

## Developmental Checklist      27 to 30 Months

You set up the playdate, set the kids loose — and they head off for different toys, completely ignoring one another. Is the playdate a bust? Not at all. Kids this age typically engage in what's called parallel play. It might look strange, but it's completely normal and developmentally useful.

Your preschooler is making important social progress. He's moved up from always playing alone, as he did when he was a baby. Now he's interested in other children. Even when the kids don't interact during their play, they're aware of one another. And it's as different from solo play as sitting in a crowded theater is from sitting home alone watching TV.

### Things Your Child May Do At This Age

- “problem solve” by taking things apart
- play with other children, even if it's parallel (side by side) play
- may be possessive of toys during play time
- stack (not just knock over) towers of blocks
- concentrate for slightly longer periods of time (up to 20 minutes if very interested)
- Can grasp the crayon between thumb and fingers. Some recognizable shapes will start to appear on the paper: primitive stick people, circles, and rainbows.
- may resent interruptions and have a hard time transitioning from one activity to another
- be curious and remove items from drawers or shelves and “get into things”
- may “whine” when frustrated
- may switch from “me” to “I” and start making plurals (dogs), though grammatical mistakes and mix-ups to continue for a while
- want lots of repetition (eating the same thing over and over, watching the same show over and over, wearing the same clothing item over and over)
- Become fearful of things they were not afraid of before (the dark, baths, etc)
- “Regression” may occur. Sometimes a child is working so hard on one kind of skill that she backslides on another

### Safety Tips

- If it hasn't happened already, you might soon discover your preschooler catapulting out of her crib. That's your cue to transition to a new, safer sleep arrangement. Some parents put the crib mattress on the floor and disassemble the crib. Others take advantage of the opportunity to move to a big-kid bed. You can make the switch easier by putting your preschooler down for naps on the big bed for a few days before moving her there at night. A guardrail can ease worries about her falling out of bed.
- Children this age are especially vulnerable to accidents like drowning and poisoning because they're so curious, and they have improved motor skills to get into things – quickly. Be especially watchful during critical stress hours: morning rush out the door, right before dinner, at parties, on vacation, when you have guests, or when you're running late.

### Special Tip!

"Pick your battles" -- focus on the big issues and ignore small ones or the ones you can't win. Your child is learning to exert his will and preferences, and he's also easily frustrated these days. Clearly define your limits and expectations. Decide which rules you care most about: “no hitting” and “no throwing food,” for example. These are the ones you should enforce consistently and ask all caregivers to insist on, too.

### Health Hints

Help your toddler brush his/her teeth with a soft child's toothbrush and non-fluoride toothpaste. Use about a pea-sized amount (you can switch to fluoride toothpaste at age three). Brush gently

all around your child's baby teeth -- front and back. You should plan to help brush your child's teeth until he or she is old enough to hold the brush and can rinse and spit without assistance. Keep on the lookout for any signs of baby tooth decay -- brown or white spots or pits on the teeth. If you or your pediatrician notices any problems, take your child to a pediatric dentist for an exam.

## **Nutrition Notes**

Your toddler may want to eat only certain foods (or the same food over and over again) and become a "picky eater" even if he/she was not before. Offer healthy between-meal snacks if your child is not eating well at mealtimes. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low- or nonfat dairy also make good nutritious snacks for children.

## **Things You Can Do Every Day to Help Your Child Grow**

- Help your child practice her large-motor skills by bringing home ride-on toys and push and pull toys.
- Make an obstacle course of sofa cushions and pillows to climb over. Throw a blanket over a table to make a "cave" or "house."
- For fine motor skills practice, look for puzzles with knobbed handles, lock boxes and latch boards, and dress-up dolls that need buttoning and lacing. Or get some yarn and string together different pasta shapes or large buttons and beads.
- Reading the same book over and over provides a measure of comfort to preschoolers, who see the familiar characters and plot as an oasis in a world full of unknowns. But there are cognitive and language benefits to re-reading, too. Re-reading helps your 2-year-old connect the words he hears with the pictures he sees.
- Keep a wide variety of books on hand by making frequent library visits; eventually he'll be ready to switch to a new favorite
- Boost your child's confidence by keeping playgroups small and familiar. Make a habit of inviting over just one or two children your child already knows. Use the word "friend." Talk about your friends and your child's: "Your friend Max is coming over after your nap today."
- Keep playtime short. Especially with new friends, don't count on more than a half hour to an hour of peaceful play at this age.
- Limit "screen time" to less than two hours per day for 2-year-olds, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Choose age-appropriate, commercial-free preschooler shows. (Cartoons and sitcoms geared to older kids can be frightening or confusing.) As handy as the tube may be, reserve turning it on for those moments when you really have to get something done instead of making it a part of your child's daily routine.
- Sharing is a skill that comes later. Model sharing and use the word "share": "Would you like to share my cookie?" You may want to hide a favorite toy if another child is coming over to play, because two year olds have a hard time sharing things they're attached to. If needed, break up "fights" by removing the object of debate and moving the kids onto something else: "The car needs to take a rest now. Want to blow some bubbles?"
- Help your preschooler lay down these memory tracks in the brain by asking questions about things he knows: "Hmmm, what will the bunny say goodnight to next?" Ask him to recall details: "Did you have vanilla ice cream or chocolate?" At night, review your day together: "And then what did we do?"
- Bring out a variety of water toys — plastic containers or measuring cups work fine — so your preschooler can dip, pour, and have pretend tea parties at bath time.
- Provide different kinds of art materials: fat crayons, fat pencils and colored pencils, nonpermanent markers, sidewalk chalk, watercolor, clay or Play-Doh. Don't get too caught up in the *what* of the art; it's the *how* that your child is focusing on now.