



Activities to Promote Development

18 Months

Activities to promote gross motor development – Large movements like crawling, running, or jumping

- **Bubble chase** – Bubbles are a toddler's favorite and they're also a great way to get kids to exercise! Blow bubbles for your child to chase around outside. Get them to chase after the giant bubble, then the tiniest bubble etc. to make it even more complex.
- **Box push** – Give your child some large boxes. Let your child put some of their toys in a box and show them how to push it around the room. Ask them to help you. After you push the box, ask your child to push it on their own. Let them play with the boxes in their own way.
- **Follow the leader** – Put on some fun music and play follow the leader with your child. As you lead, try different actions (crawl, walk, march, move fast). Encourage your child to follow, as long as they'd like.
- **Slide!** – Take your child to a playground and encourage them to climb up the steps (with your help at first) of a toddler-size slide. Be very careful the first few times your child tries this. Let them slide down and try it again.
- **Animal exercise class** – Sing "Old McDonald," and as you sing each animal's name, move your body the same way the animal you are singing about would. Try being a snake (wiggle your whole body), a monkey (hop up and down), or an elephant (hang your arms low like a trunk).
- **Stand on one foot** – Stand in front of your child and lift one of your feet. As your child watches, say, "Can you pick your foot up like this?" If they have trouble picking up their foot by themselves, hold their hand and help them. Try rocking side to side as you lift one foot at a time. Let go of one of your child's hands to see if they can do it on their own.
- **Toe touch** – Get your child to touch their toes in many different ways. Show them how to stand and bend down to touch their toes with or without bending their knees. Ask your child to sit with their legs in front of them and reach their toes. Sing "head, shoulders, knees and toes," as part of your toe touching game.

Activities to promote fine motor development – small muscle movements like using a pencil or holding a spoon

Note: Fine motor skills are important for learning to write. Remember, it's still a good idea to keep a close watch when your child uses small toys even if they rarely put things in their mouth.

- **Pull-apart toys** – Give your child pull-apart toys to play with. Show them how they fit together and then pull apart. Try toys like large Legos. As your child gets older you can give them toys of smaller sizes.
- **Play dough** – Give your child a ball of play dough to work with (you can even make your own). As you play together, show your child how you pinch off little pieces or squeeze the ball in your hand. See if your child will copy what you do with their own play dough. You can flatten the play dough, roll it, and make shapes with a cookie cutter.
- **Boxes and lids** – Gather a few different sized boxes with lids and a few small toys. Take the lids off the boxes and place them where your child can see them. Drop a toy in one box and let your child know that you are hiding the toy. Ask them to find a lid to close the box. If necessary, help your child find the right lid and put it on the box. Continue to play, matching the other lids to their boxes and hiding toys.
- **Lock board fun** – Give your child a lock board puzzle or box. Show them how to move the latches back and forth as you talk about what they are doing. Let them also work on the locks on their own.

Activities to promote language development

- **Nursery rhyme books** – Toddlers love repetition and rhyming. Nursery rhymes are a great way to learn words and conversation. Read and sing them often. Point to the things going on in the pictures. See if your child will say a few of the words with you. When you sing familiar songs or rhymes, pause to see if they will say the missing word. Remember to let your pause last – toddlers sometimes need lots of time to think before coming up with the right word.
- **Old McDonald** – Look at animal pictures with your child. As you do, sing the old McDonald song and see if your child will sing the name of the animal they see. You can both make the animal sounds together too.
- **Observing actions** – Talk about what other children are doing with your child as you watch them (like at a playground). See if your child can name some of the things the others are doing, using, or playing with, and if they can tell how other children may be feeling (for example, “That boy is swinging and his face looks so happy”).

- **Weather and seasons** – Hang one or two weather or season pictures where your child can see them. Point to the picture that shows what the weather is like outside and talk about it. Ask your child to point out things in the picture (the sun, rain).
- **Action games** – Play an action word game with your child. Say words for actions you know your child can do (wave, clap). Do the actions as you say the words and see if your child will copy your actions. If they just want to watch, that's fine too. You can still include them in the fun ("You're watching me clap!")
- **Combining words** – Be on the lookout for your child's first use of two-word combinations (like "big ball"). When you hear a two-word sentence, show how excited you are! Add to your child's big words – for example, if your child says, "More yogurt," say "You finished your yogurt and now you want more!"
- **Puppet games** – Use a puppet for your child to talk to. Have the puppet ask your child questions that you think they might be able to answer. Be silly with the puppet as it asks about your child's name, clothes, body parts, toys, food, etc.
- **Word songs** – When your child says a word, play with the word by singing about it. For example, if your child asks to be picked up by saying "up" and stretching out their arms, you can sing a little tune as you lift them up. "Up? Do you want to be picked up? Up, up, up you go!"

Brain Building Activities

Food counting

Give your child a plate with different finger foods. Suggest that your child feed themselves, and help them count how many pieces of food they have on their plate. Talk about how many pieces of each type of food there are on the plate, "You have one banana slice and one piece of chicken, two things to eat."

Number Songs

- Five Little Pumpkins song (hold up a finger for each pumpkin as you say the poem)
 - Five little pumpkins sitting on a gate.
 - The first one said, "oh my, it's getting late."
 - The second one said, "but we don't care."
 - The third one said, "let's go to the fair."
 - The fourth one said, "let's have some fun."
 - The fifth one said, "let's run, run, run."

- Whoooo went the wind and out went the light
- And the five little pumpkins rolled out of sight
- This Little Piggy (count your child's toes as you playfully touch each one)
 - Piggy number one went to market
 - Piggy number two stayed home
 - Piggy number three had roast beef
 - Piggy number four had none
 - Piggy number five cried wee wee wee all the way home

Color Sorting

Put blocks of all one color in a basket or container. Also include several small toys of the same color. For example, you could try red blocks, a red fire engine, and red cups. Give your child the red toys and blocks to play with. As your child plays, talk about what the toys are and their color. Stick to the same color for a few days and point out objects you see of the same color during the day. Make a game out of it and ask your child to bring you objects that are that color. When you notice your toddler has found examples of the color in many settings, it's time to switch to a new color!

Shape Games

Shapes are everywhere! Begin to point them out. Stick with the same shape for at least a few days and start easy. Help your child learn a circle, a square, and a triangle before moving on to octagons. You can cut snacks into shapes (for example, a triangle sandwich, a circle piece of cheese).

Matching Games

There are many available to buy, or you can make your own. Show your child how to spread out all of the picture and then put the pairs together. "Here's a picture of an apple and here's another picture of an apple. Can you put the two apples together?" Then let your child use the pictures in their own way.