

Games to play with your toddler



Reviewed by the [BabyCenter Medical Advisory Board](#)
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These simple games are fun to play with your toddler – and they'll boost development too.

12 to 16 months

Coming to life

Pretend your child's favorite teddy or doll is real and include him in everyday activities. Take him on a walk, tuck him into bed, or dance with him around the room. Narrating what you're doing boosts your toddler's language skills. Act out whether the toy is happy or sad so she can learn to identify and talk about emotions as she's developing her imagination.

Push me, pull you

If your toddler is pulling himself up and trying to walk, help him practice with a pushing and pulling game. Use a moveable object, such as a child-size chair or plastic stacking box filled with soft toys.

While he holds the edges for support, you can hold the other side steady. Then slowly pull the box toward you to encourage him to step forward. Soon he'll start to push while you gently pull. This builds his confidence for the day he finally walks on his own.

Clap happy

By now your toddler can hold her hands open, but it may be a while before she [claps independently](#). For now, clap them together for her, or let her hold your hands while you pat them together.

Sit her facing you on the floor or on your lap and sing clapping songs like patty-cake. These will boost her language skills as well as her hand-eye coordination.

Who's hiding here?

Just as your toddler loved peekaboo as a baby, he will love to play simple games of hide-and-seek. First thing in the morning, take turns hiding under the bed sheets. At bath time, use a big towel. For extra fun and giggles, you can gently prod him when he's hiding. Say something like, "**Hmm, is this a leg? Or is it an arm?**"

Games like this show your toddler that just because he can't see something, that doesn't mean it isn't there. For a change, carry him into another room while he's wrapped up in the towel. He'll be delighted to pop his head out and discover he's in a new spot.

The magic of sound

Word play increases your child's awareness of sounds and gives her the confidence to try out new words. From books that mimic car sounds to farm animals that moo and cock-a-doodle-doo, there's no shortage of toys that can ignite your child's imagination through sound. Playing games that repeat certain sounds, reading nursery rhymes out loud, and experimenting with different tones and rhythms are other ways you can help your toddler develop language skills – and have fun while she's at it.

16 to 20 months

Tea party

On a sunny day, take a child-size plastic tea set outside and fill a large plastic bowl with water. Pretend you've "come to tea" and have your toddler fill the teapot and pour the tea. Don't expect a dainty tea party. It's likely to be a watery mess. But this fun game will challenge his coordination, and he'll be fascinated to discover the properties of water – like how it always flows down, not up.

Block patterns

This requires some concentration on your toddler's part, so it's best played when she's feeling refreshed. Use building blocks to make simple patterns, such as three in a row or "two up, two down" to make a square. Show her how to copy your pattern using other blocks. Then copy whatever pattern she comes up with.

Sorting objects into shapes helps your toddler develop problem-solving skills.

Roll it to me

Balls are popular toys for toddlers. Bouncy balls are best for outside play, but soft, foam balls make great indoor toys. Keep a close eye on your child when he's using these because some curious toddlers like to see what they taste like, and foam is a choking hazard.

The best ball game to start playing with your toddler is an easy version of "catch." Both of you sit on the ground facing each other with your legs apart and toes touching. You can now roll the ball back and forth to each other without it going out of bounds. Fun for building arm muscle strength and hand-eye coordination.

Young collector

Go for a walk together and take a bucket with you. Collect small objects that interest your toddler, like stones, leaves, and pinecones.

Your toddler will want to carry the bucket, but don't be surprised if she also dumps its contents and starts again. Toddlers this age love to fill containers just so they can empty them again.

Meanwhile, she's practicing her hand movements and developing dexterity.

20 to 24 months

Let's dance!

Play favorite songs that could inspire your child to do specific actions – like something with a loud, strong beat so he can stamp like an elephant, or something quiet so he can pretend he's tiptoeing past a sleeping lion. Marching to music is also great fun and easy enough for most toddlers to manage. These games stretch his imagination and develop his sense of rhythm, which helps language development.

What can you hear?

Take a big towel or blanket out into the garden and lie down on it together. Ask your toddler to close her eyes and listen carefully.

After a minute or so, ask her what she could hear and tell her what you heard – the wind in the trees, a bird singing, a car driving past. This is a great game for helping your toddler develop listening and descriptive skills.

Catch me if you can

Toddlers love to be chased. The object of this game is for your child to be caught, especially if he knows he gets a big bear hug and tickles every time you manage to catch him.

For variety, pretend to be different types of animals, like a roaring lion or a scuttling mouse. A great game for building up your toddler's stamina – and yours!

http://www.babycenter.com/0_games-to-play-with-your-toddler_1485454.bc