

# MIND builders



# Play Dress Up

Save old clothes or Halloween costumes for dress up. Ask your child who he wants to be, and help him make a costume. Play along with him. If he is pretending to be a teacher, you can be the student. If he is pretending to be Daddy, you can pretend to be him! You can also use toys, blankets and pillows for silly costumes. For example, put a pillow or a toy on your head and say:

**Look, I'm a pillow! Or,  
I'm a truck!**

Your child will like this kind of silly play, and he is learning while he does it!

*Playing dress up is a great imagination-builder for your toddler.*



# A Play House

**H**elp your child make a “house” to play in by using large empty boxes, tables and chairs, or blankets and pillows. Your child can help build the house.

For example, together throw the blankets over the table and chairs, scribble on the boxes to decorate them and put pillows in the house. Let your child make this her special place, where she can bring some books, a toy, or a snack. Pretend to “visit” your child’s house. Knock on the door and ask if she is “home.” Ask lots of questions about her special place.

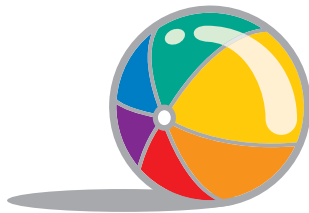
**Where is the door?**

**Are there windows?**

**Where does she sleep,  
and where does she eat?**

Join her inside her house and talk or read together.

*Your toddler learns thinking skills and problem-solving as she helps build the house. She figures out how to make the box stand up or the blanket stay on the table and chairs.*



# Pretend Soup

**F**ind a place where your two year old can get dirty and make a mess, for example, a yard or a park. Collect containers and playing tools like buckets, spoons, cups, kitchen utensils, or empty shampoo bottles. Using sand, mud, water, and rocks, let your child mix, pour, stir, and shape to make pretend soup, cookies, and other things. Talk with your child as you “make” things together and help him through each step. For example ask:

**What should we put into the soup?**

**Look, here’s a potato** (hand him a rock).

**Or, It’s time to stir the cookie dough;  
can you stir it three times?**

**One, two, three! Now let’s shape the  
cookies and put them on a tray.**

(Smooth out the sand and make little piles to be the pretend cookies.)

**Now they go into the oven.**

**Now they’re done, let’s eat them!**

*Your child is learning about science – what happens when he pours, fills a container, and mixes things together like water and sand. Pretending helps your child with thinking skills.*



# Create a Band

**Y**ou can make your own instruments for a band. Make shakers by putting beans, rice or pasta into different containers. You can use plastic storage containers or empty baby-wipe boxes. You can also seal up one end of an empty toilet paper or paper towel roll, fill it with beans, rice or pasta, and seal the other end. Two blocks of wood can be banged together, and a pot and a spoon make a nice loud drum. Let your child help you create your own band. Then, play some music or sing your favorite songs. March or dance together while you shake your shakers and beat the drum.

*Making her own instruments helps your child develop her imagination. Music and dancing teaches her about counting and rhythm.*



# Make Play Dough



ere's a recipe to make your own play dough.

**1 cup flour**

**1/2 cup salt**

**About 1/2 cup water**

Let your child help you stir the flour and salt together. Then add enough water so that the dough holds together – usually a little less than 1/2 cup of water. Once you have made the play dough, let your two year old explore with it. Have her pretend her hand is a hammer and pound the dough. Help her roll a piece into a long snake, and then practice cutting with a popsicle stick or piece of cardboard. Roll or pound it flat and cut out shapes. You can show your child concepts like big and small, square and round, “put together” and “take apart.” Make a play dough ball, and roll it back and forth across the table, trying to catch it each time.

The dough will last for several days if you seal it in a plastic bag and store it in the refrigerator. You can also add food coloring or a little powdered jello mix to give the play dough color.

*Playing with play dough builds your child's imagination. You can also use it to teach new words and concepts like “taking apart” and “putting together.”*



# Counting All Day Long

**M**ake one day a week a special “counting day.”  
When your toddler wakes up in the morning tell him,

## **Today is Counting Day!**

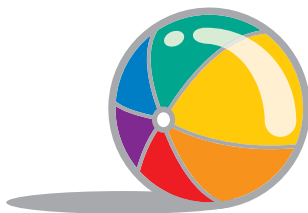
Count some of the things you see in the room, such as his eyes.

**One, two! You have two eyes.**

**One, two, I have two eyes!**

Count the stripes on his pajamas, or the handles on the dresser. At breakfast, count the number of bites he takes. On the way to the store or daycare, count the number of green cars you see. Continue like this for the whole day, and let your toddler think of the things to count. Take a “counting” walk around the house or neighborhood looking for things like light switches or doors, or cracks in the sidewalk, or trees. Whenever possible, touch the objects as you count.

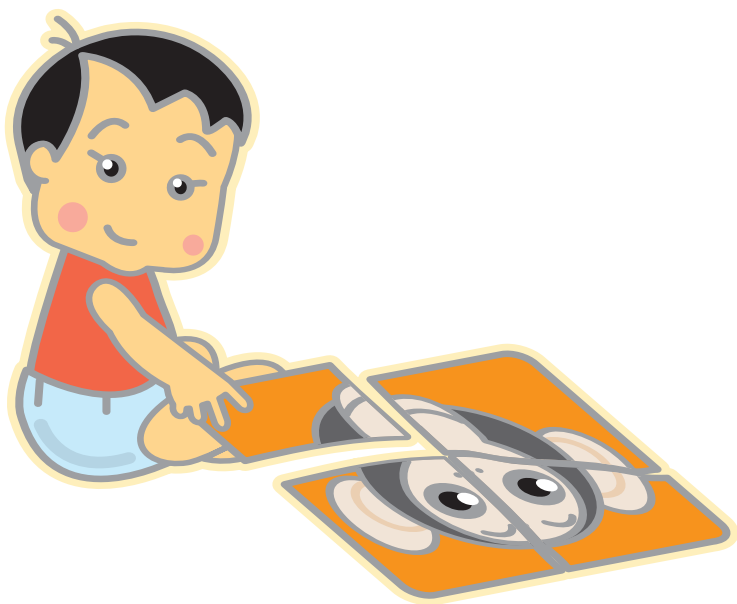
*Your toddler learns about numbers and counting by hearing numbers over and over again.*



# Make a Puzzle

**L**ook through a magazine together and find a picture that is big and bright. Glue the picture onto cardboard or sturdy paper, and then cut it into four big pieces. Mix up the pieces, and then help your child put the picture puzzle back together again. As your child gets familiar with this game, you can make it more interesting by cutting the puzzle into more pieces – five, then six.

*Putting together puzzles helps your toddler learn to solve problems.*







# What's in the Box?

**C**hoose five pairs of objects such as two small cars, two wooden blocks, two balls, two books, and two spoons. Lay one set of objects on a table or the floor where your toddler can see them. Put the other set inside a box or in a bag. Ask your child to reach in without looking and touch one of the objects. Then ask him to pick the object on the table that matches the one in the box. For example, say:

**Find one on the table that  
is just like the one you  
are feeling inside the box.**

After he guesses, have him take the object out of the box. If he doesn't guess the right object, let him keep trying. Ask questions about the objects as he is feeling them and looking at them.

**How do they feel?  
What color are they?**

Then, talk together about the things in the box and on the table – about how some things are hard and others soft, some rough, others smooth.

*This activity helps your child learn to solve problems. Talking about the objects builds his language.*



# Sorting Words

**A**s she is nearing three years old, your toddler may be ready to play this word game. If you need a quiet or drive time activity, you can play a sorting game with words. Think of a category like "names of people you know" or "parts of your body." Give your child an example, and then help her come up with things that fit into the category. If she says something that doesn't fit in the category, talk with her about why it doesn't fit. Try to make the categories easy enough that your child can come up with several things that fit.

*Your child is learning about sorting and organizing her thoughts.*



two year old



# Find the Hidden Objects

**H**ide three or four similar objects in a room or yard. Use coasters, wash cloths, blocks, plastic Easter eggs or other objects. Tell your child you are going to hide them and you want him to find them. First, let your child watch you hide the objects. Then he can “find” them. As your child gets older, you can have him close his eyes while you hide the objects. Leave part of the object visible, and let your child discover the objects on his own. If your toddler needs a little help, you can give him hints like,

**Look way up high,  
Look under the pillows,  
Did you try behind the curtains?**

*This activity builds your toddler's memory and problem-solving skills.*



# Notes