

Top Tips: Your developing child aged 2-3 years

The time between 24 and 36 months is often known as the “terrible twos” but this is not a very helpful way of describing the emotional roller-coaster little ones are on. Being emotional is a perfectly natural part of growing up and it becomes more evident as your child is showing increased independence. Your toddler’s emotions are easily visible, including feelings of frustration. H/she wants to do things when h/she wants to. Be patient and sensitive in your response and build in extra time so you aren’t trying to rush. Try to go with the flow rather than battle with them.

Your toddler at this age is an active explorer who constantly is asking “what?” and “why?” questions and uses what h/she already knows to solve problems. You will see them staring for long periods at an object – trying to discover how it works and what it can do. Better hand-eye coordination

allows objects to be investigated more fully. Blossoming language skills are obvious. Their talk makes sense to them and the people that know them yet they still need some help in structuring what they want to say. This is a time when they are very good company with a sense of humour and understanding a lot of what you are saying.

Your toddler continues to achieve important milestones during this year but it is important to remember that all children do so at their own pace. The milestones below will give you an idea of what progress you can expect but please do not worry if your child takes a little longer or indeed achieves some of these earlier than indicated. As a parent you have a very important part to play in supporting this development within a loving and caring relationship. The ideas below will help you to support your child’s development.

Tip 1. Build up vocabulary

By age two, toddlers have on average about 200-250 words and this is added to quickly throughout the year. Understanding of words is superior to speaking but pronunciation is improving all the time. Your toddler will understand instructions in simple sentences like, “Come on Amir, let’s go off to the park”. They are also developing some understanding of time, “Shall we go later **after** you have had your snack?” Let your toddler practise their language and keep communicating with one another. Teach your child nursery rhymes and simple songs.

Tip 2. Increase your conversations

Your toddler seems to chat all the time. This is great. H/she finds the world fascinating and expects you to do so too. Not only does this increase vocabulary, but you are shaping understanding of the social conventions of

conversation. Taking turns, using different facial expressions and gestures to communicate, maintaining eye-contact are all aspects of conversation.

Tip 3. Limit TV times

Television has some beneficial effects for children, in helping with language, but it does need to be viewed in moderation. 15 -30 minutes a day is not going to be harmful but remember there are much better ways of helping your little one to develop language. Talking with your toddler is far better! If your toddler is going to watch TV do it with them so that you can talk about what is happening in the programme.

Tip 4. Manage fluctuating emotions

Your toddler is trying to work out who h/she is and show you that h/she is quite independent now. Emotions are on a roller coaster: up and down, down and up sometimes leading into temper storms. Help your child through this time. It is only a passing phase as by about mid year, these tantrums are less frequent. This is a time when your child's unique personality is forming. It takes time and you are an important role model for your child to copy.

Tip 5. Manage the situation when feelings spill out

There will be many times when your child's feelings do spill over. These can be intense and loud and distressing. What you need to do is to remain calm. Avoid losing **your** control as your child is learning about behaviour from you. Reassure your child whilst they are angry or upset and tell them you know they are feeling cross - as this provides safety and reassurance. Afterwards you may want to think about out why it started. Was it hunger, tiredness, frustration at not being able to do something? These are all vital clues that might help you in preventing a similar situation occurring for the same reason in the future.

Tip 6. Encourage sharing with other children

Toddlers do find other children of a similar age fascinating, They want to be with them and to look at what they are doing. They may occasionally join in with play, but most children will not be ready to play together for some time. They play alongside each other. Occasional displays of aggression towards another child are normal, particularly when it comes to sharing a favourite toy – a good way to avoid this happening is to provide more than one of the same type of toy. If children do get upset about sharing help them to understand why people sometimes have to share and praise any positive behaviour. Such times offer powerful learning opportunities.

Tip 7. Support his/her self management skills

Your toddler has now much improved hand-eye co-ordination. Use these developing skills to support dressing and undressing. By the end of the year, many children can manage most items of clothing with a little time. Be patient

and allow them the time they need. Buy clothes without difficult fastenings. Shoe-laces are also difficult. The majority of children can manage the toilet with some help with wiping themselves and hand washing.

Tip 8. Help with thinking and reasoning

After about 2 ½ years, your toddler's memory and concentration takes huge steps forward. The flitting from one toy to another is disappearing and time spent exploring a toy or puzzle extends rapidly. By age 3, your toddler can probably name colours, can recognise some letters, say numbers or count aloud (though not count objects) and group similar objects together. Logic is increasing. Explain why things happen as they do.

Tip 9. Understand that a child at play is a child learning

Play time is a wonderful time for your toddler to learn. Imagination is fostered through pretend play; exploring the properties of objects helps build learning capacity and physical skills are improved through running and climbing. Language for thinking is improved. Play is a powerful way for young children to learn. Try not to offer too many suggestions or direct your child's play. Just watch for some of the time and join in if invited to. Puzzles, picture lotto games, jigsaws, dressing up clothes are all proven in stimulating a child's learning.

Tip 10. Balance free play with routine

Children at play become engrossed. The make-believe world is theirs to create for themselves. More time is spent playing alone but this will soon involve play with friends. Keep the routines of the day going: regular meal times, bath time, sharing books time and bed time as well as play time. Your child will enjoy routines like setting the table with you, tidying up after playing with toys. This helps to build up a sense of pride and ownership and can also help with mathematical ordering skills and language development. Make it into a game every once in a while. Set a challenge. Say, "I bet you can tidy away all your toys into the box by the time the timer rings in one minute. Can't you?"

Important milestones

Moving	Communicating	Learning	Showing emotions. Being with others
<p>Shows better balance and coordination Throws a ball. Kicks a ball with better accuracy and power Improved running. Avoids obstacles. Can jump with feet together from a low step. Hops Keen to climb on furniture and apparatus Can ride a tricycle using pedals</p>	<p>Knows around 200+ words Continually asks questions Uses “me” and “you” when talking Constructs short sentences with a verb, subject and object, e.g. “Me go home” The words used make sense to them Can begin a conversation with another adult.</p>	<p>Has understanding of reality and makebelieve Can sort objects by shape and colour Begins to know about cause and effect. If she touches a hot object it will hurt Knows own name in full Knows she is a different person to someone else Copies others. Will tidy up after play as this is what adults do.</p>	<p>Shows temper when frustrated Watches other children at play. Occasionally joins in Enjoys play with an adult giving undivided attention More confident with strangers Expresses own feelings easily. Has now some understanding of other people’s feelings</p>