



STRESS-BUSTERS

For Young Children



Little kids can have big worries, too. Help melt their stress away with these 20 practical tips for your early childhood classroom!



1. Set Aside Group Time to Talk About Feelings

Young children need the vocabulary to talk about complex emotions. Teach them words like *proud*, *worried*, *excited*, *frustrated*, and *amazed*, and talk about them during group time. Acknowledge both negative and positive emotions, since every emotion shared provides valuable insight into the child's mind.

2. Be Flexible During Transitions

Transitions are a time when many children feel stressed and overwhelmed. Be flexible as much as possible during transitions. For example, allow kids who prefer to eat slowly to finish their snack at their own pace, and let other students get up and play if they finish first.



3. Show Them Mistakes Are Okay

Everyone makes mistakes when learning new skills and navigating new social situations—even grownups. Owning up to your own small mistakes in the classroom can go a long way toward soothing children's worries when they mix up the rules of a new game or accidentally hurt a friend's feelings.

4. Encourage Conversations with Children from Diverse Backgrounds

Children often feel stressed when they feel alienated from the rest of the class. Help students from diverse backgrounds find common ground by encouraging them to chat about favorite TV shows, games, and hobbies—a great way to help kids look past differences and bring them together.



5. Infuse the Day with Patterns and Rituals

Kids are less likely to feel anxious when routines and patterns are predictable. Use a special greeting each morning to help kids ease into the day. Choose a song that tells kids when it's time to put away toys or use inside voices. Celebrate special events like birthdays with predictable rituals—for example, make it a tradition to have each child tell the birthday boy or girl something nice.



6. Reduce Tensions through Art Activities

Group art activities can provide children with a powerful outlet for their feelings. Art can help kids process dark emotions—a child worried about his father’s illness might draw an ambulance and cover it with brown scribbles that represent his fears. Art can also be a way to express and amplify joy, as children work with bits of bright paper, glitter, stickers, and gloopy paint in vivid colors.

7. Keep a Peace Rose

Keep a silk Peace Rose in your classroom to help resolve conflict. Have the children involved in the conflict take turns holding the rose and describing what happened, how they feel about it, and what they think the solution should be. Ask children to interact directly to solve the problem. When they agree on a solution, have them say together: “We declare peace.”



8. Use Puppets to Model Behavior

Puppets are a fun and effective way to teach peaceful conflict resolution strategies. Collect a cast of puppet characters, give them names like Homer Helper and Frannie Fixer, and make up little skits and dialogues that demonstrate how to resolve problems and help peers who are upset. Model words and behaviors explicitly to support children in adopting kind and helping behaviors.

9. Empathize with Outsized Child Fears

Remember how scary the world often felt when you were a young child? Take an empathetic approach when a child quakes at thunderstorms or fears being abandoned by a trusted parent or caregiver. Even if the child’s fears seem unrealistic or exaggerated to you, approaching him or her with kind understanding will help alleviate stress.



10. Dance During Circle Time

This is a great way to relax tensions and unwind the body! Try slow skating waltzes or lively, stomping music. Let your young learners twirl dreamily or jump and leap to powerful beats. Watch tension flow out of their bodies as children move to the music.



11. Provide Safe Spaces for Vigorous Movement

Kids with high activity needs can feel stressed if they lack opportunities to let off steam. Find creative ways for high-energy children to move vigorously throughout the day. Provide access to tumbling mats, hobbyhorses, jumping games, and safe climbing equipment that give kids an outlet for their natural energy.

12. Use Toys to Encourage Nurturing

Nurturing dolls and stuffed animals is a good way for children to unwind and practice caring behavior. Set up toy cribs where boys and girls can put their “babies” to bed, and water tables where kids can bathe their dolls. Help create caregiving scenarios and praise children for their TLC. (Be sure to provide girl and boy dolls representing different cultural groups.)



13. Care for Plants and Animals Together

Tending to bird feeders, classroom pets, and indoor and outdoor gardens can divert children’s attention from daily stressors and fill them with wonder. Digging and planting can both energize and calm children as they work together, and caring for animals can boost children’s happiness as they learn responsibility.

14. Keep Your Classroom Neat

A little messiness is unavoidable during playtime and activities—toys get scattered on the floor, art supplies clutter tables. But research shows that children feel more secure when things look orderly. To increase children’s sense of calm and security, try to keep toys and supplies neatly stored in their places after activities are over.



15. Involve Children as Classroom Helpers

Enlist children’s help in keeping the classroom tidy, comfortable, and efficient. Get them involved in organizing the classroom, arranging toy storage, and planning special occasions. A happy, orderly classroom environment will decrease stress, and if you praise kids for their helping behaviors, they’ll feel so important and proud!





16. Try a Baking (or Squishing) Activity

Mushing, squeezing, and pounding dough is a therapeutic activity that can help kids process feelings of anger and frustration. If baking isn't an option in your school, let the kids smush and pound dough or clay. They'll let off steam in a safe, wordless way *and* hone their artistic creativity at the same time.

17. Tell Silly Jokes

Laughter releases tension and eases stress—both for you and the kids in your classroom. Tell silly, easy-to-understand jokes throughout the day to get your young learners giggling. When a small mishap occurs, reframe it in a funny way to reduce the stress of the situation and ease worries.



18. Give Children Reasons for Expected Behaviors

Children are less stressed when they feel that requests are reasonable. Share the reasons behind your behavioral expectations and then redirect the child's focus. For example, if a child is bothering a peer, say "It makes Jerry upset when you run your truck over his back when he is lying down. You can have fun driving your truck on the floor instead."

19. Provide Upbeat, Positive Emotional Feedback

Daily doses of upbeat talk and cheerful remarks will give children the positive energy they need to cope with stress. And when you model acceptance of unexpected nuisances (spilled juice, a clogged sink), children will see how to handle stressful situations with grace and good humor.



20. Praise Children for Helping Each Other

Have you noticed kids in your classroom going out of their way to engage a worried or withdrawn peer? Have you seen a child help another through a stressful activity or transition? Be on the lookout for instances of children helping each other during free play and activities. Tell them how proud you are of their positive behavior—and you'll likely see more of it!



Get more tips on boosting children's social-emotional skills at the Brookes Inclusion Lab!

www.brookesinclusionlab.com



These tips were adapted from *Little Kids, Big Worries*, by Alice Sterling Honig, Ph.D.

Learn more about the book at www.brookespublishing.com.

**When getting dressed...**

...count out articles of clothing with your child
 ...count body parts as the clothing is put on
 ...have your child point out shapes like circles, triangles, squares, and rectangles in fabric prints, fasteners, and pockets

When doing laundry...

...sort clothes with your child into piles of "more" or "less"
 ...ask your child to help put a specific number of clothing items into the hamper or basket, and then count with her as she does it
 ...have your child match socks to help them understand sets of objects

When waiting around...

...try simple math games such as "counting cars" to create learning opportunities

**When cleaning up...**

...ask your child to pick up a set number of objects and count with him as he does it.
 ...have your child count the number of steps she took to pick up each of the objects or to complete the cleanup task.
 ...name the shapes of the objects that the child is tidying up

When washing hands...

...count the squirts of soap and then count to 10 while your child washes—you'll reinforce counting knowledge *and* thorough hand washing!

When preparing meals...

...try measuring out an ingredient using three different cup containers so your child can see and count "three cups of flour"
 ...teach "order irrelevance" by asking, "If we count from left to right, do we still get the same number of cups of flour?"

**When eating dinner...**

...engage your child in conversations about *more* or *less*: "Do I have more or less mashed potatoes than you have?"
 ...play "how many" games: "How many forks are on the table? How many carrots are on your plate?"
 ...have your child count food items as they are served

When bathing...

...ask your child to count the cups of bath soap or number of toys in the tub.
 ...hang a wall clock in the bathroom and show your child how to tell how much time has elapsed while they're in the tub

When brushing teeth...

...use a small egg timer to help your child develop a sense of elapsed time (and to be sure they brush their teeth long enough!)

When reading bedtime stories...

...choose stories that incorporate math themes like counting or shapes
 ...look for ways to introduce math talk even if the book isn't specifically about math—have your child count the number of animals a character meets, for example

**When saying goodnight...**

...have your child count the number of events in his "goodnight routine": getting into bed, fluffing pillows, turning on night lights, organizing stuffed animals
 ...put the child's night light on a timer and say, "Count to the highest number you can to see how long the light takes to go to sleep."
 ...count bedtime kisses with your child—and then give him an extra one!



Challenge YOUR kids to do one activity every day all summer long. It's a great way to learn a few new games and activities, while filling those "I'm bored!" moments.

1. [Obstacle Course](#)
2. Scavenger Hunt
3. [Water Balloons](#)
4. [Collect Bugs](#)
5. Study a spider web
6. 3-legged races
7. Wash the dog
8. Wash the car
9. Paint outdoors
10. [Stargazing](#)
11. [Plant a garden](#)
12. [Camp in the backyard](#)
13. Eat watermelon in big wedges
14. Look for 4-leaf clovers
15. [Splash in puddles](#)
16. [Build a bird house or feeder](#)
17. Make a paper hat
18. [Make a paper boat and see if it floats](#)
19. Decorate a T-shirt
20. [Send postcards to family & friends](#)
21. [Finger painting](#)
22. [Make your own Play-doh](#)
23. Make a necklace out of beads or pasta
24. Write an autobiography
25. [Have a fashion show](#)
26. [Bubbles](#)
27. [Hula Hoops](#)
28. Jump Ropes
29. Rearrange your bedroom
30. Have a PJ Party
31. Watch the clouds
32. Create a movie or play
33. Make up a story; Illustrate it
34. [Have a talent show in your backyard](#)
35. Learn a Line Dance
36. Practice tongue twisters
37. Learn to juggle
38. Create a house of cards
39. [Have paper airplane races](#)

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40. Bob for apples
41. Make a Rope Swing
42. Hopscotch
43. Freeze Tag
44. Hide and Seek
45. Red Light Green Light
46. Dodge Ball
47. Learn a YoYo trick
48. Play H-O-R-S-E
49. Egg Toss
50. Make shadow puppets
51. Line up dominoes and watch them drop
52. Play with Shaving Cream & food coloring
53. Create a musical instrument out of recyclables
54. Make a box town out of old boxes
55. Research careers (Interview locals such as a firefighter, dentist, hairdresser, or lifeguard)
56. Learn string games like Cats in the Cradle
57. Have a picnic on the living room floor
58. Learn clapping games like Miss Mary Mack
59. Play cards (Crazy 8s, War, Rummy)
60. Family game night
61. Watch old home movies or look at old pictures
62. Have a watermelon seed spitting contest
63. Build a fort
64. Fly a Kite
65. Play capture the flag
66. Play Freeze Tag
67. Tell scary stories in the dark
68. Go for a hike
69. Learn sign language
70. Learn Morse Code
71. Build a toothpick bridge or building
72. Walk the dog
73. Bake some treats for your neighbors
74. Play chess or checkers
75. Play charades
76. Have a bubble-blowing contest
77. Climb a tree
78. Do blind taste tests with various drinks and food
79. Solve a crossword or word search puzzle
80. Make butterflies from coffee filters
81. Play hangman or tic-tac-toe
82. Dance to 50s music (or any era)
83. Invite neighbors for a family potluck dinner
84. Play free online games
85. Make a Diet Coke and Mentos eruption
86. Jump rope Try double dutch
87. Make a time capsule
88. Learn how to read a map
89. Play hot potato
90. Have breakfast for dinner
91. Make homemade pizza
92. Have thumb wars
93. Arm wrestle
94. Give each other crazy or fancy hair dos

95. Draw a letter, word, or picture on your friend's back and have them guess what you've drawn
96. [Have a relay race](#)
97. Color "Easter Eggs" any time
98. Make your own pet rock
99. Play "I Spy"
100. Put together a puzzle
101. Play "20 questions"
102. Make a fort or car out of a large appliance box
103. Try to make each other laugh
104. Create something with beads
105. Write a secret message in "mirror image"
106. Have a staring contest
107. Speak Pig Latin
108. Play Truth or Dare
109. Create a [secret code](#) Send each other messages
110. Play Simon Says
111. [Play Ping Pong](#)

Virtual Field Trips

- **Museums:** These 12 famous museums offer virtual tours you can take from your couch.
- **National Parks:** Take a virtual tour of 12 of our greatest National Parks
- **Zoos & Aquariums:** 20 Zoos and Aquariums offering live streaming via webcams.
- **Farms:** 11 virtual tours of farms from pigs and cows, to apples and eggs.
- **Great Wall of China:** Virtual tour of the Great Wall of China.
- **Mars:** Explore the surface of Mars on the Curiosity Rover.
- **Project Explorer:** Travel the world through the eyes of our storytellers.
- **The Louvre:** Travel to Paris, France to see amazing works of art at The Louvre.
- **Yellowstone National Park** Tour Yellowstone National Park

Live WEBCAMS

- **Aquarium of the Pacific:** penguin, shark, jellyfish, tropical reef cams, and more.
- **Atlanta Zoo:** Check out the PandaCam
- **Cincinnati Zoo:** Home Safari Facebook Live event daily at 2pm CST
- **EarthCam:** Offers a variety of animal cams from across the country and around the world.
- **ElPaso Zoo:** Offers webcams of meerkats, orangutans, giraffe, siamangs, and sea lions.
- **Explore.org:** Offers 96 live feeds including some adorable bear cubs:)
- **Georgia Aquarium:** Webcams offering a live look at beluga whales, California sea lions, jellyfish, piranhas, puffins, sea otters, an Indo-Pacific barrier reef and the ocean floor.
- **International Wolf Center:** Live wolf cams
- **Houston Zoo:** Live WebCams of elephants, gorilla, rhino, giraffes, Leafcutter ants, and chimpanzees.
- **Maryland Zoo:** Penguin, flamingo, giraffe, and goat cams
- **Memphis Zoo:** Hippo, elephant, and panda cams
- **Monterey Bay Aquarium:** 10 Web cams allow you to view sea otters, jelly fish, penguins, sharks, and more.
- **National Aquarium:** Three cams give you views of the Blacktip Reef, Coral Reef, and Jelly Invasion
<https://www.aqua.org/>
- **National Zoo:** AnimalCams of lion, elephant, panda, and naked mole-rats.
- **Oakland Zoo:** Black Bear, sun bear, condor, and elephant cams.
- **Oregon Coast Aquarium:** Live Shark Cam
- **Pittsburgh Zoo:** Cheetah and penguin cams
- **Reid Park Zoo:** Offers zoo cams of elephant, giraffe, grizzly bears, lemur, and lions.
- **San Diego Zoo:** Amazing videos, activities, and games.
- **Seattle Aquarium:** Sea Otters and harbor seal cams



Activities



FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 2-month-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

Sing songs you remember from childhood to your baby. Hold your baby close in your arms or in a baby carrier. Gently dance with your baby.

With your baby on her back, take a tissue and wave it above your baby for her to see. Tissues also can fly, float, and tickle parts of your baby's body. See how your baby responds. If she fusses, then stop playing.

If your baby cries, find out what he needs. He is letting you know something with his cry. When you respond, he learns to trust you are there for him. You cannot spoil your baby at this age.

Hold your baby and put your face close to hers. Make silly faces. Smile at your baby. Stick out your tongue. Yawn. Wait a few seconds and see if she tries to repeat your actions back to you.

Step back from your baby so he cannot see you. Gently call his name. Watch what he does. Does he stop moving for a moment? Does he try to move his head toward your voice? Pick him up. Say, "Here I am."

Talk to your baby about what she is doing, seeing, hearing, and feeling. Say, "I am changing your diaper. You will like being nice and dry. I love you!"

Place interesting things close to her bed for her to look at. Hang objects or toys out of reach. Tape simple pictures from magazines on the wall.

Introduce new, safe* objects for your baby to explore. Simple objects such as plastic cups and big wooden spoons are all new to him.

**Be sure to review safety guidelines with your health care provider.*





Activities



HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 2-month-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Take turns with your baby when he makes cooing and gurgling sounds. Have a "conversation" back and forth with simple sounds that he can make.

Gently shake a rattle or another baby toy that makes a noise. Put it in your baby's hand. See if she takes it, even for a brief moment.

Rest your baby, tummy down, on your arm, with your hand on her chest. Use your other hand to secure your baby—support her head and neck. Gently swing her back and forth. As she gets older, walk around to give her different views.

Read simple books to your baby. Even if he does not understand the story, he will enjoy being close and listening to you read.

Put a puppet or small sock on your finger. Say your baby's name while moving the puppet or sock up and down. See whether he follows the movement. Now move your finger in a circle. Each time your baby is able to follow the puppet, try a new movement.

With white paper and a black marker, create several easy-to-recognize images on each piece of paper. Start with simple patterns (diagonal stripes, bull's eyes, checkerboards, triangles). Place the pictures so that your baby can see them (8"–12" inches from her face). Tape these pictures next to her car seat or crib.

Place a shatterproof mirror close to your baby where she can see it. Start talking, and tap the mirror to get her to look. The mirror will provide visual stimulation. Eventually your baby will understand her reflection.

Sing to your baby (even if you don't do it well). Repetition of songs and lullabies helps your baby to learn and listen.





Activities



FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 6-month-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

Get down on the floor with your baby and play with him on his level. Look at toys, books, or objects together. Have fun, laugh, and enjoy your time together.

Learn your baby's special rhythms, and try to settle into a regular routine for eating, sleeping, and diapering. Talk to your baby about his routines. This will help your baby feel secure and content.

When your baby cries, respond to her. Whisper in her ear to quiet her. Hold her close and make soft sounds. This will help her know that you are always there and that you love her.

Let your baby begin to feed herself bits of food and use a spoon and a cup. She will begin to enjoy doing things herself.

Bring your baby to new places to see new things. Go on a walk to a park or in the mall, or just bring him shopping. He will love to see new things while you keep him safe.

Use your baby's name when you dress, feed, and diaper him. Say, "Here is Dusty's finger. Here is Dusty's foot."

Visit a friend who has a baby or young child. Stay close to your baby and let her know that these new people are okay. It takes a little time to warm up.

Bath time* is a wonderful time to have fun and be close with your baby. Sponges, plastic cups, and washcloths make simple, inexpensive tub toys.

**Be sure to review safety guidelines with your health care provider.*





Activities

AGE
6
MONTHS

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 6-month-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

While sitting on the floor, place your baby in a sitting position inside your legs. Use your legs and chest to provide only as much support as your baby needs. This allows you to play with your baby while encouraging independent sitting.

Gently rub your baby with a soft cloth, a paper towel, or nylon. Talk about how things feel (soft, rough, slippery). Lotion feels good, too.

Common household items such as measuring spoons and measuring cups make toys with interesting sounds and shapes. Gently dangle and shake a set of measuring spoons or measuring cups where your baby can reach or kick at them. Let your baby hold them to explore and shake, too.

Play voice games. Talk with a high or low voice. Click your tongue. Whisper. Take turns with your baby. Repeat any sounds made by him. Place your baby so that you are face to face—your baby will watch as you make sounds.

With your baby lying on his back, place a toy within sight but out of reach, or move a toy across your baby's visual range. Encourage him to roll to get the toy.

Place your baby in a chair or car seat to watch everyday activities. Tell your baby what you are doing. Let your baby see, hear, and touch common objects. You can give your baby attention while getting things done.

Your baby will like to throw toys to the floor. Take a little time to play this "go and fetch" game. It helps your baby to learn to release objects. Give baby a box or pan to practice dropping toys into.

Place your baby facing you. Your baby can watch you change facial expressions (big smile, poking out tongue, widening eyes, raising eyebrows, puffing or blowing). Give your baby a turn. Do what your baby does.





Activities

AGE
1

FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 1-year-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

Play on the floor with your baby every day. Crawl around with her, or just get down and play on her level. She will really enjoy having you to herself.

Dance to music with your baby. Hold his hands while he bends up and down. Clap and praise him when he "dances" by himself.

Let your baby know every day how much you love him and how special he is—when he wakes up in the morning and when he goes to sleep at night.

Play gentle tickle games with your baby, but make sure to stop when she lets you know she has had enough. Watch her carefully and you will know.

When you are dressing or diapering your baby, talk about her body parts and show her your body parts. Say, "Here is Daddy's nose. Here is Destiny's nose."

Go on a walk to a park or a place where children play. Let your baby watch them and visit a little if he is ready.

Twirl your baby around. He will enjoy a little rough-and-tumble play, but make sure you stop when he has had enough.

Sit on the floor with your baby and roll a ball back and forth. Clap your hands when your baby pushes the ball or "catches" the ball with his hands.





ASQ Activities



HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 1-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Let your baby "help"

during daily routines. Encourage your baby to "get" the cup and spoon for mealtime, to "find" shoes and coat for dressing, and to "bring" the pants or diaper for changing.

Following directions is an important skill for your baby to learn.

Babies love games at this age (**Pat-a-Cake, This Little Piggy**).

Try different ways of playing the games and see if your baby will try it with you. Hide behind furniture or doors for Peekaboo; clap blocks or pan lids for Pat-a-cake.

Make puppets out

of a sock or paper bag—one for you and one for your baby. Have your puppet talk to your baby or your baby's puppet.

Encourage your baby to "talk" back.

Tape a large piece of drawing paper to a table. Show your baby how to **scribble** with large nontoxic crayons. Take turns making marks on the paper. It's also fun to **paint with water**.

Babies enjoy **push and pull toys**. Make your own pull toy by threading yogurt cartons, spools, or small boxes on a piece of yarn or soft string (about 2 feet long). Tie a bead or plastic stacking ring on one end for a handle.

This is the time your baby learns that adults can be useful! When your baby "asks" for something by vocalizing or pointing, respond to his signal. **Name the object** your baby wants and encourage him to communicate again—taking turns with each other in a "**conversation**."

Cut up safe **finger foods** (do not use foods that pose a danger of your baby's choking) in small pieces and allow your baby to feed himself. It is good practice to pick up small things and feel different textures (bananas, soft crackers, berries).





Activities



FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 18-month-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

Your toddler likes to have a regular daily routine. Talk to him about what you are doing now and what will be happening next. Give him time to be active and time to be quiet.

Have a pretend party with stuffed animals or dolls. You can cut out little "presents" from a magazine, make a pretend cake, and sing the birthday song.

Your toddler needs a lot of time to move around and exercise. Go for a walk, visit a playground, or take a trip to a shopping mall.

Dance with your toddler. Make a simple instrument out of a large plastic food tub (for a drum) or a small plastic container filled with beans or rice (for a shaker).

Your toddler will love to help with daily tasks. Give her simple "jobs" to do and let her know what a big girl she is. She can wipe off a table, put her toys away, or help sweep up.

Set up playtimes with other children. Your child doesn't understand how to share yet, so make sure there are plenty of toys. Stay close by and help him learn how to play with other children.

Help your child learn about emotions. Make happy faces, sad faces, mad faces, and silly faces in front of a mirror. This is fun!

Storytimes, especially before naptime and bedtime, are a great way to settle down before sleep. Let your child choose books to read and help turn pages. Help him name what he sees.





ASQ Activities

AGE 18 MONTHS

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 18-month-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Pretend play becomes even more fun at this age. Encourage your toddler to have a doll or stuffed toy do what he does—walk, go to bed, dance, eat, and jump. Include the doll in daily activities or games.

Toddlers love movement. Take him to the park to ride on rocking toys, swings, and small slides. You may want to hold your toddler in your lap on the swing and on the slide at first.

Sing action songs together such as "Ring Around the Rosy," "Itsy-Bitsy Spider," and "This Is the Way We Wash Our Hands." Do actions together. Move with the rhythm. Wait for your toddler to anticipate the action.

Put favorite toys in a laundry basket slightly out of reach of your toddler or in a clear container with a tight lid. Wait for your toddler to request the objects, giving her a reason to communicate. Respond to her requests.

Toddlers will begin putting objects together. Simple puzzles (separate pieces) with knobs are great. Putting keys into locks and letters into mailbox slots is fun, too.

Your toddler may become interested in "art activities." Use large nontoxic crayons and a large pad of paper. Felt-tip markers are more exciting with their bright colors. Let your toddler scribble his own picture as you make one.

Play the "What's that?" game by pointing to clothing, toys, body parts, objects, or pictures and asking your toddler to name them. If your toddler doesn't respond, name it for him and encourage imitation of the words.

Fill a plastic tub with cornmeal or oatmeal. Put in kitchen spoons, strainers, measuring cups, funnels, or plastic containers. Toddlers can fill, dump, pour, and learn about textures and use of objects as tools. Tasting won't be harmful.





Activities



FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 2-year-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

Play Parade or Follow the Leader with your toddler. Your child will love to copy you—and be the leader!

Try to have **set routines** during the day, and let your child know what will be happening next. Say, "Remember, after we brush your hair, we get dressed."

Have a special **reading time** every day with your toddler. Snuggle up and get close. Before bedtime or naptime is a great time to read together.

Give your toddler choices, but keep them simple. Let her choose a red or a blue shirt while dressing. Let her choose milk or juice at lunch.

Encourage your child to **pretend play**. Put a few small chairs in a row to make a "bus." Cut up some paper "money" to pay the driver. Ask, "Where will we go today?"

Teach your child simple songs and finger plays, such as "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider."

Your toddler is learning all about emotions. Help him label his feelings when he is mad, sad, happy, or silly. Say, "You are really happy" or "You seem really mad."

Get down on the floor and play with your child. Try to follow your child's lead by playing with toys he chooses and trying his ideas.





ASQ Activities

AGE 2

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 2-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Action is an important part of a child's life. Play a game with a ball where you **give directions** and your child does the actions, such as "Roll the ball." Kick, throw, push, bounce, and catch are other good actions. Take turns giving the directions.

Children can find endless uses for **boxes**. A box big enough for your child to fit in can become a car. An appliance box with holes cut for windows and a door can become your child's playhouse. Decorating the boxes with crayons, markers, or paints can be a fun activity to do together.

Take time to **draw** with your child when she wants to get out paper and crayons. Draw large shapes and let your child color them in. Take turns.

Play "**Follow the Leader.**" Walk on tiptoes, walk backward, and walk slow or fast with big steps and little steps.

Enhance listening skills by playing both slow and fast music. Songs with speed changes are great. Show your child how to move fast or slow with the **music**.

Children at this age love to **pretend** and really enjoy it when you can pretend with them. Pretend you are different animals, like a dog or cat. Make animal sounds and actions. Let your child be the pet owner who pets and feeds you.

Add actions to your child's favorite **nursery rhymes**. Easy action rhymes include "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush," "Jack Be Nimble," "This Is the Way We Wash Our Clothes," "Ring Around the Rosy," and "London Bridge."





Activities



FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 30-month-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

Give your child directions that have two steps. Say, "Put all of the LEGOs in the box, and then put the box in the closet." Let him know what a big help he is!

Make a "Me Book" with your child.
Take some pieces of paper and glue in pictures of your child, family members, pets, or other special things. Tape or staple the pages together.

Let your child help when you are cooking and cleaning.* She can do things such as helping to stir, putting flour in a cup, or putting away spoons and forks in the drawer.

*Be sure to review safety guidelines with your health care provider.

Let your child do more things for himself. He can put on his shoes and coat when you go out. Make sure you give him plenty of time to work on these new skills. Say, "What a big boy!"

Your child loves to imitate you. Try new words, animal sounds, and noises, and see if your child can imitate what you say or how you sound.

Encourage creative play, such as drawing with crayons, painting, and playing with playdough. Playing with chalk on the sidewalk is fun.

Play with your child and help her learn how to share. Show her how to share and praise her when he shares with you. This is a new thing for her, so do not expect too much at this age.

Invite a friend with a child over for a playdate. Keep it short, such as 1 or 2 hours. Have some playtime with enough toys for two, snack time, and some outdoor play. Say, "That was fun! See you next time."





Activities



HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 30-month-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Tell or read a familiar story and pause frequently to leave out a word, asking your child to "fill it in." For example, Little Red Riding Hood said, "Grandmother, what big _____ you have."

Give a cup to your child. Use bits of cereal or fruit and place one in your child's cup ("one for you") and one in your cup ("one for me"). Take turns. Dump out your child's cup and help count the pieces. This is good practice for early math skills.

Trace around simple objects with your child. Use cups of different sizes, blocks, or your child's and your hands. Using felt-tip markers or crayons of different colors makes it even more fun.

To improve coordination and balance, show your child the "bear walk" by walking on hands and feet, keeping the legs and arms straight. Try the "rabbit hop" by crouching down and then jumping forward.

Have your child help you set the table. First, have your child place the plates, then cups, and then napkins. By placing one at each place, he will learn one-to-one correspondence. Show your child where the utensils should be placed.

Help your child learn new words to describe objects in everyday conversations. Describe by color, size, and shape (the blue cup, the big ball). Also, describe how things move (a car goes fast, a turtle moves slowly) and how they feel (ice cream is cold, soup is hot).

Cut pictures out of magazines to make two groups such as dogs, food, toys, or clothes. Have two boxes ready and put a picture of a dog in one and of food in the other. Have your child put additional pictures in the right box, helping her learn about categories.

Put an old blanket over a table to make a tent or house. Pack a "picnic" sack for your camper. Have your child take along a pillow on the "camp out" for a nap. Flashlights are especially fun.





Activities



FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 3-year-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

Tell your child a simple story about something she did that was funny or interesting. See if your child can tell a different story about herself.

Draw simple pictures of faces that show happy, sad, excited, or silly expressions. Cut them out and glue them on a Popsicle stick or pencil. Let your child act out the different feelings with the puppets.

At dinner time, let family members talk about their day. Help your child tell about her day. Say, "Latoya and I went to the park today. Latoya, tell your sister what you did at the park."

Give your child directions that have at least two steps when you and he are cooking, dressing, or cleaning. Say, "Put that pan in the sink, and then pick up the red spoon."

Tell your child a favorite story, such as the Three Little Pigs or Goldilocks and the Three Bears. See if your child can tell you how the animals felt in the story.

Tell silly jokes with your child. Simple "What am I?" riddles are also fun. Have a good time and laugh with your child.

Play games that involve following simple rules, such as Mother May I and Red Light, Green Light.

Create a pretend argument between stuffed animals or dolls. Talk with your child about what happened, feelings, and how best to work out problems when they come up.





ASQ Activities

AGE 3

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 3-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Make an **adventure path** outside. Use a garden hose, rope, or piece of chalk and make a "path" that goes under the bench, around the tree, and along the wall. Walk your child through the path first, using these words. After she can do it, make a new path or have your child make a path.

Before bedtime, look at a magazine or children's book together. Ask your child to **point to pictures** as you name them, such as "Where is the truck?" Be silly and ask him to point with an elbow or foot. Ask him to show you something that is round or something that goes fast.

While cooking or eating dinner, play the **"more or less"** game with your child. Ask who has more potatoes and who has less. Try this using same-size glasses or cups, filled with juice or milk.

Make a **necklace** you can eat by stringing Cheerios or Froot Loops on a piece of yarn or string. Wrap a short piece of tape around the end of the string to make a firm tip for stringing.

Practice **following directions**. Play a silly game where you ask your child to do two or three fun or unusual things in a row. For example, ask him to "Touch your elbow and then run in a circle" or "Find a book and put it on your head."

Find large pieces of paper or cardboard for your child to **draw** on. Using crayons, pencils, or markers, play a drawing game where you follow his lead by copying exactly what he draws. Next, encourage your child to copy your drawings, such as circles or straight lines.

Listen and dance to **music** with your child. You can stop the music for a moment and play the "freeze" game, where everyone "freezes," or stands perfectly still, until you start the music again. Try to "freeze" in unusual positions for fun.





Activities

AGE 4

FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 4-year-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

Introduce a new feeling each day, such as bored. Use pictures, gestures, and words. Encourage your child to use a variety of words to describe how he feels.

Encourage activities that involve sharing, such as building with blocks, coloring with crayons, and playing dress up. Teach your child how to ask a friend for a turn. Give your child a lot of time to play with other children.

Take your child to the library for story hour. She can learn about sitting in a group and listening to stories.

Take your child to the store, a restaurant, or the library. Explore new places. Talk with her about how people are alike and how they are different.

Provide opportunities for your child to be creative. Empty containers, glue, newspapers, rubber bands, and magazines can be used to make new inventions.

Make puppets out of Popsicle sticks by gluing on paper faces, adding yarn for hair, and so forth. Put on a show about two children who meet and become friends.

When doing housework or yard work, allow your child to do a small part on his own. Let him empty the wastebasket or clean crumbs off the table.

Use stuffed animals to act out an argument. Talk first about how the different animals are feeling. Then, talk about different ways to come to an agreement.





ASQ Activities

AGE 4

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 4-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Invite your child to play a **counting game**. Using a large piece of paper, make a simple game board with a straight path. Use dice to determine the count. Count with your child, and encourage her to hop the game piece to each square, counting each time the piece touches down.

Play the **"guess what will happen"** game to encourage your child's problem-solving and thinking skills. For example, during bath time, ask your child, "What do you think will happen if I turn on the hot and cold water at the same time?" or "What would happen if I stacked the blocks to the top of the ceiling?"

Play **"bucket hoops."** Have your child stand about 6 feet away and throw a medium-size ball at a large bucket or trash can. For fun outdoors on a summer day, fill the bucket with water.

Make a **bean bag** to catch and throw. Fill the toe of an old sock or pantyhose with 3/4 cup dry beans. Sew the remaining side or tie off with a rubber band. Play **"hot potato"** or simply play catch. Encourage your child to throw the ball overhand and underhand.

Go on a **walk** and pick up things you find. Bring the items home and help your child **sort them into groups**. For example, groups can include rocks, paper or leaves. Encourage your child to start a collection of special things. Find a box or special place where he can display the collection.

"Write" and mail a letter to a friend or relative. Provide your child with paper, crayons or pencil, and an envelope. Let your child draw, scribble, or write; or he can tell you what to write down. When your child is finished, let him fold the letter to fit in the envelope, lick, and seal. You can write the address on the front. Be sure to let him decorate the envelope as well. After he has put the stamp on, help mail the letter.

Play **"circus."** Find old, colorful clothes and help your child put on a circus show. Provide a rope on the ground for the high wire act, a sturdy box to stand on to announce the acts, fun objects for a magic act, and stuffed animals for the show. Encourage your child's imagination and creativity in planning the show. Don't forget to clap.





Activities

AGE
5

FUN & EASY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Try these activities with your 5-year-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

When your child has friends over, encourage them to play games that require working together. Try building a tent out of old blankets, playing catch, or acting out stories.

Build a store, house, puppet stage, or fire truck out of old boxes. Your child can invite a friend over to play store or house, have a puppet show, or be firefighters.

Ask your child her birthday, telephone number, and first and last name. Practice what she would do if she was separated from you at the store.

Tell your child a favorite nursery rhyme that involves the idea of "right" and "wrong." Discuss what kinds of choices the characters made in the story.

Gather old shirts, hats, and other clothes from friends or a thrift store. Encourage dramatic play—acting out stories, songs, and scenes from the neighborhood.

Play games with your child such as Go Fish, Checkers, or Candy Land. Board games or card games that have three or more rules are great.

Show your child pictures in magazines of people from different cultures. Talk about things that are the same or different between your family and other families.

Talk about real dangers (fire, guns, cars) and make-believe dangers (monsters under the bed) using hand-drawn pictures or pictures cut out from a magazine.





ASQ Activities

AGE 5

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 5-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Encourage **dramatic play**. Help your child act out his favorite nursery rhyme, cartoon, or story. Use large, old clothes for costumes.

Play **"mystery sound."** Select household items that make distinct sounds such as a clock, cereal box, metal lid (placed on a pan), and potato chip bag. Put a blindfold on your child and have him try to guess which object made the sound. Take turns with your child.

Play the **"memory" game**. Put five or six familiar objects on a table. Have your child close her eyes. Remove one object, and rearrange the rest. Ask your child which object is missing. Take turns finding the missing object.

Make an **obstacle course** either inside or outside your home. You can use cardboard boxes for jumping over or climbing through, broomsticks for laying between chairs for "limbo" (going under), and pillows for walking around. Let your child help lay out the course. After a couple of practice tries, have him complete the obstacle course. Then try hopping or jumping through the course.

Practice **writing** first names of friends, toys, and relatives. Your child may need to trace the letters of these names at first. Be sure to write in large print letters.

Let your child help you with simple **cooking tasks** such as mashing potatoes, making cheese sandwiches, and fixing a bowl of cereal. Afterward, see if he can tell you the order that you followed to cook and mash the potatoes or to get the bread out of the cupboard and put the cheese on it. Supervise carefully when your child is near a hot stove.

You can play **"license plate count up"** in the car or on the bus. Look for a license plate that contains the number 1. Then try to find other plates with 2, 3, 4, and so forth, up to 10. When your child can play "count-up," play "count-down," starting with the number 9, then 8, 7, 6, and so forth, down to 1.

