



Wee Beginner (0-18 months): 9 Ways the Right Toy Helps Development

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Wee Beginner (0 – 18 months): 9 Ways The Right Toy Helps Development

It may look like child's play, but with the right toys your baby or toddler is getting a developmental head start. Play is important work and toys are your child's vital tools.

Here's a guide to the important work your baby's doing at playtime and how the right toys really do promote learning (*as well as* fun times!)

1. Toys help babies recognize their world and tune into language

From the moment babies are born they are programmed for curiosity and growth, looking to make sense of things they encounter and communicate with people they meet. Look for toys with familiar shapes, symbols and letters on them to give your child a head start. They help babies become aware of basic language concepts and patterns.

2. Toys introduce the exciting concept of cause and effect

Do this and THAT will happen! Amazing! Simple toys that encourage an action and deliver a reward are not only key in fostering the idea of cause and effect, they help babies and toddlers feel happy and accomplished, and foster dexterity. Action/reaction toys that pop up, make sounds, light up or move when touched are the perfect choice for babies who are keen to explore the world.

3. Toys encourage conversation and hone fine motor skills

As babies and toddlers become more mobile, they can independently experiment with toys like blocks, stacking toys, nesting toys and activity centers, much to their delight.

4. Toys invite exploration and boost gross motor skills

Ride-on toys, balls and pull-along toys all help to encourage confidence and physical development, as well as providing opportunities for experimentation, social interaction and adventuring.

5. Great toys refine hand-eye coordination

The right toy can provide a stealthy educational boost AND assist with mastering hand-eye coordination. Simple puzzles, toys that come apart, toys that stack, shape sorters and musical toys are all ideal for instilling confidence and fostering development.





9 Ways The Right Toy Helps Development continued...

6. Toys invite role-play and nurture social skills

Toys that mimic household objects and encourage role-play are hugely important when it comes to growing your baby up. They provide opportunities to play 'let's pretend' and process the world around them while also sparking co-operation and conversation. Kid-sized versions of familiar objects are perfect for this kind of play.

7. Toys encourage problem solving

The right toys can encourage your adventurous child to experiment and problem solve, fostering curiosity and independence in the process.

Chatting together about different ways to play with these toys is a perfect opportunity to connect and encourage new words and ideas. Puzzles, nesting toys, blocks, shape sorters and toys that fit together are all great options.

8. Toys reveal the size and order of things

Toys which stack or fit into each other, simple puzzles and play sets all tell toddlers important things about how things work together. Blocks that graduate in size may seem super simple, but they're fostering spatial awareness and are teaching the child important lessons about shapes, weight, balance and colour too. Toys with pull-apart components invite children to put them back together.

9. Interesting toys encourage concentration

Mastering a new toy is an exciting endeavour, but it can also prove a challenge to excited babies and toddlers. Focusing their attention is not always easy, but with the right toy they'll soon be completely absorbed. Playing with a new toy encourages persistence, risk taking and experimentation. It also invites your toddler to filter out other distractions and focus on the task at hand. These are all valuable skills for children to build on.

<http://bit.ly/2ew0o55>





Wee Explorer (18 months – 3 years): Tips to Survive the Terrible 3's

According to Kathleen Berchelmann, M.D., FAAP; they call them the "terrible 2's," "trusting 3's" and "pleasing 4's," but in reality having a 3-year-old can be harder than the 2's.

Here are tips to help you *make it through the day*

- Yell less, love more: Yelling is a late defense mechanism, a technique we use when everything else fails. But yelling can hurt kids more than we realize – it might cause an immediate behaviour change, but in the long run can cause real psychological harm. Rather than yelling and harsh punishment, children need positive parenting for healthy brain development.
- Label behaviour: Instead of getting angry, label behaviour.
- The key to raising emotionally healthy children is attunement, or how well you recognize your child's needs at any given moment. Attunement, in short, is putting yourself in your child's shoes and then meeting their needs with the wisdom of a parent. Try to identify the root of your child's misbehaviour– why she won't put her shoes on or why she's throwing a tantrum – then tailor your consequence appropriately.
- Give your child your full attention frequently. As soon as you realize your child is trying to get your attention, give her a few seconds of full attention. Look her right in the eyes, ask her some questions, and listen to the answer. Use body language that shows attention, like putting your phone down. While you listen to her answers, think of how you are going to redirect her.
- Redirect with creativity: Try to redirect early, and with a loving voice. Ask yourself, "Why is my child misbehaving? What do they really need?" Aggressive behaviours usually require physical redirection
- Be consistent: Consistency does not mean harsh punishments or yelling, it means consistently addressing the same problem behaviours.

<http://bit.ly/1NUbL3J>





Wee Builder (3 – 4 years): Hand and Finger Skills of your Preschooler

By age three, your child is developing both the muscular control and the concentration she needs to master many precision finger and hand movements. You'll notice that now she can move each of her fingers independently or together, which means that instead of grasping her crayon in her fist she can hold it like an adult, with thumb on one side and fingers on the other. Now she will be able to trace a square, copy a circle, or scribble freely.

Because her spatial awareness has developed quite a bit, she's more sensitive to the relationships among objects, so she'll position her toys with great care during play and control the way she holds utensils and tools to perform specific tasks.

Looking at her scribbles, for example, she might decide they look like a dog. But soon this will change, and she'll decide what she wants to make before starting to work on it. This change in approach will motivate her to develop even more precision in moving and using her hands.

Quiet-time activities that can help improve your child's hand abilities include:

- Building with blocks
- Solving simple jigsaw puzzles (four or five large pieces)
- Playing with pegboards
- Stringing large wooden beads
- Coloring with crayons or chalk
- Building sand castles
- Pouring water into containers of various sizes
- Dressing and undressing dolls in clothing with large zippers, snaps, and laces

<http://bit.ly/2ebfAdq>





Wee Learner (4-5 years): Does Sugar Really Make Children Go Crazy?

Yes, everybody SAYS it does, but really?! Dr Justin Coulson digs into the science behind the adage. There's been lots said about the way that sugar affects our physical health. Fact: too much of it has a negative impact on our health.

But does sugar really send children's behaviour into crazy territory? Is it sugar that drives parents up the wall? Dr Mark Wolraich, chief of Developmental and Behavioural Pediatrics at Oklahoma University Health Sciences Centre has conducted several studies that suggest sugar is *not* the issue when it comes to kids and craziness.

What do the experts know? Science can be frustrating for us when it appears to contradict our experience? For example, this study, known as a meta-analysis, analyzed the results of 16 other studies. Each study had children divided into groups where some children had sugar and others had a placebo, and where neither the participants or the researchers could tell who was in what group. The outcomes? Overall, the data indicated that sugar doesn't impact behaviour for better or for worse in any significant way. And it doesn't impact on academic outcomes either.

So what's causing the crazy behaviour? It is true that someone with low blood-sugar levels (known as having hypoglycaemia) experiences an energy boost from a sugar hit. But sugary treats behave differently for those of us who don't have low blood sugar. Our body simply uses the energy or converts it to fat (storage).

The researchers think that what's *really* happening is that our kids are most likely to have lots of sugar when they're at exciting events with their friends. And we're correlating the sugar consumption with the behaviour, rather than the influence and excitement of peers with the behaviour.

All in all, there are good reasons to keep junk food to a minimum. It's bad for health, bad for teeth, bad for body-weight, and bad for so many other things. From a parenting perspective, giving your kids sugar is bad for your relationship. We seem to monitor them and pick on them more when they've had sugary treats than when they haven't.

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Wee Expert (5-6 years): Physical Development

By the time your child is 5-6 years old she will be physically confident and proud of her achievements. At this age, she will still misjudge the extent of her abilities and so accidents are common.

- She is confident at climbing, sliding, swinging and dancing and gets a lot of enjoyment out of being active.
- She loves to show you what she can do.
- She can balance on one foot for a short time.
- She can hop on both feet separately.
- Her fine motor skills have developed enough that she can write and draw in a controlled manner.
- She is learning to colour-in while staying in the lines.
- She is learning to skip with a skipping rope.
- She is learning to catch a medium size ball.

How can I encourage her physical development?

- By the time she starts school, your child will usually be clearly right or left handed. Don't try to force her to change as this will only confuse her and may cause a delay in her learning.
- Encourage her fine motor skills by giving her plenty of opportunities to cut, draw and colour-in.
- Play games that involve sorting objects, matching shapes and letters.
- Give her lots of opportunities to enjoy music through singing and dancing.

<http://bit.ly/2ebliMc>





Wee Mentor (6+ years): What Two Words Will Gain Your Child's Respect?

I've seen and heard many parents as they tower over their children and yell, "THAT'S IT! I'VE HAD ENOUGH. YOU NEED TO SHOW ME SOME RESPECT!"

It's more than a little ironic that we demand respect in such a disrespectful way. So when our children are disrespectful, what are our options?

1. Remember these two words: BED and OAR

BED stands for Blame, Excuse, and Denial. While OAR stands for Ownership, Accountability, and Responsibility.

We should try to encourage our children to get out of BED and get them showing OAR. If they are disrespectful, don't take their excuses. Don't let them blame the other person. Refuse to accept their denial. Kindly, clearly, and directly help them to own it, be accountable for it, and make responsible decisions in the future.

2. Get our relationships right

When our children feel safe, secure, and understood, they tend to behave in respectful ways. Of course they'll still push boundaries from time to time. That's what children do as they develop and grow. But when relationships are right, we can have useful, constructive conversations with them about limits rather than disrespectful confrontations.

3. Model it

We have to be respectful ourselves. Whether that means we ask more rather than telling, or we use our manners more, or speak more politely. The more respect we show, the more our children will learn what respect looks like and feels like. And they will copy us.

4. Stop disrespect when it starts

When we spot disrespect – whether towards siblings, school friends, or ourselves – we need to stop it right there, at the start. And we need to do it clearly, directly, but respectfully.





What Two Words Will Gain Your Child's Respect? Continued...

5. Encourage perspective

We can promote perspective by having them talk to others who have felt disrespected and learning from their experiences. Ask them, "How did mum/dad/sibling/friend feel when you behaved like that?" Invite them to take another person's perspective to develop empathy. Then problem-solve better solutions for the future.

6. Encourage helping

It's hard to be disrespectful to someone you are helping. The more our children help others, the more compassionate they'll be. Remember, however, that forcing a child to help is disrespectful. And when someone is forced to do something, they usually don't have the change of heart we are looking for. It needs to be freely chosen, with our gentle guidance to encourage it.

Respectful relationships are a two-way street. They don't raise themselves. It takes effort. But as we get our relationships right with them, they begin to trust us and become open to our influence. Then, we experience the rewards of those respectful relationships.

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