colors:
mix and name



Water paint
on sidewalk



Nature brushes
(leaf, pinecone)



Bubble wrap
print: press
paper



Stmp with
sponge o blocks



Nature brusc-
(leaf, pinecone)

Say this while you paint:

- Up dots? Your turn.
- Blue on yellow-green!
- Keep sessions short

Try these



Big lines &
circles
(crayons)



Dot-dot-dot
then swipe
(cotton swab)



Tape-resist
shapes: peel



Car or ball
tracks in
paint tray



Paint-in-bag
squish
(no mess)



Sticker collage
shapes

Caregiver Tip

- Always supervise
- Stay with your child
- Use washable, non-toxic supplies
- Avoid small parts under 1.25 in (toilet paper-roll test)

Pretend Play & Helper Chores

Use dolls, stuffed animals, and safe tools.

How to set up

- Pick 2 props
- Keep sessions 2-5 min
- Show one step, then pause 5-7 sec
- Cheer any try

Try these

Pretend play



Feed baby

(spoon/cup)



Wash baby in bowl
pat dry



Brush hair



putth

More water?

All done.

Helper chores



Sweep with small broom



Spray & wipe window (water)



Sort socks match



Carry washtoths to basket

Say this while you play:

- Feed baby. Scoop, scoop.
- Wash-wash. Dry-dry.
- Night-night. Eyes closed.
- Sweep-sweep. Your turn.
- Spray, wipe-wipe.
- In the bin. On table.
- More water? All done.

Caregiver Tip

- Use real words + gestures.
- Model, then wait 5-7-sec.
- Keep it light and fun.







Water Play

(Splash & Scoop)



Mini Activity

Materials:

-  small tub or basin
-  cups/howls/scoops
-  sponges
-  bath toys
-  towel
-  waterproof mat

Try these words:

- scoop
- squeee
- wet/dry
- full/empty
- sink/float
- splash
- cold/warm
- cold/warm

How to use:

1. Lay towel/mat; fill tub with 1-2 inches of water.
2. Model; scoop, pour, squeeze sponge.
3. Invite child to try; name words.
4. Add a rule: water stays in tub; walking feet.
5. End with drain & dry.

Caregiver Tip:

Keep it short (2-5 min).
Use the same simple words.
Praise effort.

Variations at home:

- Add food coloring drop to tint; mix colors (if approved)
- Add colander/funnel/syringe/turkey baster
- Sink/float test (toy vs. leaf/spon)
- Wash toy babies/cars with soapy water (few drops)
- Transfer station. two bins, move water with sponge
- Ice cubes in summer; warm water winter

Safety: Supervise closely; water depth € 1-2 in; non-slip mat; avoid choking hazards; empty bucket

Obstacle Courses

Blanket Tunnel

1. Put two chairs and a blanket.
2. Crawl under slowly.
3. High-five at the end.



Pillow Steps

1. Line up 3-4 pillows.
2. Step over/onto with slow feet.
3. Big steps, little steps.



Tape Line Balance

1. Place masking-tape strip.
2. Arms out; heel-to-toe walk.
3. Freeze, then go!



Cone Zigzag (Cups)

1. Set 5 cups in a zigzag.
2. Walk around each cup.
3. Touch wall and return.



Caregiver Tip

- Stay close; soft items only.
- Keep sessions 2-5 minutes.

Move & Play

GROSS MOTOR PLAY

Play with Balls

- Roll, kick, and throw a large, lightweight ball.
- Encourage chasing after it to improve coordination.



Practice Jumping

- Help your toddler practice jumping off the lowest step
- Jump in and out of a hula hoop



Head Outdoors

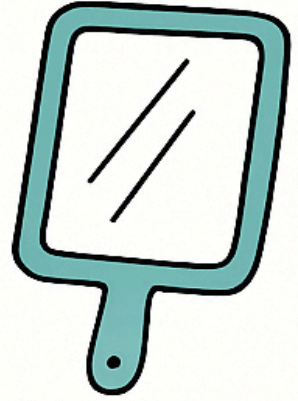
- Go for walks on different surfaces like grass
- Walk up and down small hills to help improve balance



Caregiver Tip: Stay close; clear space; soft landings; hold hands for first rs.

Talk About Emotions

Mirror Play



How to set up

- Sit with a mirror
- Point to face parts
- Model faces; take turns 5-7 sec
- Keep sessions short 2-5 min.

Say these faces



Happy face—
big smile



Sad face—
down mouth



Mad

Say this while you play:

- Happy face—big smile
- Sad face—down mouth
- Mad face—big breath
- My turn; your turn
- I see your eyes

Caregiver Tip

Follow child's lead;
stop if upset;
match feeling then

To every mom

Your daily care wires your child's brain.
Short sets beat long sessions.
End on a win. Follow their lead.

Watch closely and name what you see.
Pause and wait for a turn.
Talk, sing, and read in tiny bursts.
Choose floor time first.

Use what you have—cups, spoons, boxes, books.
No special gear needed.
Your face and voice do the work.
Keep it simple and safe.

Praise effort, not perfection.
Repeat so skills stick.
Breathe and reset when it's hard.
Small steps stack into big gains.

To every child

You are loved and safe.
You are curious and brave.
Keep exploring with gentle hands.
Ask for help when you need it.

Look, listen, and notice small changes.
Try, then try again. Share and take turns.

Big feelings are okay.
Breathe slowly, then choose your next step.
Practice every day. Effort grows your brain.