

Your Child's Development

Your toddler is using all his new physical, thinking, and language skills to be a good problem-solver. He might push a stool to the counter and try to climb up as he points to the cookie jar and says something like *Mine!*

How do you see your toddler figuring things out?



What Your Toddler Can Do	What You Can Do
<p>I'm using my body to explore and learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am walking and may be running and climbing. • I can scribble with a crayon and build a block tower. • I can feed myself. 	<p>Encourage your child to use his fingers and hands to explore. Let him scribble, tap a toy piano, or hold a bubble wand.</p> <p>Play "baby olympics." Create some safe challenges—like climbing over a stack of pillows—for your child to master.</p>
<p>I'm using language to understand the world around me.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can understand simple questions and directions like <i>Kick the ball to me.</i> • I communicate by combining sounds and actions—pointing to a cup and saying <i>wawa</i> for water. • By 18 months, I may say as many as 20 words. 	<p>Ask your child questions: <i>Would you like yogurt or a banana for snack?</i></p> <p>Put her gestures into words: <i>You're pointing at the bird flying in the sky.</i></p> <p>Read, sing together, and make up rhymes and stories. This builds a love of language and words.</p>
<p>I am beginning to understand my feelings and others' feelings too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may try to comfort someone who seems sad. • I repeat sounds and actions that make someone laugh. • My feelings can be hard for me to handle. I may start having tantrums and will need your help to calm down. 	<p>Read books that talk about feelings. Connect what you are reading to your child's experiences: <i>That little boy in the book felt sad saying good-bye to his daddy, just like you do sometimes.</i></p> <p>Stay calm during tantrums. Take deep breaths, count to 10, or whatever helps you to <i>not</i> react. Staying calm helps your child recover more quickly.</p>
<p>I'm becoming a good problem-solver.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I may do something over and over to figure out how it works. • I use objects the way they are supposed to be used—like talking on a toy telephone. • I imitate what I see others do—like trying to wipe the table with a sponge. 	<p>Let your child repeat the same activity, if he wants to. It may be boring to you but is important practice for him.</p> <p>Once your child has learned a new skill, like throwing the ball, add a twist: Set up a laundry basket for him to toss the ball into.</p>



As you use this resource, remember that your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated here and still be growing just fine. Talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional if you have questions.

Your family's cultural beliefs and values are also important factors that shape your child's development.

For more information on parenting and child development, go to: www.zerotothree.org.

What's on Your Mind

My 16-month-old wants to do everything by himself, which just isn't possible sometimes. What can we do?

Be creative. If he wants to feed himself but can't yet use a spoon, give him one spoon to hold while you feed him with another.

Find an alternative. Explain: *These sharp knives are for Mommy and Daddy to use.* Then show her how to use her hands or a blunt plastic knife to cut her food.

Be his coach. Offer just enough support so that he can achieve the goal himself. You might put your hand over his to help him zip his jacket.

Let your child safely practice new skills. She can practice pouring water out in the backyard or by using a small plastic pitcher in the bathtub.

Did You Know...

Children begin to understand how others are feeling—to empathize—by 18 months.¹

What It Means for You:

At 18 months, children begin developing a sense of self-awareness—the knowledge that they are individuals with their own feelings, thoughts, likes, and dislikes. Next, they realize that other people have *their* own feelings, thoughts, and preferences, too. This helps children learn empathy. They can imagine how another person feels. To help your child develop empathy:

Spotlight on Problem-Solving

The ability to solve problems is very important for being successful in school and in life. When you see your toddler getting into everything, think of it as his way of problem-solving—figuring out how things work.

Toddlers problem-solve by using their bodies and their minds to make a plan to reach their goals. For example, toddlers are solving a problem when they tip over their sippy cup to see how to make the liquid come out.

Toddlers are also solving problems by using their past experiences to help them understand new situations. For

example, your child may begin throwing everything into the trash—garbage or not. He is remembering that throwing his napkin out after lunch makes you happy. He just hasn't learned yet what *not* to toss out!

Children also learn how to solve problems by imitating what the people who care for them do. So when they see these adults staying calm and not giving up when they face a challenge, children learn to keep trying, too.

How do you see your toddler solving problems?

What You Can Do

Support your child in reaching her goal. If her block tower keeps falling, suggest she add some more blocks on the bottom for support.

Do chores together. Pushing a broom, for example, helps children solve problems like how to get the crumbs into the dust pan.

Teach your child to ask for help. When you see him getting frustrated as he tries to solve a problem, you might say: *It can be hard to get that jack-in-the-box to pop up! Would you like some help? Let's try turning this knob together.*

Talk about others' feelings. *Kayla is feeling sad because you took her toy car. Let's give Kayla back her car and then choose another one for you.*

Suggest how children can show empathy. *Let's get Jason some ice for his boo-boo.*

Empathize with your child. *Are you feeling scared of that dog? He is a nice dog but he is barking really loud. That can be scary. I will hold you until he walks by.*



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1 - Repacholi, B.M., & Gopnik, A., 1997.

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