

# Baby's First Wish

Cooperative Extension Service  
New Mexico State University

A h a p p y & h e a l t h y l i f e

Dear Parents: 29 & 30 Months

Your Toddler  
Is Learning  
New Words

Isn't it amazing how fast your toddler is learning new words? Language learning may be your child's most important accomplishment this year. You are helping. Every time you sing her a song, read her a story, or repeat a nursery rhyme, your toddler learns about language, and learns that you enjoy language. Remember, your child learns by imitating you and by catching your enthusiasm.

In their eagerness to teach their little ones about language, some parents forget that language goes two ways. Children must hear people use language, but they also need adults to listen and respond to their words. Let your little one tell you stories, "read" books to you, describe things she has seen, and answer your questions. Help her make up songs, encourage her



to play at rhyming words or making up new words.

Show your child that what she says is important to you. Remember, communication means talking and listening.

## Questions Parents Ask

Why Won't My Child Go to Sleep When I Put Her to Bed?

**Q.** My 2 1/2 year old won't go to sleep when I put her to bed. What can I do?

**A.** Bedtime is not always sleep time. Young children need regular bedtimes and special bedtime routines, like teeth cleaning, stories, and hugs. Parents need regular bedtimes for their children, so that they can have some relaxation time.

You can expect your child to go to bed and be quiet at set times. Don't worry if she does not always go to sleep as soon as she goes to bed. When she isn't sleepy, let her have some quiet play time in bed until sleep comes.





# Health

## Child Care Centers Require Immunizations

If you are considering enrolling your child in a child care center, her immunizations must be up-to-date. You will need an immunization record that lists the dates of each immunization your child received.

The law says that child care centers must make sure all children enrolled have their immunizations. The child care center staff must see your record so that they can complete official records for their files.

The immunizations required by child care centers are the same ones every child needs for protection.

Call your county Health Department or county Extension office for immunization requirements.

# Nutrition

## Good Times at Mealtimes

Mealtime is not just a time to eat. It can be a time to talk, share, and enjoy being with others. Family members can tell each other what has been happening at school, work, or home. Even though your toddler may not talk well, let him take part in this sharing. Ask him questions, and let him answer for himself.

Mealtime is not a good time to discuss family problems about money, misbehavior, and the like. No one feels like eating when there is an argument going on. If this happens often, your child will begin to dread meals. He will eat as quickly as possible and then want to leave the table. He may

begin to have stomach aches because mealtime is unpleasant.

Talk about problems after the meal is over and everyone has left the table. During meals, think of things to talk about that will help everyone feel good about themselves and others.

If you are eating alone with your child, you can talk about the names of the different foods on his plate and the color and shape of each food. You can count how many different foods or pieces of food there are on his plate. With a little imagination and planning, you and your toddler can make every meal a happy meal.

For more information on children and violence, call your county Extension office and ask for the publication, "Children, War Toys, and Violent Games."



# Choosing a Preschool

Preschools differ. Here are a few questions to consider if you are choosing a preschool:

- Are you invited to observe in the classroom? Spending one or two hours in a class will show you what the school has to offer.
- Are the caregivers willing to answer your questions? Would they talk to you on a regular basis about your child's progress? Once your child has enrolled, will you be welcome to visit and observe at any time? You and your child's caregivers need to work together as a team to help your child grow.
- Do teachers seem to enjoy and respect the children? Is there hugging and holding and warmth between the teachers and the children? Do teachers talk with and listen to the children? Are there enough adults to provide good supervision and attention? Children's relationships with caregivers are important.
- Do the children seem happily involved in activities? Are there enough play materials for all the children? How long would a child have to wait for a turn? Children can become angry and unhappy if they have to wait too long for a chance to play with toys.
- Is there a balance of quiet and active play? Is there a balance of indoor and outdoor play? Children need variety in their daily lives.
- Does indoor play include music, art, water, dress-up, housekeeping, science, block building, books, and puzzles? Does it also include toys for imaginative play, such as trucks, cars, and dolls? Are the rooms clean, safe, and attractive? Children need to



have lots of different opportunities to learn.

- Is there a safe outdoor area with enough equipment, like ladders, barrels, low slides, riding toys, and swings to encourage activity and muscle development? Is there protection from the sun?
- Are meals provided by the preschool? Do you approve of the food they serve?

You will not be happy about your child's preschool unless you feel that your child is in a safe, healthy, nurturing place. The extra time it takes to find the right kind of care for your child will pay off in your own peace of mind and in your child's development.



# Games for Growing



## Drawing Around Things

### Purpose of the Game

To let your child practice using small hand muscles and to help him understand more about the shapes of things.

### How to Play

- Sit in a comfortable place and give your child a plastic cup to draw around.
- Have him trace the edge of the cup with his finger. Then give him a pencil or crayon to use for drawing around the cup. Talk about the circle he drew. Help him find some other things with simple shapes to trace. He can trace around his

hand or yours. He'll enjoy this. You're helping him use his hands and make pictures of objects so he'll learn more about the ways they are different.

## Follow Me

### Purpose of the Game

To encourage your child's imagination and physical development.

### How to Play

This is a follow-the-leader game to play indoors or outdoors. Show your little one funny ways you can move and encourage her to imitate, following after you. Run fast, walk slow, gallop like a horse, shuffle like an elephant, flap like a duck. Take turns leading. Use your imagination and encourage her imagination as you both think of more different and funny ways to move.

## What's It For?

### Purpose of the Game

To help your child understand how things are used. This game also helps build your child's imagination and language skills.

### How to Play

Collect about 10 things that your child uses or has seen used, such as a shoelace, a fork, a napkin, a comb, a key, eyeglasses, a spool of thread, a hammer, a paint brush, a pencil. Pick up one after the other and ask your child what it is used for. Give your child a turn to

ask you what things are used for. You can play a silly version of this game too by asking a silly question about each thing you pick up.

For example, you can pick up a cup and ask if that is what you brush your teeth with. Remember, play the game only as long as it is fun for both of you.

## Toddler Talk

### I Learn in Lots of Ways

- Let me use a sprinkler can or a squeeze bottle to water outdoor plants. Think of other ways I could help outside.
- Give me my own flashlight. I'll enjoy turning it on, because I can push the switch forward with my thumb. I probably can't pull it back. Show me how to turn the flashlight around, so I can push the switch off.
- Take pictures of special times and write the date on the back of the pictures. Even if you don't have a baby book for me, I will like looking at these pictures now and when I'm older.
- Turn off the radio and television. Listen with me to sounds around the house, like running water, the refrigerator motor, a ticking clock, or a wind chime. Tell me what they are. Helping me learn to listen will help me learn language.

# Homemade Toys That Teach

## Play Dough

### Why?

Play dough helps your toddler practice using his hands and fingers and learn how to mold different shapes by patting, squeezing, and rolling.

### Making the Play Dough

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup of flour
- 1/2 cup of salt
- 1 teaspoon of cream of tartar
- 1 cup of water
- 1 teaspoon of cooking oil
- Food coloring (optional)

Mixing the dry ingredients, add the water and oil. Stir over low heat until the mixture forms a ball. Add food coloring if you want. Knead it and let it cool. Store it in a refrigerator in a covered container.

### Playing

Put the play dough on a plastic placemat and protect the floor from spills. Your toddler will enjoy having you near her when she plays with her play dough. You can give her ideas on how to squeeze, roll, and pinch the dough. Add cookie cutters, a dull knife, or a rolling pin to encourage your child's creativity.

## Bread Dough Creations

Your 2-year-old has learned to roll, pinch, poke, and mash bits of play dough with you, so why not make some creative snacks together? Use this recipe:

- 2 cups flour
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Measure the flour and salt into a large bowl. Add the oil and rub it in until the mixture resembles coarse oatmeal. Add the water and blend it with your fingers. Add more water if necessary to make a dough you can gather into a ball. Knead the dough for 10 minutes. Your toddler will enjoy punching and rolling the dough. Divide the dough into small balls and let your child create. Show her how to flatten it, cut holes with a table knife (help her with this so she doesn't cut herself), pinch up peaks, and stretch the dough.

When she's all done, you can place her creations on a cookie sheet, and bake them in a 350°F oven for 10 minutes. When they're cool, enjoy showing off the creations and eating them!



# Guidance and Discipline

## Avoid Overusing “No”

The fewer times you say “no” to your toddler, the less she’ll scream “no” back at you. Keep asking yourself, “How can I help my child do what I want her to do without saying ‘No’?” Life can be more pleasant for everyone with fewer “no’s.” Here are some ideas:

- Look for ways to structure routines and play spaces to reduce the need for restriction and discipline. Remove tempting dangers and breakables. Try to reduce time spent in activities that require your toddler’s patience or that might cause conflict. For example, long shopping trips seem to undo nearly all parents and their toddlers; try to cut them short.
- Keep rules reasonable. Your child is growing fast, but her ability to understand is still more limited than you might expect. She will press you to let her do things on her own—and that’s important for her learning—but she may still have accidents. She may break, drop, or spill things. She can understand some rules, but not all.
- Give your toddler choices. As part of their growing independence, toddlers are often defiant and noncooperative. You



need to be firm but patient in enforcing rules. Look for safe and reasonable opportunities to let your toddler make her own choices, so she can practice her growing independence.

- Play detective. If your little one does something over and over that you have told her not to do, try to figure out the reason. Don’t assume that she is just trying to annoy you. Chances are she’s got her own very good reasons for doing what she’s doing. See if you can help her get what she wants in a way that is OK with both of you. Sure, all this takes more time, patience and energy than saying “no,” but the long-term benefits are likely to be a toddler who is happier and easier to live with.

Remember, *Baby’s First Wish* describes a typical child at each age. Each child is special and each child develops at his or her own pace. Children may do things earlier or later than those described in *Baby’s First Wish*. If you are concerned about your child’s development, see your doctor.

# Be Good to Yourself

## Communicating to Lower Stress

Sometimes angry feelings and stress are caused by the way people talk to each other. You can reduce your stress by changing the way you say things. It doesn’t mean you should hold things inside, but simply that you should say them in a different way.

Things we say to others often have the word “you” in them. For example, you might say, “You’re always telling me how to care for my child!” If you give the same message with “I” in it, the other person might not get so irritated. You could say, “I feel like a child myself when someone tells me what to do.”

Try turning “you” messages into “I” messages. This may make your conversations less stressful.



## What We Know

### Guidance Styles and Child Behavior

How can parents help their children grow to be cooperative and well-behaved? Studies show that children who are most cooperative have parents who are warm and loving with their children, have firm rules, communicate clearly what is expected of the child, and demand appropriate behavior. This kind of guidance and discipline are more effective than guidance that is too bossy or too weak.

# Television

We don't know the effects of television viewing on very young children. Research on older children, however, suggests the following:

- Children who are aggressive tend to watch a lot of violence on television.
- Children are attracted to and influenced by television commercials. They may pressure parents to buy toys and food advertised on television. Many of these toys may not be right for your child. The foods may not be good for him, since many of those advertised are high in sugar, fat, and salt.
- Children who are heavy television viewers use less imagination in their play and school activities than children who see less television.
- Very young children enjoy the catchy tunes and repeated phrases used in cartoons, children's shows, and commercials. These jingles give them a chance to practice their listening and talking skills.
- Very young children don't understand the meaning of television programs. However, they may be developing a television viewing habit that will keep them from other healthier activities. If your child shows a great interest in television, then talking and listening may be important to him right now. Read to him and talk with him about pictures in a book. Play some story tapes or records. Substitute these things for some of his television viewing time.

You might think about these questions when you decide how much television your child should watch:



- Do you know how many hours a day your child watches TV? Do you know which programs he watches and do you know what he's learning from them? Knowing how much television he's watching will help you decide if his viewing should be limited.
- Do you watch television with your child and discuss what you are seeing? Doing this will help your child understand his world.
- Do you want your child to see violence on television? Violent situations are shown even in cartoons and music videos, and they can be scary.
- Does television keep you from reading, talking, and playing with your child? Does it keep him from creative, active, or imaginative play?

Television can be a very powerful influence in children's lives. It can entertain and educate. It can take children away from other important activities. Begin deciding now how much television you want your child to see and what programs you want him to watch. If you set up some clear guidelines now, it will be easier to handle television later.

## Coming Next:

- **Getting Control Over Your Life**
- **Try on Your Child's View of the World**

NMSU COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE OFFICES

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Another 4-H Prevention Program

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