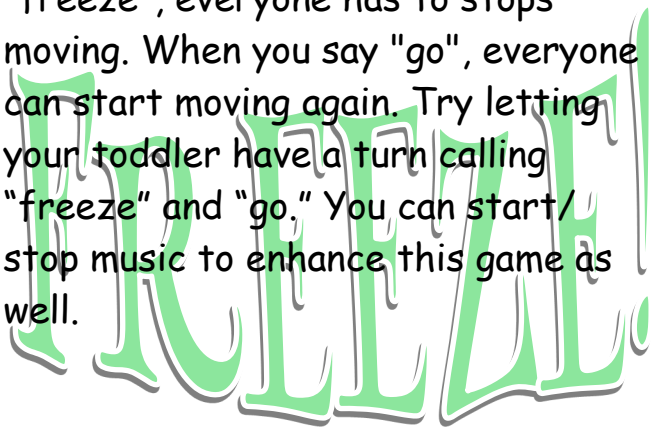


A year of Toddler Play!

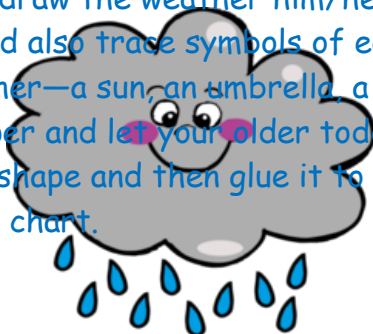
January

Talk about how water turns into ice when it freezes. Then play "freeze" with your toddler. When you say "freeze", everyone has to stop moving. When you say "go", everyone can start moving again. Try letting your toddler have a turn calling "freeze" and "go." You can start/stop music to enhance this game as well.



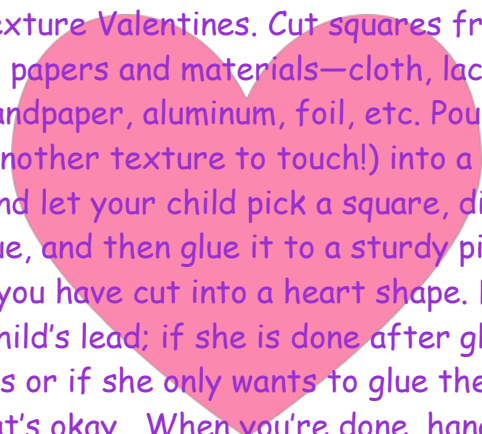
March

Make a weather chart. Every morning look outside the window with your toddler: What do you see? Is it rainy, cloudy, or sunny? Draw a sun, clouds, or raindrops on a piece of paper with the appropriate word underneath. Let your toddler help by coloring and drawing with you. Post each day's forecast and talk about the week's weather on Friday. Can your child remember the words for each type of weather? A variation on this activity is to let your older toddler draw the weather him/herself. You could also trace symbols of each kind of weather—a sun, an umbrella, a cloud—onto paper and let your older toddler cut out the shape and then glue it to her weather chart.



February

Make texture Valentines. Cut squares from different papers and materials—cloth, lace, ribbon, sandpaper, aluminum, foil, etc. Pour some glue (another texture to touch!) into a plastic bowl and let your child pick a square, dip it in the glue, and then glue it to a sturdy piece of paper you have cut into a heart shape. Follow your child's lead; if she is done after gluing 2 squares or if she only wants to glue the foil on, that's okay. When you're done, hang her "masterpiece" at her eye-level so she can show everyone her work.



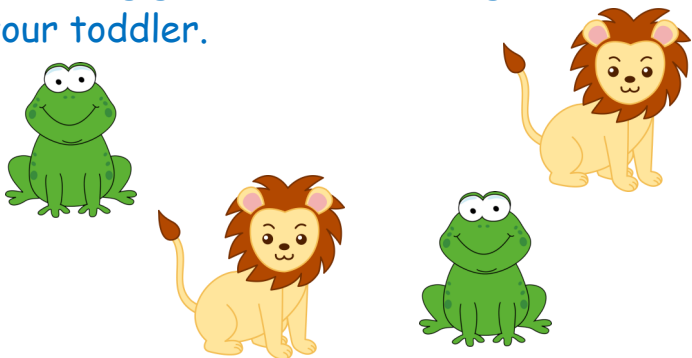
April

Toddlers love to help out doing "real" jobs around the house. For colors, try a cooking project where you make a rainbow snack together. Pick out a range of healthy foods of different colors—yellow bananas, red watermelon, green grapes, blueberries, etc. Let your child choose what to have as his snack and talk about all the different colors he can eat. What does he think is the best-tasting color?



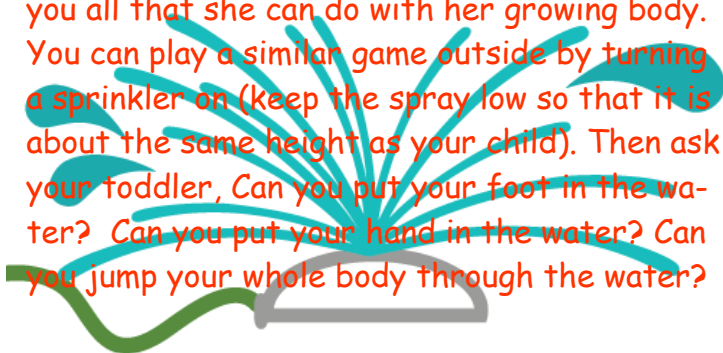
May

Cut pictures of animals out of magazines and glue them to sturdy cardboard. Make sure there are matches—2 pictures of horses, 2 pictures of sheep, etc.. Lay these pictures out (face up) on the floor and see if your child can match the animals that are the same. Matching games build thinking skills in your toddler.



July

Toddlers love challenges, especially as they are growing stronger and more coordinated physically. Ask your child Can you lift your leg? Can you touch your hands to your knees? Using the names of her body parts in context helps her learn, and also gives her a chance to show you all that she can do with her growing body. You can play a similar game outside by turning a sprinkler on (keep the spray low so that it is about the same height as your child). Then ask your toddler, Can you put your foot in the water? Can you put your hand in the water? Can you jump your whole body through the water?



June

Plant some seeds (carrot or bean seeds often work best) in a square of dirt outside or in a pot to keep inside. This is a fun project for toddlers who love to shovel dirt, pour water, and get messy! Watch your seed grow over the next few weeks (remember to water every few days). Have a garden snack when your plant has grown big enough to "harvest"!



August

Play "Pop the Bubble" outside. Tell your child that her job will be to try and "catch" as many bubbles as she can and pop them. Start blowing bubbles and watch her dash to catch them. As you play, you can sing (to the tune of Pop Goes the Weasel): Round and round the grassy yard my baby chases bubbles, Pop goes the bubbles!

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep have you any wool? Yes sir, Yes sir 3 bags full. One for the master, one for the dame, one for the little boy that lives down the lane.

I'm a little Tea Pot short and stout, Here is my handle, Here is my spout. When I get all steamed up hear me shout! Tip me over and pour me out!

September

Play stop and go. Color one side of a paper plate red and write the word "stop" on it. Color the other side green and write the word "go." If you'd like, glue a popsicle stick to the bottom so you can easily hold it. Let your child pretend to be a car (encourage him to make brum brum honk honk noises). You will be the traffic light. Your "car" has to stop at the red sign and can go at the green sign. Once your child has the hang of this game, see if he'd like to tell you when to stop and go.

Brummmmm
HONK!

November

Choose a few different leaves for your child to paint with. Squirt washable tempera paint onto a paper plate. Show your child how to dip the leaves into the paint and then "stamp" onto paper.



October

Line a table with newspaper or a plastic tablecloth. Cut the top off a pumpkin (adults only) so that your child can help you reach inside with a big spoon and take out all the seeds. Let your child play with the seeds and "pumpkin innards." This kind of sensory play is great fun for toddlers who love to get messy. Be aware, though, that some children won't like the feeling of the smushy pumpkin and will want to get washed up right away. When you are done emptying the pumpkin, your child can paint it using washable tempera paints or draw on it using washable markers.

December

Cut a large star out of heavy cardboard. Let your child paint or color the star any color he'd like. Decorating it with glitter is always fun, too! You can make a small hole at the top of the star, thread a short piece of string through, and hang in front of a window (adults only). Older toddlers can use the cardboard star as a model to trace onto a piece of paper and continue the activity as outlined above.