

At Home Learning Guide for Toddlers (1–2 years old)

Week of April 13, 2020

During the month of April, toddlers in our centers typically get to explore the natural world through gardening. There are lots of things you can do with your child at home to explore the natural world and discover all the growth and change that comes with spring. Try a few of our tips and tricks as you plan activities for the week ahead:

Have a Plan! Toddlers thrive when they have a consistent routine to follow. Keeping some structure and predictability will help keep you grounded through long days at home, too! That's why we've provided a sample schedule that you can personalize to organize your day—and your kiddo's.

Keep 'Em Busy! Keeping your toddler's active mind and body busy throughout the day is a full-time job (that's usually done by their KinderCare teachers—our heroes!). It's hard to juggle your actual full-time job with entertaining your kids. To help you keep your little one's brain and body busy, we've included activities that support each area of your child's development.

Developmental Domains are the areas of focus that support development of the whole child. Interested in learning more? Click [here](#) to discover the six developmental domains.

This Week's Theme: Growing Gardens



What you'll find in this guide...

We've organized this content the way your child would be learning it in their center, but you and your child can choose your own adventures and do the activities in any order.

MONDAY

Get the Wiggles Out!
(Physical Development and Wellness)

Moving in Different Ways Hopping in place, your child explores moving to music of varying tempos.



TUESDAY

Get the Wheels Turning
(Cognitive Development)

Comparing Foods Make mealtimes a yummy science lesson as you and your kiddo observe and compare foods.



WEDNESDAY

Let's Chat! (Language and Literacy)

A Walk Outdoors Walkin' and talkin' about plants and gardens



THURSDAY

Express Yourself (Creative Expression)

Playing in the Garden Use garden items to create and play in a garden of your child's own.



FRIDAY

Growing Flexible Brains
(Executive Function)

"Stems, Flowers, Leaves and Roots"
Sing and move along to a song about plants.



EVERYDAY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Pick an activity to weave learning experiences into your everyday routines—no preparation needed!

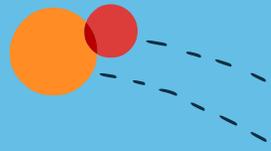
Getting Ready for the Week: Materials to Gather

- Objects related to gardening, such as toy garden tools, garden gloves, plastic pots, fake flowers or plants, a sun hat, a basket, toy fruits and vegetables
- Foods served during mealtime
- Music of varying tempos

Tip: At the beginning of your week, gather materials and place them in a container so you're ready to go!

FOCUS ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Teaching social and emotional skills can be intertwined in everything you do. You'll find tips and activities to help your child continue developing these essential skills at home.



MONDAY

Get the Wiggles Out: Moving in Different Ways

Experiment with different tempos as you and your little one hop to the beat!



Length of activity:
10 minutes*

*Duration will vary depending on your child's interest.

**Level of Engagement
Required by Adult:** Medium



Level of Prep Required: Low



What you need:
Music of varying tempos



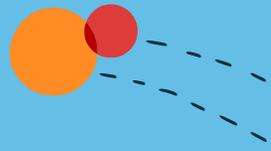
What your child is learning: Hopping to different tempos helps your child experience how their body can move in different ways and how to match their body's movements to the beat.

What you do: All you need is a little music to make this learning game fun! Encourage your kiddo to practice hopping up and down with you to warm up. Then, play a song with an upbeat tempo and see if your child can hop in place to the beat. Next, switch it up and play a song with a slower tempo, modeling for your child how to adjust their hops to the new beat. Having fun? Keep going until you're all hopped out!

If your child is ready: Explore hopping forward and backward or side to side! Or, get silly and ask your child to hop like a frog or a bunny!

Pro Tip: On a call? Hit mute and bounce with your little one! Consider it your daily cardio.





TUESDAY

Get the Wheels Turning: Comparing Foods

Make mealtimes a yummy science lesson.

Length of activity:
N/A

**Level of Engagement
Required by Adult:** High



Level of Prep Required: Low



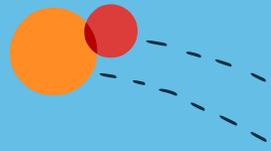
What you need:
Foods served during
mealtime



What your child is learning: Mealtimes are a delicious opportunity for your toddler to build a foundation for observing, gathering, and using information. And that helps build a foundation for math and science skills.

What you do: During a meal, ask your child what they notice about the foods they're eating. Reinforce what they're learning about gardens by paying special attention to foods that would grow in a garden. Help them count and compare as you talk. For example, you can count the strawberries on the plate, sort them from biggest to smallest, and talk about what a beautiful shade of bright red they are!

If your child is ready: Invite your child to choose what to eat guided by your descriptions. For example, "What do you want to eat next, the red strawberry or the orange cheese?" Encourage your kiddo to point to (or reach for) what they'd like to eat and narrate their actions: "You chose a red strawberry!"



WEDNESDAY

Let's Chat: A Walk Outdoors

Signs of spring are all around. Take a walk around the block or venture into the backyard and talk about the plants and gardens in bloom.

Length of activity:
N/A

**Level of Engagement Required
by Adult:** Low, Medium, or High



Level of Prep Required: N/A



What you need:
N/A

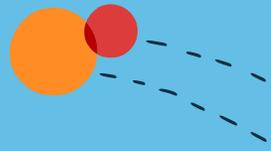


What your child is learning: You can help build your child's understanding of language simply by asking questions! Through conversations, your child learns how to use what they've learned from their own experiences and observations to answer questions.

What you do: Step outside for some fresh air with your child and talk about the different plants you see. Use descriptive words to observe the plants and gardens you notice. You can count flower petals, appreciate different colors, or compare the size of trees.

If your child is ready: Build on your little one's growing vocabulary by encouraging your child to name familiar plant-related objects, like a leaf or a flower. "Look at this! What is this called? It's a flower! We read about flowers in our book this morning."





THURSDAY

Express Yourself: Playing in the Garden

Bring the outdoors in with your child's very own indoor garden.



Length of activity:
15 minutes*

*Duration will vary depending on your child's interest.

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: Medium to High



Level of Prep Required:
High



What you need:

Garden-related props* like toy garden tools, gloves, plastic pots, fake flowers or plants, a sun hat, a basket, toy fruits and vegetables

*No gardening materials? No problem! Your toddler won't be fussy – go ahead and repurpose knit gloves for gardening gloves, use a comb as a rake, or an empty milk gallon as a watering can.



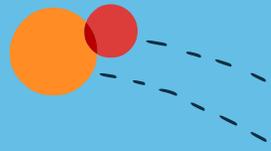
What your child is learning: Your child is learning to engage in imaginative play with a little bit of structure. This activity will encourage them to initiate conversations using gestures and words.

What you do: One at a time, show your child the objects you've collected, naming each item. Pretend with your child that you're working in a garden. You can support your child's play by asking questions like, "This is a flowerpot, where should we put it in your garden? What could you put in the flowerpot?" As your child plays, make observations about what you see them doing, and respond to their questions and comments..

If your child is ready: Maybe you have space outdoors, or maybe you have house plants. Either way, your child can bring their play to life by helping you with simple tasks like watering plants, planting seeds, or pulling weeds.



Pro Tip: Once your child has done this a few times, they may be able to keep themselves busy tending their garden while you unload the dishwasher or answer emails. Try setting out their garden supplies somewhere close by, and see how long they can entertain themselves!



FRIDAY

Growing Flexible Brains: “Stems, Flowers, Leaves and Roots”

Get in the gardening groove by singing and moving with your child to a song about plants.



Length of activity:
5–10 minutes*

*Duration will vary depending on your child’s interest.

Level of Engagement Required by Adult: High



Level of Prep Required: Medium



What you need:
N/A



What your child is learning: Singing with your child helps build your child’s working memory skills, which is important for learning how to follow directions. And that’s not all! It is also a great way to get some exercise and learn to express themselves through music.

What you do: Familiarize yourself with the song “Stems, Flowers, Leaves and Roots.” Sing the song for your child a couple of times, and then invite your child to participate by moving along with the music. Think of your body as a flower. Your stem is your legs, the flower is your head, the leaves are your fingers and the roots are your toes/feet. As you sing this song, point to or wiggle the part of your body you’re singing about.

“Stems, Flowers, Leaves and Roots”

(sung to the tune of “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”)

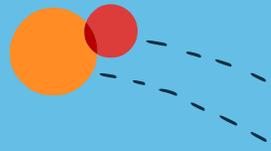
Stems, flowers, leaves and roots, leaves, and roots

Stems, flowers, leaves and roots, leaves, and roots

Veggies and fruits and seeds and nuts

Stems, flowers, leaves, and roots, leaves, and roots

If your child is ready: Encourage your child to make the movements along with you.



Everyday Learning Experiences

Any time is a good time to learn! Here are some ways to keep your kiddo learning and growing through everyday experiences.

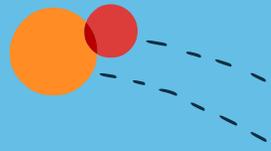
1 Whether it's Baby Shark or Lady Gaga, pump up the jams and see what gets your little one **grooving**! Join in the fun and model clapping to the beat or creating impromptu instruments with things you have around the house.

2 The word '**patience**' isn't in a toddler's vocabulary yet, which can be challenging when spending lots of time together (and juggling lots of things) at home! When you need your child to give you a moment or two—like while you're on a phone call or making dinner—ask your little one to hop in place while they wait. Keep it interesting by asking them to hop faster or slower, or to show you how they would hop when they're happy or excited, or sad and angry.

3 Toddlers are expert mess-makers, but they can also be helpful when it comes to cleaning up when clever parents make it **fun**! As you tidy up, show your child each object you're getting ready to put away. Name the object and ask your child to show you what it's for. Then ask them to show you where it goes. Can they show you how to use the object and where to put it when they're done? It may take a bit longer to clean up, but it's a great opportunity to **empower your child** and gain a helping hand.

4 Children learn a lot from watching us. At any point during the day, **involve your child** in what you're doing. Show them an object you're using, like a cutting board or blanket. Talk about how the object looks or feels. Compare the object to other items nearby—does anything look or feel the same?

5 Even the most ordinary tasks are great opportunities to help children develop their **mathematical thinking**. While doing chores like putting dishes away or folding laundry, involve your child by asking them to notice a certain type of object, like shirts or cups. Then, work together to count the number of objects in front of you.



Focus on Social and Emotional Learning: The Power of Play

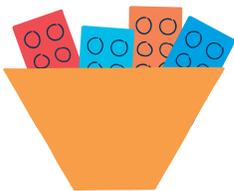
Play might look random or disorganized, but it's actually the most meaningful and natural way for young children to learn. During play, children are engaged in active learning and developing skills from head to toe. Check out the information and resources below to understand the power of play and what you can do to guide it.

Play-Based Learning for School Readiness

Play is more than just fun and games. Check out this [podcast](#), featuring KinderCare's Chief Academic Officer Dr. Elanna Yalow, about how play builds skills that help children succeed in school and in life.

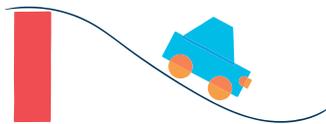
Active Learning: What's Really Happening During Play

Children love to play, and for good reason. Play is powerful! During play, children are active learners — they make choices, create meaning, and form connections.



Making Choices

Red paint or blue? A bike or the slide? A tall tower or a long tunnel? Children are naturally curious, and letting them follow their curiosity by making choices means they're guaranteed to be interested in what they're doing.



Making Meaning

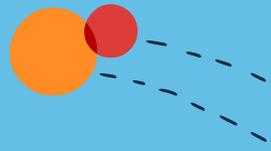
Children are natural-born scientists! They experiment, form theories, and test those theories during play. Even if they can't spell out the science behind things, children are constantly paying attention to what happens during play and fitting it into what they know about the world.



Making Connections

The more children play, the more they learn. Can I make this tower as tall today as I did yesterday? Does this ball bounce the same as that one? Children make meaning from their play experiences, and they also make connections between them. These connections aren't just passing thoughts—they are real neural pathways in the architecture of a child's brain that help them build skills and knowledge over time.

For more on the importance of play, check out [this article](#) from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



How To Encourage Active Learning During Play:

Offer choices like where to play and what to play with.

Make comparisons between different materials and experiences.

Ask open-ended questions (not “yes” or “no”) to encourage curiosity about what’s happening during play.