

Body builders



Will You Be My Mirror?

Sit or stand face to face with your child. Move your arms up and down like you are flying, and have your child copy your actions, as if she were a mirror. Try different kinds of motions, like moving your head side-to-side and up-and-down, marching, turning around in a circle, hopping up and down, sticking out your tongue, touching your nose and knees and stomach. Take turns letting your child be a “mirror” for your actions, and then be a “mirror” for your child’s actions. If you have more than one child, let your children take turns copying each other.

All these movements help your child learn coordination and how to move her muscles.



Obstacle Course Parade

For this activity you will need music, instruments, and “obstacles.” For music, you can sing, or play the radio or a CD. You can make your own instruments or just clap your hands or bang two pot lids together. You will need to make some “obstacles.” Obstacles can be chairs, pillows, a line of tape on the floor, play equipment – anything safe for your toddler to march around, climb on or jump over. Find something to wear for hats, maybe a real hat, or something silly like a plastic bowl. March around to the music, leading your child or children in a line behind you. Go around the chairs, jump over the pillow or tape line, clapping and doing a fun marching dance. Let your child take a turn being the leader, too.

All the marching, clapping, and climbing in this fun game helps your child's body grow strong.



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two year old

Jump, Jump, Jump!

During this year, your toddler will gain the strength and coordination to jump on his own. So give him lots of practice. You can lay a scarf on the ground or put down a piece of masking tape. Show him how to jump over the scarf and then back to the other side. When he seems to be able to jump on his own, set up a jumping “ladder” on the ground. (This is not a real ladder, but a pretend ladder made of tape or towels or scarves.) Find a place where there is enough room to spread out five or six things for him to jump over. You can use things like pieces of tape, or dish towels rolled up. At the bottom of the pretend “ladder” place the first towel or tape for him to jump over. Leave enough room for his feet and then place the next piece of tape. Continue until you have made a pretend ladder with several “rungs” for your toddler to jump over. At the top of the “jumping ladder” put a prize. It can be anything, from a favorite stuffed animal, to a snack.

Jumping practice builds your child's strength, coordination and balance.



Stacking Blocks

Toddlers love to stack up blocks (and then knock them down!) You can use lots of things to make blocks of different sizes for your child to play with. Use old tissue boxes, soap boxes, cereal boxes, packing boxes, or baby wipe boxes. For really big and soft “blocks” crumple up newspaper and fill up brown paper shopping bags, then tape them closed. Work together to see how high you can stack the blocks. Build a town or a zoo or a house or a boat with your blocks.

The actions of building – bending down, standing up, picking up blocks, putting down blocks and reaching – help build your child’s muscles. Stacking blocks also teaches your child about balance.



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two year old

Stringing Pasta

Buy one or two bags of pasta or cereal with large holes that can be threaded on a string. Use a stiff piece of string or a shoelace or yarn with the end taped to make it stiff. Help your child make “jewelry” by stringing the pasta or cereal onto the string or yarn. Talk about the shapes as you put the pasta onto the string. Ask your toddler questions like:

Is this piece short or long?

Look at this one?

Is it round or square?

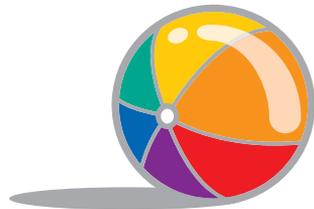
Count the pieces of pasta as you string them, and again when you are done.

**How many pieces
did we get on this string?**

One, two, three . . .

If your child likes this activity, she can make “jewelry” as a gift to give another family member.

Putting pasta onto strings helps the small muscles in your child's hands grow and become more coordinated.



Simple Finger Plays

Finger plays are great for quiet times or waiting times (in line, at the doctor's office). First, show your child the finger plays on your fingers. Then, help him use his hands and fingers to do the motions. Repeat the rhymes until your child can remember the words and rhythm. The public library has books with finger play rhymes. Here are some rhymes with motions to try.

Grandmother's Glasses

Here are grandma's glasses (make "glasses" over eyes with fingers)

Here is grandma's cap (fold hands over head)

And this is the way she folds her hands (fold hands)

And lays them in her lap. (place hands in lap)

The Bee Hive

Here is the bee hive

Where are the bees?

Hidden away where nobody sees. (thumb and fingers bent into palm of a fist)

Watch and you'll see them

Come out of the hive

One, two, three, four, five (count one finger for each number)

BUZZ-Z-Z-Z-Z! (flutter fingers)

Finger plays and rhymes help build your child's small muscles, his memory, counting skills and language.





Touch, Tap, Kick

Find a large lightweight ball. Put it into a sturdy plastic bag or a pillow case, and tie the opening closed with a strong piece of string. Tie it so that you can hold the bag up by the string and dangle it at your child's level. First hold it high above your child so that she has to jump to touch it. Let her practice jumping, and make sure it is not so high that she can never touch it and gets frustrated. Then hold it so that your child can tap the bag. (Be careful not to let the ball swing back and hit your child.) Let her practice swinging her arm and feeling what it is like to tap the ball and make the ball move. Then hold it on the ground or just a little bit above the ground, and let your child practice kicking the ball, and watching it swing up and away from her foot when she kicks it.

Your child is learning coordination, and using her muscles for a specific purpose.



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two year old

Walking Backwards

During this year, your child will be able to walk backwards. Give him practice by making it a fun activity! Put two pieces of tape on the floor several feet apart to make a starting point and a halfway point, or use a marker or chalk on the sidewalk. Find a “prize” your child can pick up at the halfway point, like a toy he likes. Show your child how to start at the first marker and walk backwards to the halfway point and pick up the “prize” and then walk backwards back to the starting point. Then let your child try it. Put the prize at the halfway point and have your child stand at the starting point. Shout **GO** and then encourage your child to walk backwards to the halfway point and back to the starting point.

Your child is learning about balance by walking backwards.



Basketball Practice

Set up a child-size basketball court for your child. You can use a large box, wastebasket or laundry hamper for the basket. Use a lightweight plastic ball, or simply wad up a large piece of aluminum foil or newspaper with masking tape around it, or socks rolled into a ball – anything to throw into your basket. Place a couple of markers around the basket (like a piece of masking tape on the floor) for your child to stand on. Show her how to throw the ball into the basket from the different markers. Play “ball-getter” for your child. As she throws, get the ball from the basket or wherever it rolled, and give it to her to throw again. Praise her each time she throws the ball. Let her be the “ball-getter” too.

Practicing throwing helps your child's arms become strong.

Aiming for a basket helps your child's coordination and accuracy.



Dance Together

Children love music and dancing. So put on some music and dance together. Find music that has a strong beat that you can march, jump and hop to. You can hold hands and walk in a circle, jump, and twirl, wave your arms – just get moving and have fun. See if you can keep dancing for a whole song without stopping.

By moving all her muscles your child is building strength and coordination. By dancing for a longer time without stopping, you are helping your child's heart grow stronger.



Notes