

Your 16 to 26 month old...

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Making Relationships: Your toddler will be happy to take part in new adventures but will return to you for comfort. They will play next to other children but doing their own thing. Although they are unlikely to play with other children, being around other children is great for your toddler to become socially aware. They will enjoy playing games cooperatively with you, such as rolling a ball, and they will use these skills later in life when playing with other children.

Self-confidence and Self-awareness: Your toddler will be a lot more independent now and will say 'no' to you and have their own ideas. They will begin to play imaginatively, showing their developing sense of self. Your toddler may still need you nearby for comfort and confidence. Encourage your child to recreate experiences by modelling role-play such as pouring and drinking a cup of tea.

Managing Feelings and Behaviour: Now that s/he is older, your toddler will be aware of their own feelings and those of others. They might show this by making a sad face when they hear crying or share excitement they can hear. They will need some support to respond to boundaries. You can help young children label emotions by talking about their own or the feelings of others or looking at books. Allow children to have choices and time to follow their own ideas so they are less likely to feel frustrated and tantrum.

Communication and Language

Listening and Attention: When something takes their interest, your toddler will only be able to concentrate on this one thing- meaning that they appear not to hear you when you call them. S/he will enjoy listening to rhymes and poems and the flow of your voice will help maintain their attention. Encourage them to join in with nursery rhymes or the sounds in books as you interact.

Understanding: Now that they have an understanding of familiar words and simple sentences, your toddler will be able to find particular objects. It is important to keep talking to your child as you do everyday things and play, as children of this age can understand a lot more than they can say. Labelling things will encourage them to continue making links between words and objects.

Speaking: The range of words your toddler can say is growing and they are now starting to put two words together. They may begin to ask simple questions or talk about people who aren't with them. To encourage speech, give children a choice, 'apple or pear?'. Be sure to encourage talk and repeat words correctly that are mispronounced.

Physical Development

Moving and Handling: Your toddler can walk upstairs holding your hand and crawl downstairs backwards. They are beginning to build blocks to make a tower and make connections between the movements and the marks they make. Encourage your child to be independent in exploring ways to move and help them discover new ways by modelling or looking at books that encourage movement when they act them out. Your child might need a little support to grasp one handed tools and other objects such as a paintbrush, toy teapot or spade in the garden.

Health and Self-care: Your child will enjoy new food textures but will be developing their own likes and dislikes. They will begin to show some awareness of bowel and bladder urges and will be interested in dressing and hygiene. Encourage and praise your child's independence and give them choices. Talk to them about the potty and toilet and allow plenty of time for them to wash their hands independently or put their own shoes on.

Literacy

Reading: Your toddler will be developing his/her love of books and may have some favourite stories and rhymes. Make sure you have a range of books at home- or visit the library! Use soft toys and puppets to help you tell stories and use exciting voices to keep your little one's attention. Try and encourage your toddler to use stories they've already heard in their play; this will enable them to draw on these ideas in the future when they tell their own stories.

Writing: There are lots of ways to develop your baby's future writing skills! It is important that you give them a rich language experience so talk to them, read to them and encourage them to join in. Enjoy lots of sensory experiences together; hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching. This is great for brain development and the movement will strengthen their muscles.

Mathematics

Numbers: You may hear your toddler start to say some random number words in their play and they will be starting to sort and categorise things. Children will develop an awareness of number by hearing you talk about numbers and then putting that into context when they play. Count in front of your child (walking up steps) and try to talk about how numbers are important them- 'we need two shoes, here's one, and another is two!').

Shape, Space and Measure: Although they won't be able to label shapes, by playing and exploring your toddler is learning all about shape and space. Your routine will be familiar to your toddler now and they might be able to tell you what might happen now. Games such as puzzles and wooden bricks will help your toddler explore how shapes fit together. They will enjoy playing with different sized containers in the bath, pouring the water from one to the other whilst you model language such as 'full' and 'empty'.

Understanding the World

People and Communities: Your toddler will be interested to learn about themselves, their families and others. Remember that children learn to accept and celebrate differences through watching how we treat others. Showing that you value religious, cultural and community beliefs will develop a positive attitude in your child.

The World: Your toddler will understand objects and know where they belong and how they fit together (putting a lid on a teapot). They will enjoy exploring toys that they can shake, hit, feel, mouth, pull, turn and poke. To develop a sense of their world, children will enjoy collecting pebbles, jumping in puddles and spotting bugs and wildlife when you go for walks.

Technology: Toys that have buttons, flaps and simple mechanisms will interest your child. Talk to your child about the way things work such as pulling back a toy friction car and letting go or pressing a button to hear a sound or see a light.

Expressive Arts and Design

Exploring and using Media and Materials: Your child will be beginning to create now, whether it be dancing in the living room, making toy car tracks through puddles or stacking a wooden brick tower. It is important to value children's creations. This will develop their self-esteem and, in turn, encourage them to stretch their imagination further.

Being Imaginative: Your child's imagination will be beginning to grow and show now. You may start to see them taking part in role play and pretending that objects are other things when playing, such as pretending a toy banana is a phone or a wooden brick is a space rocket. You may feel silly at first, but playing along with your child will really make their ideas feel appreciated as well stretch their imagination, language and concentration skills.