

# GET YOUR PLAY ON!



Play is an essential part of every childhood. It's the way children explore, create and discover. Through play children learn about themselves and the world around them.

## WHY IS PLAY IMPORTANT?

Play is how children learn. Play supports children's social, emotional and intellectual development. Play provides your toddler with the opportunity to engage and interact with others. This will help them learn valuable social skills. Toys are a vital part of play. Toys spark ideas and inspire children to play and learn.

## PLAY IN THE TODDLER YEARS

Play alongside your child, you are their favourite playmate. Offer your encouragement and praise. Try not to worry about rules or mess, just play for the sake of playing. Play is meant to be fun!

Play contributes to the development of:

- Motor skills
- Problem solving
- Concentration
- Self-confidence
- Emotional regulation
- Coping with stress

## AGES AND STAGES OF PLAY

Children differ enormously in their rate of growth and development. Toys to support play should be appropriate to children's changing needs. As a parent, pay attention to your toddlers' interests and abilities, and choose toys and play experiences to suit your child.

## TODDLERS AND PLAY

As toddlers develop control over their bodies they become more curious, mobile and energetic. This is an exciting time as they learn what they are capable of doing.

Create opportunities for your toddler to play at home. Try new activities, as well as repeating previous activities. This will keep children interested and help them develop a sense of mastery. Make time for your toddler to play every day.



## A WORD ABOUT SAFETY

Toddlers need your constant supervision and participation while playing. Provide your child with a safe environment, and make sure you can see them at all times.

All toys, games and objects provided should conform to recommended safety regulations. It is very important to read and follow the instructions and warnings that accompany toys – no matter how simple the product might appear to be. Toys that are suitable for older children may not be safe for toddlers.

Little children can easily choke on small objects. Under 3s are especially at risk as they tend to explore new things by placing them in their mouths. Even if you think your child has understood your warnings, a small toy can be tempting.



A safety message such as 'not suitable for children under 3 years' must be taken seriously. You will see the 0-3 symbol on toys and toy packaging. This means the toys are suitable for children 3 years and older, but not suitable for younger children. The symbol means

'Warning, do not give this toy to children under 3 years old, nor allow them to play with it'.

# GET YOUR PLAY ON!



## WHAT TODDLERS CAN DO

### 1-2 YEARS

- Toddlers will be keen to investigate & manipulate objects & toys.
- Toddlers will start to become mobile - crawling and walking.
- Some toddlers will develop coordination to engage in pretend play, copying those around them.

### 2-3 YEARS

- Toddlers imaginations are active, so pretend play will be of great interest.
- Many toddlers will start to talk, showing increased communication.
- Toddlers will begin to enjoy playing with their friends and siblings, as well as you.
- Toddlers will increase their ability to play with intricate objects as their concentration and coordination improve.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### 1-2 YEARS

- Play some music and sing and dance together.
- With your help, your toddler will be able to stack and build with blocks.
- Read with your toddler. This is a lovely age to develop a reading routine, for example before bedtime.
- Offer encouragement and praise when your toddler achieves something new or does something well.
- Try not to take over games – let your toddler set the rules and figure things out for themselves.

### 2-3 YEARS

- Provide a play space with your toddler for play, for example offer some props for make-believe play.
- Stimulate their imagination and curiosity by providing new experiences and toys for your child to explore.
- Be patient as your toddler attempts new tasks and practices new skills and offer praise for a job well done.
- Around this age toddlers can also start to help with packing up their toys after play is finished. This will require help and encouragement from you, but with practice, your toddler will become more helpful!

## SUITABLE GAMES / ACTIVITIES

### 1-2 YEARS

- Show your toddler how to imitate – they love copying you!
- Encourage a sense of humour by laughing with your toddler. Make funny faces for them to laugh at and laugh back at them as they copy you.
- Toddlers will begin to enjoy water play. \*This requires very close supervision.

### 2-3 YEARS

- Games such as memory or snap.
- Outdoor play at home or the local park. Toddlers love sandpits, swings, climbing equipment and cubby houses.
- Everyday tasks around the home will become very interesting to toddlers. Give them a chance to help out when you can.

## SUITABLE TOYS

### 1-2 YEARS

- Balls to throw and kick outside.
- Building blocks and shape sorters.
- Crayons and pencils for drawing and colouring.
- Waterproof toys and bath books for bath time.

### 2-3 YEARS

- Dress-ups to inspire pretend play.
- Soft toys and dolls for imaginary play, and for comfort.
- Recycled materials like small boxes, egg cartons and cardboard rolls can be used for building or decorating with craft materials.

## SUMMARY

- Toddlers are increasingly curious and energetic. They will play with great enthusiasm to explore their surroundings.
- Toddlers are still reliant on their parents to play with them. Look for ways to play together as often as you can.
- Remember all children develop at their own pace.



### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

#### Australian Toy Association

PO Box 7061, Melbourne VIC 3004  
Also visit [www.austoy.com.au](http://www.austoy.com.au)

The ATA acknowledges the work of the National Toy Council (UK) in the development of these materials.

**The full set of *Value of Play* leaflets are available for download at [www.valueofplay.com.au](http://www.valueofplay.com.au)**



valueofplayaus



valueofplay\_aus

THE **VALUE** OF **play**



**Australian Toy Association**