



Wee Learn



Wee Explorers (18 months - 3 years): 5 Tips for Encouraging Independence in Toddlers

"I want to do it!" "Let me do it!" "I'm a kid! "No, mama, I do it!" Are these phrases common speak in your home? If so, welcome to the world of parenting toddlers where a desire for independence, and an envy to display capability, rule. Gaining new independence and mastering new skills are important parts of toddler development. As you offer unconditional love and support, provide opportunities for exploration, encourage curiosity, and engage in a variety of rich experiences, your toddler's level of independence, along with his capabilities, will grow.

While parenting a toddler requires lots of patience and can certainly be trying at times, it is important to curb frustration as you set safe limits while honoring your toddler's desire to gain independence.

When parenting your toddler, consider these five practical ways you can encourage their independence:

- 1. Never do for your toddler what they can do for themselves.** While it certainly takes longer for your toddler to put on their own socks and shoes or to get themselves dressed, allow extra time so that they can do these things themselves. If you see they are getting frustrated or if the task is taking too long, resist the urge to take over. Instead, ask if they want help or try to coach them through doing it on their own.
- 2. Toddler-proof your home.** Be sure your home is toddler-friendly and safe for exploration. Constantly hearing "Don't touch that," "No," and "Get away from that" can hamper independence. The safer your home is for exploration, the less often you have to say "No." Limiting how often you say "No" to your toddler can also significantly decrease the power struggles between you.
- 3. Give your toddler choices.** Allow your child to make their own choices by giving them two choices that you can live with. Instead of asking him what he wants for breakfast, ask him "Would you like cereal or pancakes for breakfast?" Be sure to honor their choice, as doing so reinforces they have made a good one.
- 4. Assign age-appropriate tasks.** Encourage your toddler to help care for themselves and their belongings by assigning them age-appropriate tasks. Most toddlers can put their dirty clothes in the hamper, help sort laundry, put away toys and put their dirty dishes on the counter or in the sink.
- 5. Encourage safe risk taking.** Encourage your toddler to do increasingly more things for themselves or to try something new. If they have been hesitant to go up the small slide on their own, get behind them and encourage them.

While toddlers want to act like big kids, and in many ways they are, they still have a need to be the baby and to be reassured that mom and dad are there to pick them up when they fall down, to cheer them on when they are tackling a new challenge, and to love them to the moon and back.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2QHYGpP>

For more ideas follow us on social media or visit our Wee Talk Blog
<http://www.weewatch.com/wee-talk-blog/>

