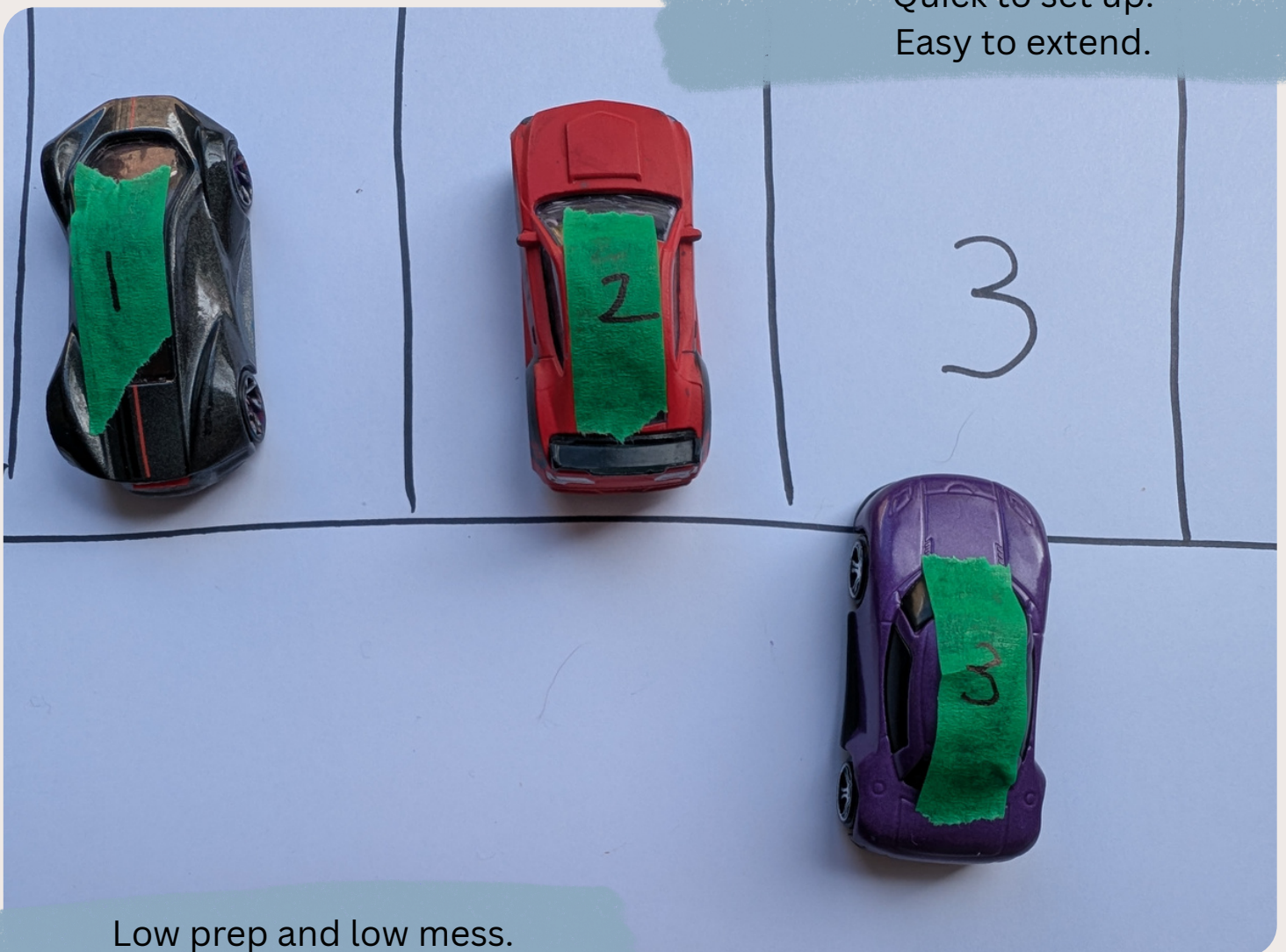


10 Toddler Activities You Can Set Up in Under 5 Minutes

Simple play ideas for ages 2-5 using things you probably already have at home.

Quick to set up.
Easy to extend.



Low prep and low mess.
No special equipment needed.

Before You Start

A few simple things to know:

- These activities are designed to give you simple ideas for play with your toddler using things you probably already have at home.
- Every child is different, so use the ideas as a starting point and adapt them to suit your child's age and stage of development.
- There is no right or wrong way to play! Follow your child's lead and have fun exploring together.
- Each activity includes a quick set-up, ideas for extending the play and a little explanation of the skills it can support.

Safety First

Adult supervision is required for all activities.

Please check that each activity and all materials are suitable for your individual child before starting. Some activities include small or loose parts which may present a choking hazard to young children. Never leave a child unattended with small objects or materials.

Check materials before use and remove anything that becomes damaged or unsafe. If your child is likely to put objects in their mouth, choose larger, age-appropriate alternatives instead.

Use your own judgement and follow appropriate safety guidance for your child.

A Note About Development

The developmental information included with each activity is intended as a general guide, not as a developmental assessment or professional advice. Children develop at different rates and in different ways. The most important thing is that your child is safe and enjoys the activities.

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Pom-Pom Rescue



Set-up: 2 min | Play: 10-15 min



Fine motor

Can you move them all without using your fingers?



You'll Need

- Pom-poms
- Tongs
- Bowls

Set up

Place the pom-poms in one bowl and put the empty bowl next to it. Give your child the tongs and challenge them to move all the pom-poms across.

Play

Challenge your child to move all the pom-poms into the empty bowl without using their fingers. How many can they move before one drops?



For younger children, swap pom-poms for scrunched-up paper or socks.

Take It Further

Add colour sorting or challenge your child to move a certain number at a time.

Why It Matters

Using tongs helps build hand strength and fine motor control. These are skills children use for things like using cutlery or getting dressed and eventually writing.

Tape Road

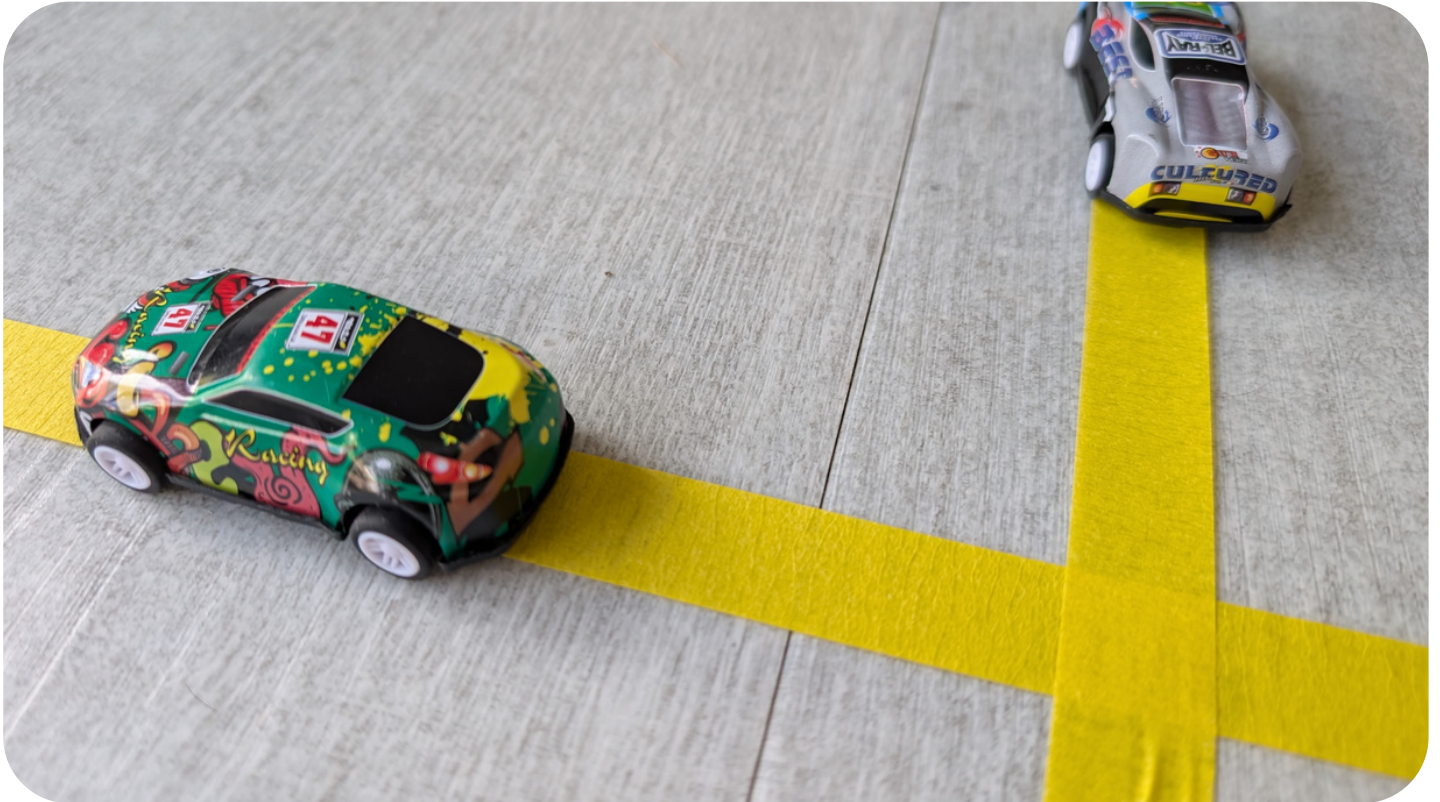
Where will your cars go?



Set-up: 5 min | Play: 15-20 min



Imaginative play



You'll Need

- Masking or painter's tape
- Toy cars

Set up

Use the tape to make a simple road on the floor. Add a junction or some parking spaces if you like.

Play

Drive a vehicle around the road. Add your own ideas as you play: *"Can you park at the shop?" "Oh no! There's a traffic jam!"*



Don't have masking tape? Use cushions or books to make a road instead.

Take It Further

Add a zebra crossing and practice stopping for pedestrians or add a bus stop. Count how many cars fit into the car park. Can your child follow your directions?

Why It Matters

This is a great way to practice spatial awareness, as children will navigate around corners and spaces.

Sticky-Note Match

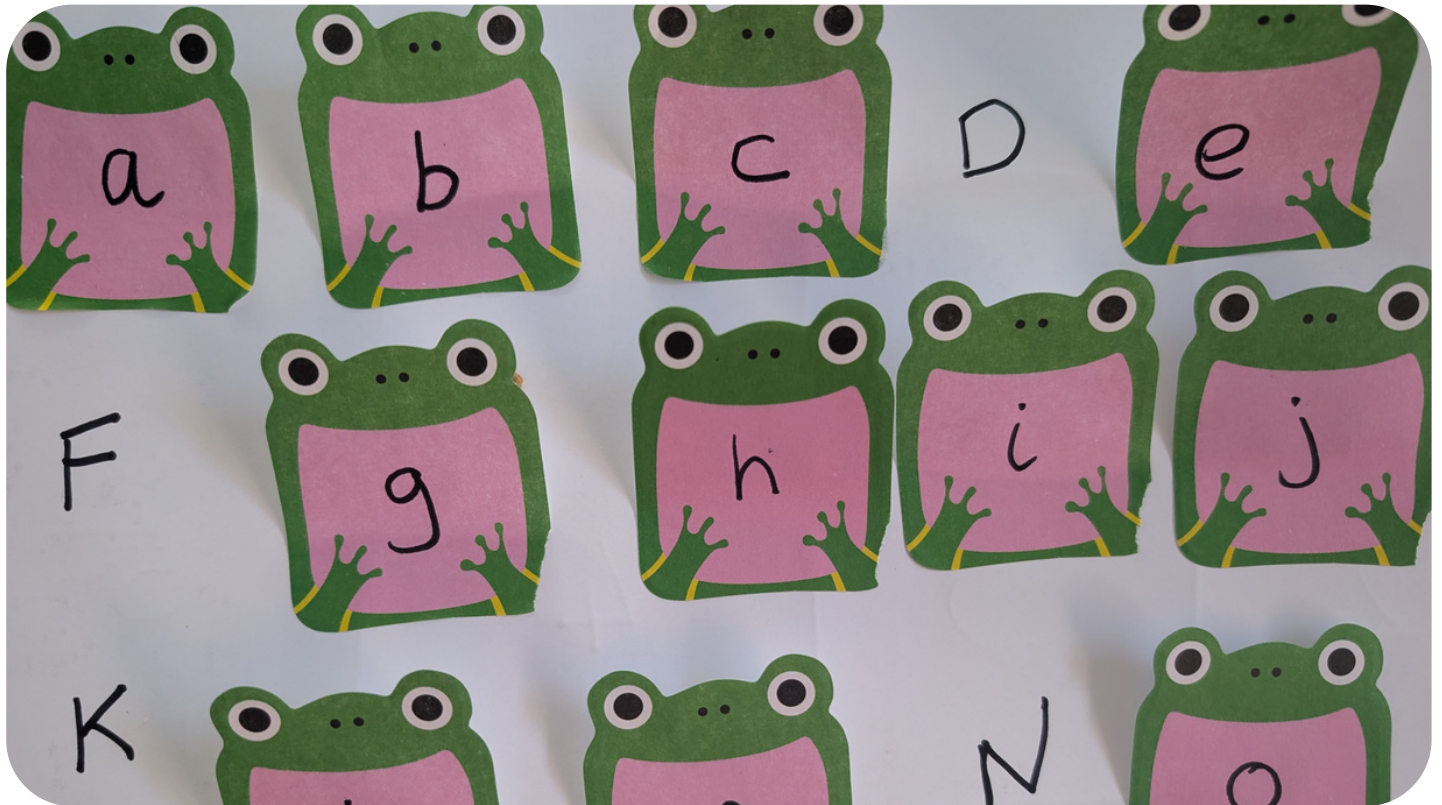


Set-up: 5 min | Play: 5-10 min



Early learning

Match and stick in this simple game.



You'll Need

- Sticky notes in different colours
- A pen or marker

Set up

Take pairs of sticky notes and draw the same shape, colour, number or letter on each pair. Stick one set of notes onto a wall and keep the matching set in a pile for your child.

Play

Give your child a sticky note and ask them to find its match. Keep going until all the pairs have been matched.



Start with simple shapes or colours. Older children can try numbers and letters.

Take It Further

Mix different colours and shapes together. Hide the sticky notes around the room.

Why It Matters

Matching activities help children notice similarities and differences. Naming the shapes, colours, letters or numbers provides opportunities to practice language skills.

Tube Posting



Set-up: 1 min | Play: 5-10 min



Fine motor

Can you post them all through the tube?



You'll Need

- A cardboard tube
- A container
- Small pieces of paper

Set up

Cut up some paper into small pieces. Stand the cardboard tube upright and put it over a box or container. Put the paper pieces next to it.

Play

Challenge your child to post the pieces of paper through the tube and into the box. How many can they post?



No tube? Try posting paper through a gap in a box or an empty tissue box.

Take It Further

Make different-sized pieces. Can your child work out which ones fit through the tube? Count how many they can post in a minute.

Why It Matters

Picking up and posting small objects helps children practice hand-eye coordination, and fine motor control. These skills support everyday tasks, such as using cutlery and getting dressed.

Colour Hunt



Set-up: 0 min | Play: 5-15 min



Movement

Can you find something for every colour?



You'll Need

- Nothing! Just your home and your toddler

Set up

No set up needed.

Play

Call out a colour, e.g. "Find me something red!" Your child has to quickly run to find it and bring something back. Then change the colour.



Start with colours of the rainbow.
Use a book with colours if your child is learning them.

Take It Further

Hunt for different shades of the same colour or try a colour hunt outdoors.

Why It Matters

Searching for objects helps children practise colour recognition and observation. Moving around while they search adds a gross-motor activity to the game.

Sock Match



Set-up: 1 min | Play: 5-10 min



Matching/sorting

Can you find all the missing partners?



You'll Need

- 5-10 pairs of socks in different colours and sizes

Set up

Mix up the socks and spread them out on the floor. Make sure the matching pairs aren't already together.

Play

Challenge your child to find the matching socks and put each pair together. Talk about the colours and patterns you find.



Start with just 3 pairs for younger children, then add more once they're ready for a bigger challenge.

Take It Further

Ask your child to find the biggest or smallest pair. Can your child roll or fold each pair together when they're finished?

Why It Matters

Matching helps children notice similarities and differences, while handling and pairing socks helps them develop coordination.

Build A Bridge

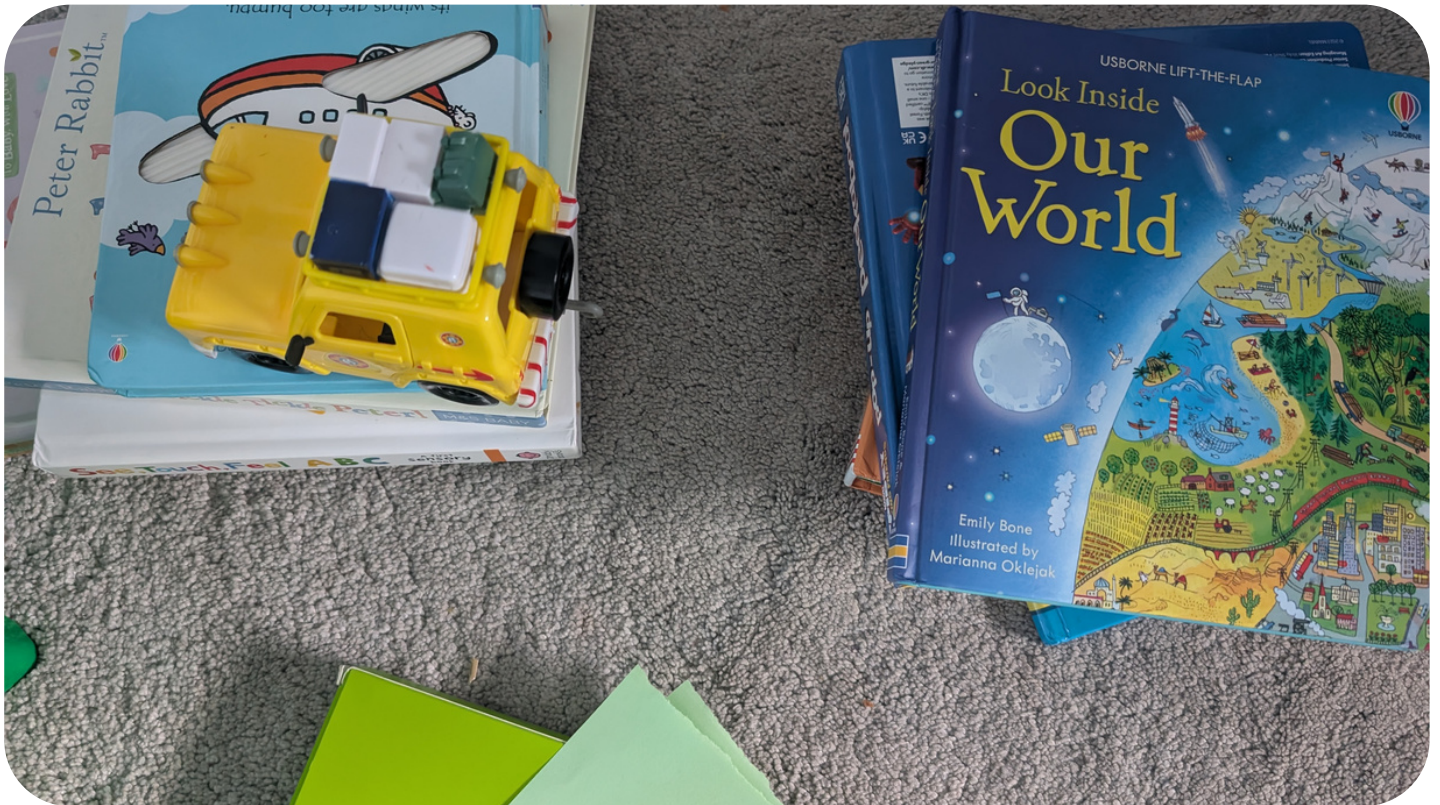


Set-up: 2 min | Play: 10-15 min



Problem solving

Can you build a bridge strong enough for a car?



You'll Need

- Blocks or books
- Cardboard
- Toy car

Set up

Put two small stacks of blocks or books a short distance apart. Leave a gap between them and put a toy car nearby.

Play

Tell your child the car needs to get to the other side. Can they build a bridge across the gap? Test it by driving the car over.



Don't have blocks? Try cardboard boxes, food containers or anything else that's sturdy.

Take It Further

Make the gap wider. Can your child build a longer bridge that still holds the car? Try adding a second car.

Why It Matters

Building and testing a bridge encourages problem-solving. Children will learn through trial and error as they discover what makes their bridge strong.

Toy Rescue



Set-up: 1 min | Play: 10-15 min



Sorting/imaginative play

Can you rescue the toys and get them into the right homes?



You'll Need

- Some toys
- 2-3 containers

Set up

Mix together some toys and put them in a pile. Put 2-3 empty containers nearby and give each one a "home", e.g. cars, animals and blocks.

Play

Tell your child the toys need to get back to their homes. Can they put each toy into the right home?



Don't worry about having lots of toys. Categories, e.g. red things and not red things, can work just as well.

Take It Further

Change the sorting rule. Try big and small, things that roll and things that don't, things that fly and things that stay on the ground.

Why It Matters

Sorting helps children notice similarities or differences and patterns. These are foundations for early mathematical thinking. Talking about why an object belongs in a group builds language skills.

Number Parking Lot



Set-up: 2 min | Play: 15-20 min



Early maths

Can your cars find the right parking spaces?



You'll Need

- Paper or card
- Toy cars
- A pen

Set up

Draw 5 parking spaces on a piece of paper. Write a number from 1-5 in each space.

Play

Park the cars in the numbered spaces. Start with one car in space 1, two cars in space 2, three in space 3, and so on.



Don't have five cars? Use any small toys. Dinosaurs work just as well.

Take It Further

Put sticky tape on top of each car and write a number on it. Or set up as a coloured parking lot for colour matching.

Why It Matters

Counting real objects helps children connect number words with quantities. Moving and arranging the cars also gives them hands-on practice with early mathematical thinking.

What's Missing?

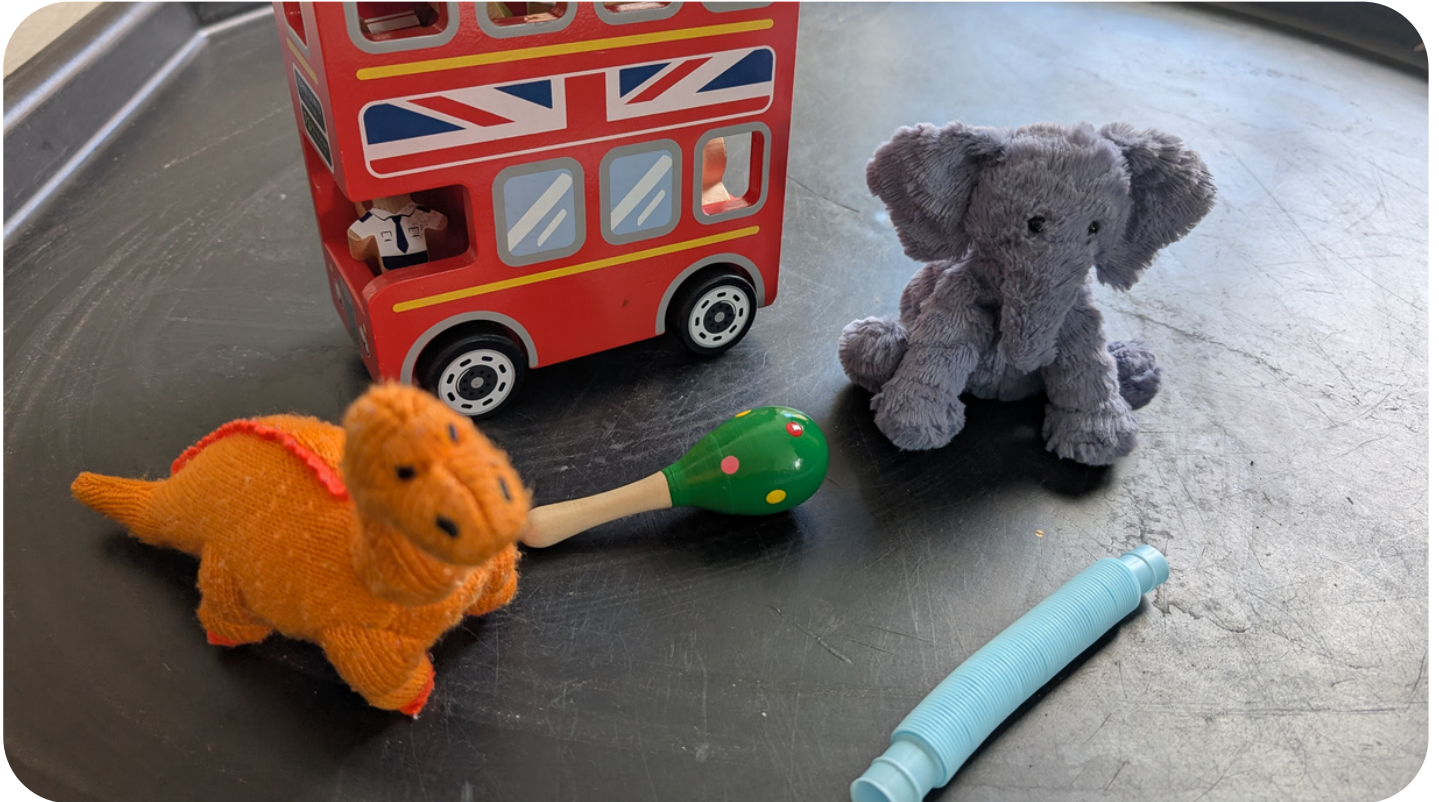


Set-up: 1 min | Play: 5-10 min



Memory/observation

Can you remember what has disappeared?



You'll Need

- 3-5 familiar toys or household objects

Set up

Put 3-5 objects in front of your child. Let them look carefully, then ask them to close their eyes. Remove one object and hide it behind your back.

Play

Ask, "*What's missing?*" Can your child work out which object has disappeared? Start with three objects and add more as they get better at the game.



Put the missing object somewhere they can see it but not immediately notice to make it easier.

Take It Further

Let your child hide the object while you guess what's missing. Can they remember where each object belongs?

Why It Matters

Remembering what they've seen helps children develop memory and observation skills. Taking turns also supports communication and social skills.

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From Toddler Hacks
Simple ideas for busy parents

Adult supervision required at all times. Use age-appropriate materials and always check for choking hazards. Activities may be messy. Use protective surfaces where needed