



How to tame your toddler

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How to stimulate your toddler

As toddlers are usually very active, here are some ideas on how to keep them busy!

Activities which stimulate curiosity:

- Water play
- Sand Play
- Messy Play – cornflour, shaving foam, soap flakes, finger painting, mud, gravel, spaghetti, pasta etc
- Playdough, large boxes, material sheets, bed sheets etc

Activities which build up self-esteem:

- Washing up
- Dressing up
- cleaning, i.e. car, windows, cupboards etc
- Cooking
- Gardening

Activities which encourage imagination:

- Small world play – cars, dolls, animals, bricks, train set, blocks etc
- Dolls and teddies
- Dressing up
- Imaginative play with home equipment, e.g. pots and pans, cutlery, sieves, colanders, bowls etc

Activities which promote physical development:

- Drawing and painting
 - Junk modeling and model making
 - Collage and cutting magazines, newspapers etc
 - Papier mache
 - Obstacle courses
 - Races
 - Visit to the Park
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A Case Study

This case study is of a 2 year old and 2 different strategies of how to act in response to the child's behaviour.

Jolene, aged two years, was happily playing with her new cars when her father came to get her ready for bed. Jolene was not ready to stop her game; her father was waiting to go out and insisted. Within seconds, a previously happy scene – with Jolene singing tunelessly – changed into a full-blown temper tantrum. Jolene's tantrums could be a frightening sight – a whirlwind of exploding emotions, involving foot stamping, screaming and lashing out.

1.

Her father waited a few seconds and then calmly sat and held Jolene, gently but firmly, until her outburst had died down. Her screams and shouts eventually turned into sobs, and ended in a comforting cuddle. Jolene then went to choose a book to read after her bath.

2.

Her father waited a few seconds and then gently held Jolene by the arms, but Jolene kicked and thrashed at him. He gave up and let go of her and she continued screaming and crying. He sat down and watched until she calmed down again. He gave her the cars and Jolene continued playing.

The following questions are designed for you to think about the way we, as adults, react to children and their behaviour.

Why do you think Jolene reacted so angrily to her father?

Do you think Jolene's father acted in the right way?

How might you have dealt with this situation?

What is the best way to deal with tantrums?



Managing unwanted behaviour

Here are some ideas of courses of action when dealing with unwanted or undesired behaviour:

As practitioners and parents we should be aiming to use positive preventative strategies to avoid unwanted behaviour rather than have to deal with it. This means anticipating potential sources of conflict or danger and making sure that children are well supervised and have interesting activities. However, there will be times when unwanted behaviour occurs and needs to be managed. It is important that unwanted behaviour is dealt with sensitively, Intervention needs to be prompt, calm and controlled. There are several ways in which you can intervene, depending on the situation.

–through eye contact/facial expression. Sometimes a simple look will warn children that they are stepping over the boundary and this will be enough to help them remember that their behaviour is not appropriate. Eye contact may need to be held with a child along with an expression of disapproval. Once the child starts to show appropriate behaviour, you should make sure that immediate praise is given. This strategy is particularly useful if you are working in group situations and you do not want to disrupt the activity.

-Say a determined 'NO!.' Most children respond to this expression and understand its meaning. For this to work, it is important that you use it sparingly. It is also important that children understand that 'no means no', and you do not allow children to continue with inappropriate behaviour. This strategy is particularly effective if combined with facial expression and is useful in situations where children need to be prevented from doing something potentially dangerous.

-Explain the consequences of children's actions. It is good practice to make children aware of the consequences of their actions. They may not realize that throwing sand may lead to pain for a child getting sand in the eye. It is also worth explaining to older children what will happen if they continue to show unwanted behaviour – this sets clear boundaries for them. For example, 'If you carry on kicking the ball towards the road, I will have to take it away in case it goes against a car.' Once you have suggested that there will be a sanction, it is essential that you are prepared to carry out the sanction. Do not threaten sanctions that you cannot justify or carry out, otherwise children will not believe you another time.

-Removal of equipment. Taking away equipment should be a final measure, but may be necessary if children have either been threatened with this sanction or they are putting themselves or others in danger, for example tying a rope around a child's neck to play horses. This type of activity may be so exciting that even if you warn children about the dangers, they will still be tempted to carry on. If you remove equipment, it is a good idea to



give children something else to do so that they do not go from one inappropriate situation into another!

-Time out. The idea of time out is not to punish children, but simply to allow them to calm down and step back from the problem. Older children particularly benefit from time out, especially if a sympathetic adult can talk about why they are needing to calm down.

The 2 to 3 year old stages

Actively explores environment

Imitates adults in simple tasks

Repeats actions that gain attention

Alternates between clinging and independence

Has understanding that toys or other objects may belong to others.

To play alongside other children (parallel play)

To carry out simple instructions such as 'Can you find your coat?'

Good supervision, as children of this age do not understand the dangers around them.

Distraction, to stop unwanted behaviour as children often forget what they were doing, for example, if a child wants another child's toy, offer him or her another instead.

Praise, so that children understand how to get an adult's attention in positive ways and to help develop good self esteem.

Calm and patience, as children of this age are often persistent at trying to do something, for example a child may keep going back to something that is potentially dangerous.

A good role model, as children are learning behaviour through imitating those around them.

Wants to be independent, but does not always have the skills.

Becomes frustrated easily and has tantrums.

Is jealous of attention shown to other children.



Has no understanding for the need to wait.

Finds sharing difficult.

Is active and restless.

To wait for needs to be met, for example at meal times.

To share toys or food with one other child with an adults help.

To play alongside other children.

To sit and share a story for five minutes.

To say 'please' and 'thank you' if reminded.

To follow simple instructions with help, such as 'wash your hands.'

Good supervision and anticipation – the keys to working with this age range. Children are trying to be independent, but lack some of the physical and cognitive skills that they need. This makes them frustrated and angry. Adults need to anticipate possible sources of frustration and support children, either by offering help or by distracting them. For example, a child who is trying to put on a coat may need an adult to make a game of it so that the child does not become frustrated. Where possible, adults should try to provide as many opportunities as possible for children to be independent.

Calm and patience, as children who are frustrated can trigger off negative feelings in adults. This has the potential to inflame a situation. It is a good idea to allow plenty of time for children to complete day-to-day tasks. Children of this age often forget and need reminding about boundaries and goals.

Praise and encouragement, to enable children to learn what behaviour adults are expecting from them. Some unwanted behaviour that is not dangerous should be ignored so that children do not repeat it hoping for adult attention. Adults should also provide plenty of love and attention if children have a tantrum as some children can be frightened by the force of their own emotions.



Questions and Answers (answers below)

The following is an exercise, where your knowledge of children aged between 3 months and 5 years is put to the test!

The questions are adapted from Mary Sheridan's 'Birth to Five' development book, which is a much used reference book for all child carers.

At What Age Does A Child...

- 1)begin to name drawings before production?
- 2) ... show delighted response to active play?
- 3) ... put objects in an out of a cup or box when shown?
- 4) ... watch other children at play with interest, occasionally joining in for a few minutes?
- 5) ... play 'pat-a-cake' and waves 'goodbye' both on request and simultaneously?
- 6) ... engage in elaborate make-believe group play?
- 7) ... respond with obvious pleasure to friendly handling, especially when accompanied by playful tickling?
- 8) ... display parallel play. The child plays contentedly near other children, but not with them?
- 9) ... play 'peek – boo' and imitate hand clapping?
- 10) ... push large, wheeled toys with handle on level ground?
- 11) ... manipulate objects attentively, passing them frequently from hand to hand?
- 12) ... do constructive out-of-doors building with any materials available?
- 13) ... do more sustained role play, such as putting dolls to bed, washing clothes, driving motor cars, but with frequent reference to a friendly adult?
- 14) ... become fascinated by household objects and imitates simple, everyday activities such as feeding a doll, reading a book, brushing the floor and washing clothes?
- 15) ... find a toy which is wholly hidden under a cushion or cup?
- 16) ... follow a parent or carer around the house and imitates domestic activities in simultaneous play?
- 17) ... manipulate cubes and may build a tower of two cubes after demonstration?
- 18) ... join in active make-believe play with other children, and understands the concept of sharing playthings?
- 19) ... enjoy putting small objects in and out of containers, and learning the relative size of objects?
- 20) ... vividly realize make-believe play, including invented people and objects?



ANSWERS:

- 1) 3 years
- 2) 6 months
- 3) 12 months
- 4) 2½ years
- 5) 12 months
- 6) 5 years
- 7) 3 months
- 8) 2 years
- 9) 9 months
- 10) 15 months
- 11) 6 months
- 12) 4 years
- 13) 2½ years
- 14) 18 months
- 15) 9 months
- 16) 2 years
- 17) 15 months
- 18) 3 years
- 19) 18 months
- 20) 3 years