

Top Toddler Games

(and How they Help Your Child Learn)

Your toddler is constantly learning. Nearly everything they encounter can become a teaching opportunity. This includes the games they play with you and other children.

Science Games

Science is all around us. Teaching your toddler the very basic tenets of science will help them better understand their world, and become prepared for pre-school and social interaction. Some science games you may consider include:

- **Sand & Water:** Transferring sand and water from different shape and size containers will help your toddler grasp weight and volume principles.
- **Like Items:** Help your toddler sort and classify like items. Encourage them to take the lead, locating objects that share similar shapes, sizes, colors, etc.
- **Magnet Mania:** Most refrigerator magnets contain non-toxic metal, but you should be sure this is the case before you allow your toddler to play with a magnet they may put in their mouth. In this game, encourage your child to notice metal items, by trying to get objects to 'stick' to the magnet.

Math Games

When many of us think of math, it brings us back to late nights cramming for an exam, or nervously trying to solve a complicated equation on the blackboard, while the rest of the class looks on. Teaching your toddler to embrace the basic tenets of math, however, can be an enjoyable experience for both of you.

- **Counting & Numbers:** While many toddlers like to count items, they also enjoy physical activity. Encourage your child to think of math as fun by having them turn around three times, or jump up and down five times. For added fun, have them give *you* the directions!
- **Measuring & Weighing:** This game will help your toddler learn, and also possibly take the stress out of a visit to the grocery store! Help your child use the store's scale to measure various items such as produce, nuts and other items. Compare the weight of each separate item. You may also wish to measure the shoes of everyone in the family, then compare the different measurements.

Word Games

Popular word games include the face match game (similar to Memory), name my family, and shape and color bingo.

Reading Games

Popular reading games include the bean bag letter toss and more.

Spelling Games

Spelling words correctly can be a challenge that follows some us into our adult years. Introducing your toddler to spelling games early on can help them and others in the family.

- **Same Sound:** Help your child identify items that have the same sounds (color, carrot), and also words that have similar spellings, but feature different sounds (ear, bear).

Animal Games

Many toddlers love animals, and enjoy watching, petting, and interacting with them. These games will help your child understand the creatures with which they share a living space.

- **Eat Like an Animal:** Get creative with snack time by choosing foods that animals love: berries for bears, seeds for birds, bananas for monkeys, carrots for rabbits, etc. Talk about which animals like each food.
- **Animal Sounds:** Ask your toddler to imitate the animals they are familiar with, and help them to learn new creatures by “sounding” like an animal.
- **Visit the Zoo:** Zoos are a great place to teach your child about the various animals in the world. Later, you can discuss which animals they enjoyed the most, and why.

Keep in Mind

It will be important for both you and your child to remember that games — even those designed to encourage learning — should be fun.

Allow your child to take the lead in this play, but remember that toddlers have short attention spans. Do not become frustrated or let down if your child quickly loses interest and wants to move on to something else.