

Time to Talk Toddlers



Children learn best when they are playing – so have fun! In this leaflet you will find activities for quality time, meal times, activities for when you are out and about and for bed time.

Quality Time Activities

Blowing Bubbles

Blowing bubbles helps to develop the muscles used in talking. Children of all ages love bubbles, you can use shop bought bubbles or make your own.



- Encourage your child to try blowing the bubbles themselves.
- Talk about what happens as they blow.
- Ask your child to see how many bubbles they can blow with one puff.
- Count the bubbles as you blow.
- See who can blow the most bubbles.

Bubble recipe

- 600 ml of water
- 150 ml of washing up liquid
- 2 tablespoons of glycerine
- (available from the chemist)



Moving to Music

Everybody enjoys listening to music whether it is nursery rhymes, classical, pop or music from around the world. Moving to music is a great way for your child to express themselves.

- Let your child take the lead and join in with the way they move.
- Put actions to songs or rhymes.
- Try clapping to the rhythm of a tune together.
- Make a shaker together by filling a small water bottle with rice or pasta. Let them shake it in time to the music.
- Get a saucepan and a wooden spoon and let your child tap different rhythms while you sing nursery rhymes with them.

Playing games

Playing games with your child can be fun and will help them to learn about taking turns. Choose a game that doesn't take too long.

- With your child, take turns to post objects down tubes, into a shape sorter or put pieces into a puzzle.

- Put some toys, such as cars, on a tray. Let them pick out the red ones.
- Sing as you tidy up together, to make it fun.
- Get a pack of snap cards, and encourage your child to find two the same.
- Play picture dominoes.
- Cut out pictures that go together such as a bat and ball and encourage your child to find the matching pairs.

Fun with play dough

Children enjoy playing with play dough and it is cheap and easy to make.



- Get your child to help make play dough. They like to mix and when it's cool enough, they can help you knead the dough.
- Give your child some things so they can poke holes and make patterns in the play dough.
- You could try hiding small objects in the play dough for your child to find.
- Add rice or sand to the play dough to make it feel different.
- Put out rolling pins and cutters for children to make play dough cakes.

Play dough recipe

- 1 cup of plain flour
- 1/2 cup of salt
- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- 1 tablespoon of oil
- 1 cup of boiling water mixed with food colouring
- Mix together and knead until smooth, it will keep in a sealed container in the fridge.

Messy play

Children love to get messy and use all of their senses to explore the world around them. Let your child know it's okay to be messy. It's a good idea to try this before bath time!



- While your child plays with some mixture talk about how it feels and smells. Use words like rough, smooth or sticky.
- Talk about the patterns they make.
- Add colours using washable paint or smells such as vanilla or perfume.
- Fill a washing up bowl or bucket with any of the following mixtures and let your child explore: jelly, cooked pasta, cooked rice, mashed potato, gloop (mix cornflour or custard powder and water until it is stiff, it will become more liquid when handled).

Meal Time Activities

Cooking



When you are cooking with your child, start by making sure they can reach the table and that all the ingredients are ready. An apron will help to keep them clean. Always watch your child if they are using a knife or are near heat.

- Let your child help you cook for as long as they wish, but be prepared to lose your helper half way through.
- Children love to stir and mix and if helped, can cut up some foods.
- Let your child decorate cakes or biscuits, look in your local supermarket for things to use.

Washing hands

Children like to wash their hands themselves. Make sure they can reach the sink, taps, soap and towel.

- Talk about making your hands clean.
- If you're using liquid soap, show your child how to squirt it.
- Show them how to rub their hands together to make bubbles. • Talk about the shapes and colour of the bubbles, the smell of the soap and if the water is hot or cold.
- It often helps to let a child know what is coming up next. Do this by letting them know that dinner will be ready soon, so that they have
- enough time to wash their hands. Talk to them about what you are going to eat.



Eating together

Having meals together helps children to understand how to take turns and join in the conversation. Turn off the television or radio as this will encourage everyone to talk. Children love to help and meal times are a great way to involve them.

- While your child helps you lay the table, talk about how many people will be eating and how many knives and forks you need.
- Let your child make placemats for the family by decorating a piece of paper or card.
- You can cut pieces out to make a pattern, or cut pictures out to stick on, or just use crayons to draw pictures or patterns.
- If your child has a favourite toy at the table, you could lay a place for them too.

Washing up



Make washing up or stacking the dishwasher into a game for your child. Keep it fun and take the opportunity to chat.

- Children enjoy helping, so let them wash things that don't break.
- Praise them for helping you, although you may need to wash the things again!

Let your child wash up toy plates and cups after a teddy bears picnic.

This is a good activity to do in the garden. First play at picnics, perhaps you could have lunch or a snack outside, and then give your child a washing up bowl to do the washing up.

Bed Time Activities

Make bedtime fun

Having a clear routine at bedtime will help your child to settle down more easily.

- Children need to know what happens at night, so keep your routine the same.
- Snuggling up together for a story, away from the TV and dimming the lights, helps children settle down.

Storytelling

Toddlers love to hear stories about themselves. You could tell a story with your child having the adventure, it doesn't have to be complicated, it can just be about something they have done, like a trip to the park

Music

Using calm music as part of your child's bedtime routine can help them to relax.

- Talk to your child about their favourite music. Snuggle up on the bed and listen together.
- Sing along to their favourite bed time nursery rhyme together.
- Look at the pictures in a nursery rhyme book together.

Stories

Sharing books and stories at bedtime is fun and will help your child settle before sleeping. Find a quiet, cosy place to snuggle in. Children love to hear their favourite stories over and over again.

- Let your child help you make up a story and decide who's in it, where they'll go and what they'll do.
- Let your child point to the pictures in the book as you read.



You can borrow books from the library, all the books are free, for more information go to <https://www.devonlibraries.org.uk>

Bath time



This is a great way for your child to look at different objects to understand shape and size. You could use these ideas in the bath, or even in a washing up bowl.

- Talk about what happens when your child squeezes a sponge.
- Fill different containers with water and then pour the water out. Talk about the containers being full and empty.

- Give your child a straw to blow bubbles in the water, add bubble bath and let them use a whisk or add drops of food colouring and talk about how the water changes.

Suggestions for toys: Spoons, wooden blocks, sieves, funnels, plastic pots, a variety of brushes, droppers, water pistols, plastic bottles, a variety of sponges, straws, empty plastic drinks bottles, plastic cups, jugs, ladles/spoons, egg cups, whisks, a variety of plastic containers such as yoghurt pots and bath books.

Bath time songs and rhymes

Everyone loves to sing in the bath and singing helps your child to hear rhythm and rhyme. Choose songs that have a lot of rhythm so that your child can clap or splash along while you sing. Here are some ideas to try out:

- Rub-a-dub-dub
- Row, row, row your boat
- 1,2,3,4,5 once I caught a fish alive
- It's raining, it's pouring

You could match the toys your child is playing with in the bath with the rhymes or songs you're singing.

Out and About Activities

In the garden

Children enjoy having the space to run about, explore and play. Don't let the rain put you off, just wear wellies.



- Let your child dig and play in soil so they can explore how it feels. Use words like smooth, rough, hard and soft. Add water to the soil and talk about the difference this makes.
- Plant seeds or bulbs. Talk about what the plants need to grow and let them do the watering. **Be careful** as some seeds and bulbs are poisonous.
- Look for insects and talk about what they look like. Children love to use magnifying glasses or bug boxes. You could go to the library and get out a book on insects. Then they can find out more about what they have seen in the garden. Always make sure your child puts living creatures back where they found them.

Going on a journey

Children can go on a journey whether you're just popping to the post box or travelling on holiday. Look out for familiar or new things when you are out and about.

- Try counting red cars as you go.
- See how many sounds you can hear on your trip, see if your child can copy them.
- Point out what you can see, hear and smell.
- Give your child a camera so that they can take photos of things they like on the journey. You can print the photos off and help your child to stick them in a book or on paper. Look at the finished book or paper together and use them to talk about where you've been



At the park



Children love to move around in a large space, to run, jump, climb and swing.

Don't let bad weather put you off. Children don't mind rain or cold if they have the right clothes on.

- On a sunny day get your child to spot their shadow, chase your shadow and jump on it. Look at shadows on the ground, ask if they know what they are.
- Encourage your child to make their shadow tall or short
- Talk to your child about the different ways they can move as they go around the park such as crawling, climbing and jumping.
- You could play Simon Says or a Stop/Go game where the children only move when you say go and have to stop when you say stop.

Going shopping



Help your child to enjoy going shopping. Try the ideas below. Remember young children put things in their mouths so be careful what you give them.

- Talk about what you need to buy and ask your child to remind you at the shop.
- Talk about anything and everything you see such as packets, meat, fish, fruit and vegetables.
- Ask your child to tell you when they spot items they know and recognise.
- When you get back you can play shops: Save empty packets and give your child a shopping bag. Ask them to go and buy different items.

Going on a picnic

You can have a picnic anywhere, even inside if you spread a cloth or blanket on the floor.

- Let your child choose a doll or teddy to take to the picnic. Encourage them to pretend to feed their toy when you're sitting down to eat.
- On the way, talk about what you can both see and encourage them to walk part of the way.
- Encourage your child to look at and touch natural things around them such as trees, grass and stones.
- Children love collecting things, so set out to find as many different leaves as you can.
- Always make sure your child does not pick things unless it is okay to do so.



If you have any concerns about your child's development, speak to your GP or health visitor for advice.