



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Sounds

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a shared book reading focused on sounds made by different zoo animals.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in a shared book reading and song about zoo animals.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers participate in a shared book reading about sounds made by different zoo animals, and in follow-up play with blocks that can be used to create a zoo or houses for animals.



Cognitive

Exploring Objects

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers use their hands to manipulate dry and wet sand.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers manipulate wet sand with the use of small containers.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers manipulate dry sand with scoops and pails.



Self-Regulation

Paying Attention

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers watch a caregiver help a toy fish go swimming and stop to eat and sleep.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers help a toy fish go swimming and stop to eat and sleep with caregiver guidance.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers independently help a toy fish go swimming and stop to eat and sleep.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler engages in open-ended play with a caregiver focused on toys of interest to the toddler.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler participates in open-ended play with a caregiver, using and singing about toy farm animals of interest to the toddler.
- Option 3** (OO) A toddler participates in open-ended play with a caregiver focused on toy vehicles and blocks.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler moves parts of his/her body as part of a sung finger play.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers move parts of their bodies and pretend their hands are twinkling stars as part of a sung finger play.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers move parts of their body and pretend their fingers are a spider as part of a sung finger play.

(OO)=One-to-One, (IG)=Informal Gathering

Revision: 07/14/2020



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal
Receptive language
Expressive language
Awareness of differences in sounds

Toddlers participate in a shared book reading focused on sounds made by different zoo animals.



Key Concepts

Hear
 Listen
 Sounds
 Animals



Materials Needed

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation

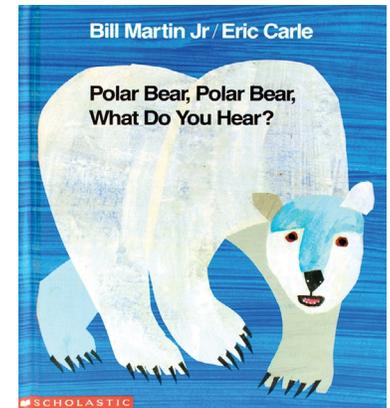
Be Prepared: Be familiar with and practice making animal sounds included in the book.

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join you on the floor to read a book. Show the cover of the book. Point to the words and picture on the cover as you introduce the book.]*

EXPLAIN: This book is called *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* This is the polar bear. The polar bear is going to listen to different animals make sounds in our book!

[Point to your ears each time you say “listen” or “hear.”]

Our book is about the different animal sounds that the polar bear hears.



ASK: What animals do you think the polar bear might hear?

[Pause for toddlers to respond. Repeat and extend each response. Example: “You said ‘doggy,’ Michael. You think the polar bear is going to hear a dog. Let’s read our book and find out!”]

ACT: *[Open the book and hold it for each toddler to see. Ask about the picture and respond positively to each reaction. Example: “Toby is making claws with his hands. He is looking at the polar bear’s claws on his feet! Do you see them?” Read the first page aloud and point to your ear each time you read the word “hear.”]*

What do you think is going to be on the next page?

[Pause for toddlers to respond. Recognize toddlers’ responses.]

Let’s turn the page and see!

[Make a surprised face when you turn the page to reveal the lion.]

What is the name of this animal?

[Some toddlers may call out the animal name. Recognize and extend each response. Example: “Yes, this is a lion! Let’s all make a lion sound!”]

Continue to read and talk about the pictures and words in the book using strategies, such as the following:

**Option 1 continued**

- *Point to and describe pictures. Example:*
 - *"Look at the hippopotamus. It is very big! This is the hippo's mouth; it is wide open. I think the hippopotamus is making a loud snorting sound! Can you make a loud snorting sound, too?"*
- *Expand upon the book text and ask specific questions to support toddlers' understanding and interest. Pause for toddlers to respond to questions. Examples:*
 - *"Look at the snake! This snake is called a boa constrictor. The boa constrictor is long and has lots of spots. Have you ever seen a snake with lots of spots?"*
 - *"This is a zookeeper. The zookeeper is whistling while he takes care of the zoo animals. I can see he has a pail of fish. What do you think he is going to do with the fish?"*
- *Respond to toddlers' comments and pointing by repeating and extending their responses and words. Example:*
 - *"You are making an elephant trunk with your arm, Gabrielle. You see that the elephant has a long trunk. You are pretending to be an elephant with a long trunk! What sound does your elephant make?"*
 - *"You are pointing to the children and laughing, Tyler! You think it is silly that the children are wearing costumes and pretending to be the animals in our story."*
- *Read enthusiastically, varying your voice to add a dynamic quality.]*

RECAP: We saw pictures of different animals at a zoo and listened to their sounds. Some of the sounds were silly! Did all of the animals make the same sound? This was a fun book to read together! Would you like to make some of the animal sounds again?

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Notice whether toddlers recognize the animals made different kinds of sounds. The Recap question "Did all of the animals make the same sound?" is in support of toddlers noticing there are different kinds of sounds. Some of the sounds will be new to toddlers. Have fun making the new sounds together! While some toddlers will participate vocally, others may prefer to watch and listen. Recognize and support each toddler's participation.

Some toddlers will be accustomed to reading books together in an informal gathering. Others may have difficulty sharing space and attention with others. (See Extra Support tip below.) Toddlers who are new to book sharing will benefit from your flexibility in reading the book. Adapt your book sharing to the needs of the toddlers present by allowing toddlers to come and go, and to "wiggle" while they sit. At this age toddlers are not expected to sit in an orderly fashion at an informal gathering.

Pay attention to whether some toddlers have difficulty seeing the pictures. You may wish to read a larger version of this book. (See Extra Support tip below.)

This book may be an introduction to zoo animals for some toddlers. If a toddler seems uneasy with a picture, reassure them that the animals live far away or live safely in a zoo. Toddlers who are familiar with the animals may call out names and make some of the animal sounds.

**Option 1 continued****More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

Extra support ■ Sit close to toddlers so they can see the pictures and hear your voice. Using a larger version of the book (versus a board book) may help toddlers focus on the pictures. ■ If toddlers struggle to share physical space while looking at the book, sitting on carpet squares or another defined space may help avoid crowding. Toddlers are not expected to sit still during an informal gathering. ■ Follow the pace of the toddlers in the gathering. If toddlers show interest in a particular animal, pause to talk about what they see. You may wish to pick up the pace of the reading if toddlers become impatient. ■ If you notice a toddler becoming distracted by other toddlers, gently insert their name into the story. Example: “Which animal do you think is going to be on the next page, Mason? Look with me and you will see!”

Enrichment ■ Invite toddlers to name and imitate the animal sounds on each page. ■ If toddlers appear interested in a particular animal, pause and talk with toddlers about the animal’s characteristics and behaviors. If interest in the animal is particularly strong, consider providing related books and play materials focused on the animal(s) of interest.

12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal
Receptive language
Expressive language
Awareness of differences in sounds

Toddlers participate in a shared book reading and song about zoo animals.



Key Concepts

Sounds
Animals



Materials Needed

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle

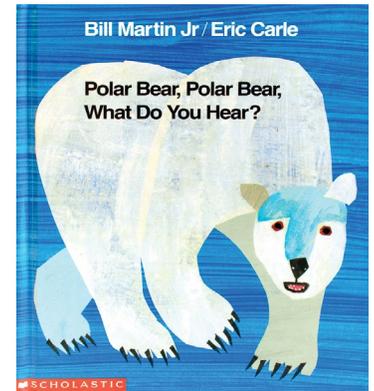


Also Promotes

Self-Regulation

Invite up to three toddlers to read the book *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* (You may wish to practice some of the animal sounds prior to the activity.) Talk with toddlers about the animals and their sounds on each page.

At the end of the book reading, invite toddlers to help you sing a song about some of the zoo animals. Select three animals from the book to include in the song. Focus on animals that seemed to be of special interest to toddlers during the book reading. Hold the book open for toddlers to see the named animal as you sing. Sing each toddler's name in one verse of the following song. (Tune: "Old MacDonald Had a Farm")



My friend (toddler's name) has a zoo. E-I-E-I-O.

And in her zoo, there is a lion. E-I-E-I-O.

With a roar, roar here and a roar, roar there.

Here a roar, there a roar, everywhere roar, roar.

My friend (toddler's name) has a zoo. E-I-E-I-O.

My friend (another toddler's name) has a zoo. E-I-E-I-O.

And in his zoo, there is a snake. E-I-E-I-O.

With a hiss, hiss here and a hiss, hiss there.

Here a hiss, there a hiss, everywhere hiss, hiss.

My friend (toddler's name) has a zoo. E-I-E-I-O.

My friend (another toddler's name) has a zoo. E-I-E-I-O.

And in her zoo, there is a zebra. E-I-E-I-O.

With a bray, bray here and a bray, bray there.

Here a bray, there a bray, everywhere bray, bray.

My friend (toddler's name) has a zoo. E-I-E-I-O.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers enjoy songs, especially songs that include their names. Some toddlers will join in the familiar parts, whereas others may prefer to listen to you sing the words. The repetitive words and verses of this song support toddlers in remembering and singing some of the song.

**Option 2 continued** A small icon consisting of three black squares of increasing size, arranged in a staircase pattern.**More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

Extra support ■ Sing the words of the song slowly and with emphasis, encouraging toddlers to join you.
■ Point to the picture of the pertinent animal in the book as you sing each verse.

Enrichment ■ If toddlers remain engaged after the three verses, ask if they would like to sing about more animals. Invite toddlers to suggest animals to include in the song. ■ Invite toddlers to “act out” the animal in the verse as they sing. Example: toddlers may wish to walk with hands formed into claws for the lion or wiggle their bodies slowly like a snake.

12–24 Months

Option 3
Informal Gathering

Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Awareness of differences
in sounds

Toddlers participate in a shared book reading about sounds made by different zoo animals, and in follow-up play with blocks that can be used to create a zoo or houses for animals.



Key Concepts

Sounds

Animals



Materials Needed

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle

Zoo animal figures (see Be Prepared)

Blocks



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Select animal figures that represent some of the animals featured in the book, if possible. Be familiar with and practice sounds made by the animals.

Invite several toddlers to read a book about zoo animals and their sounds. (You may wish to practice some of the animal sounds prior to the activity.) Read the book, emphasizing the different animal sounds and encouraging toddlers to imitate the sounds.

At the conclusion of the book, invite toddlers to play in the block area. Introduce the zoo animal figures and suggest that the blocks can be used to make a zoo for the animals to live in.

Example: “The animals in our book live in a zoo. We can build a zoo for our animals with these blocks! Would you like to build with me?” Begin building alongside the toddlers. Some toddlers may join you, and others may play with the animal figures and blocks in different ways.

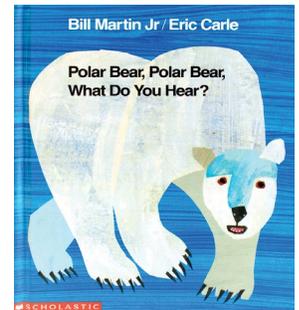
Encourage toddlers to consider the different sounds their animals make as they play. Talk with each toddler about their ideas and describe what they are doing with their blocks and animals. Example: “I can see you are placing one animal on one block. Look at the animals and blocks you have lined up! What are your animals doing?”

During this activity, ask questions that encourage more than a yes or no response. Examples:

- You have a big bear and a little bear. I think your bears are a family! What is your bear family doing?
- You are lining up the blocks. What are you building for your animals?

Repeat and extend each response. Example:

- Child: Puts several animals inside a block structure and says “house.”
- Caregiver: You built a house for your animals! You put your animals inside their house. What are your animals going to do next?
- Child: My house.
- Caregiver: Yes, you made a house for your animals. It is your house because you built it. Let’s ask our friends to be careful not to knock it down.



**Option 3 continued**

Below is another example:

- Child: Places several animals in front of a block and says “eat.”
- Caregiver: Your animals are hungry, they are eating! What are your animals eating?
- Child: Food!
- Caregiver: You are pretending this block is food for your animals. Your animals are eating food!

 **What to Look For—Option 3**

Toddlers enjoy building and creating with blocks. Introducing animal figures to block play encourages new exploration and experiences. Some toddlers may use blocks to create structures for the animals, as suggested in the activity. Others may focus on interacting with the animal figures. Encourage toddlers to interact with the materials in the ways that they choose. Acknowledge and support different uses of the materials, and talk with toddlers about their ideas and actions. Example: “I can see your animals are talking to each other, Sydney. What are they talking about?”

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3**

Extra support ■ Pretend play with blocks may be new for some toddlers. Encourage toddlers to explore stacking and lining up blocks before introducing the animal figures. Offer to help a toddler make a house or zoo for the animals. ■ Toddlers may enjoy extra time to explore the animal figures in the block area. Provide opportunities for toddlers to return to the block area at a later time.

Enrichment ■ Support toddlers in planning their work with blocks and toy animals. Example: “I can see you are building a wall. What are you going to build next? What animals are you going to put inside?” ■ Toddlers may enjoy playing with additional props, such as crumpled paper for animal “food” or large pieces of felt for “blankets.”

 **Interest Area**

Materials Needed: *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle, zoo animal figures, including several of those in the book, sensory table with a small amount of sand

Place the zoo animal figures in the sensory table with a small amount of sand. Invite several toddlers to play with the animals in the sand. Toddlers may enjoy hearing the book read while they interact with the animals in the sensory table. Talk with toddlers about their ideas and actions as they play. Encourage them to say the sounds made by different animals.

 Family Child Care

Materials Needed: *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle

This book can be enjoyed by children of all ages. Read the book and encourage children to practice making different animal sounds. Talk with toddlers about the children pictured on the last page of the book. Invite each child to select an animal from the book to “act out” or pretend to be. Some children may want to use available props. Encourage older children to help younger toddlers pretend to be a particular animal. Babies may enjoy holding an age-appropriate zoo animal during the activity.



12–24 Months

Option 1
Informal Gathering

Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers use their hands to manipulate dry and wet sand.



Key Concepts

Mix
Dig
Dry
Wet



Materials Needed

1 gallon container (see Be Prepared)
Cup-size container—1 per toddler
Indoor sand table or outdoor sand area



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: Fill the gallon container with water for staff use during the activity. Remove and temporarily store any play items that may be located in the sand. In determining the number of toddlers to include in the activity, please keep in mind that toddlers will be best able to focus on their actions in a calm atmosphere that provides sufficient space for each toddler to manipulate sand.

BEGIN: [*Invite toddlers to join you for sand play.*]

EXPLAIN: [*Encourage toddlers to touch or move their hands through the sand. Demonstrate how sand easily falls from your hand when you separate your fingers. Move some sand when you describe the ease of moving dry sand.*]



The sand does not stay in our hand when we open our fingers. The sand is easy to move around with our hands.

Our sand is dry. We are going to add a little water to the sand. The water will change the way our sand feels.

I will give each of you a cup. I will pour some water into your cup. Then you may pour your water into the sand in front of you.

ACT: [*Give each toddler a cup. Pour a small amount of water into each toddler's cup, keeping in mind the amount of sand available. You may need to show toddlers that the sand directly in front of them is the sand each will work with.*]

Let's use our hands to mix the sand and water.

[*Demonstrate and describe how to mix the sand and water with your hands. Example: "Move your hands in the sand. Squeeze the sand to mix in the water."*]

[*Respond and expand upon toddlers' questions or reactions. Example: "Yes, the sand is a little cold. Our sand feels cooler when it is wet with water."*]

Let's put some wet sand in one of our hands to see how it feels.

[*Demonstrate by scooping a little damp sand into your hand.*]

- ASK:**
- How does your sand feel?
 - What happens to the sand in your hand when you open your fingers?

Option 1 continued

ACT: Now our sand is cool and a little bit wet.

Let's all pat down the sand with our hands. We can pat-pat the sand to make it flat.

[Demonstrate how to pat the sand to make it flat.]

We are learning about sand by using our hands.

Now let's use our hands to make a hole.

[Begin to dig a hole and describe your actions. Encourage toddlers to dig one or more holes in the sand in front of them. Respond to and expand upon toddlers' words. Example: "Yes, you dig. You made a hole."

Describe toddlers' actions. Example: "Violet, you made a big hole. You took lots of sand out of one spot."]

We can use our hands to fill our holes with sand. We can put dry sand in the holes. Or we can put wet sand in the holes.

[Encourage toddlers to fill holes with dry or wet sand.]

RECAP: We used our hands to learn about sand. We felt dry sand and moved it with our hands. We used our hands to mix the sand and water. We felt the wet sand with our hands. We used our hands to pat the sand down flat. We made some holes in the sand with our hands. We used our hands to fill the holes we made.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Pay close attention to how toddlers explore the properties of sand by using their hands as tools. Describe for toddlers how they use their hands to manipulate the sand. Use toddlers' names to draw attention to individual actions. Toddlers may feel a sense of mastery or competence when they realize they can affect change in the consistency of the sand. Acknowledge signs of toddlers understanding the consequence of their actions with sand. Example: "James is smiling while he mixes the water and sand. He is changing the sand with water and his hands."

Standing at the sensory table with other toddlers may be challenging for some children. If a toddler is unaccustomed to playing next to peers, kneel or sit next to him/her to give extra support. A toddler may be concerned others will move into his/her play space. Example: "Diego, I will be next to you. I will help you and our friends." Touch or point to the sand. "There is room for all of our hands."

If toddlers remove sand from the sensory table, give a gentle reminder to keep the sand in the table. If a toddler persists in removing sand, encourage him/her to show you or verbalize the reason for taking sand out. Example: "Paulina, show me where you want to take the sand." Or "Tell me about your idea." A toddler may wish to take sand to the dramatic play center or even put it in his/her cubby. By trying to understand the toddler's reasoning, you can develop a solution.

Option 1 continued More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Sit or kneel next to a toddler. Demonstrate each task, such as digging and patting sand, if needed. ■ Offer mittens to a toddler to limit stimulation. ■ If a toddler lifts too much sand or has difficulty putting sand in his/her hand, offer to put a small amount into his/her hand.

Enrichment ■ In an outdoor sand area, more water can be added. Toddlers will enjoy digging holes and pouring water. ■ Demonstrate how to poke your finger into the sand to make a small hole or a larger hole. ■ Provide a small amount of additional water if toddlers seem interested in the mix of water and sand.



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers manipulate wet sand with the use of small containers.



Key Concepts

Full
Empty
Digging
Shaping
Flat



Materials Needed

Small containers—3 per toddler
Sand
Water



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Secure containers, such as small bowls and measuring cups, that hold two cups or less. Just prior to the activity, add water to the sand until it sticks together and can be easily formed with hands.

Invite toddlers to the sensory table or sand area. It is important to give each toddler enough space to explore the materials. Allow time for toddlers to work with the sand by shaping it with their hands before offering containers.

Give each toddler three small containers. Encourage toddlers to use their hands to fill the containers. Show how to pat the sand into a cup. Some toddlers will enjoy turning the cups over and lifting them to reveal a tiny sand shape or castle. Encourage toddlers to use their hands to flatten the shapes left by the containers. Emphasize the words full and empty. Describe toddlers' actions in digging into the sand, shaping the sand, and making the sand flat.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

This activity expands on the Option 1 plan by providing wet sand and three different containers for each toddler to work with. Some toddlers may repeat the process of putting sand in a container, maybe patting it in the container, and turning it over. A toddler may work with one or two containers, rather than all three. You also may notice toddlers comparing the shapes and sizes of what the containers create when turned over. Some toddlers may attempt to build a tower with turned-over sand from their containers or maybe create a small neighborhood or city of sand castles. Encouraging toddlers to talk about their explorations promotes language and cognitive skills.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Use a symbol to limit the number of toddlers at the sensory table, such as a dot to show where one child may stand.

Enrichment ■ To promote exploration of sand and water, give each toddler a small amount of water to add to the sand (unless the sand is saturated with water). ■ Support positive sharing of different containers among toddlers if toddlers show particular interest in the shape or size of containers.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers manipulate dry sand with scoops and pails.



Key Concepts

- Digging
- Lifting
- Moving



Materials Needed

- Scoop—1 per toddler (see Be Prepared)
- Small pail—1 per toddler
- Sand



Also Promotes

- Communication/Language
- Physical/Health



Optional Reading

- *Beach Day* by Karen Roosa
- *Good Night Beach* by Adam Gamble

Be Prepared: Use scoops that are an appropriate size for toddlers. The scoop portion should be slightly larger than a toddler’s hand and the handle should not be longer than a toddler’s forearm.

Invite toddlers to join you at the sand table (or an outdoor sand area) to work with scoops and pails. Support several different uses of the materials, depending on toddlers’ interests. Some toddlers will enjoy mixing the sand with the scoop. Others will use the scoop to fill the pail.

Emphasize the following words when you describe toddlers’ actions: digging, lifting, and moving sand.

If time permits after toddlers complete their sand exploration and clean their hands, share one or two books about the beach to provide a calm finish to the gathering. *Beach Day* by Karen Roosa and *Good Night Beach* by Adam Gamble offer images familiar to toddlers who have spent time on a beach. Encourage toddlers to point to pictures and say words or tell about an experience with sand (as shown in a book or as experienced at a beach). Toddlers are likely to enjoy these books throughout the week.

What to Look For—Option 3

Toddlers may repeat actions from previous sand and water exploration, such as patting the sand flat. If a toddler is patting the sand, describe the action with simple words and emphasize the child’s control of the action. Example: “You are patting down the sand with your hands.”

Some toddlers may enjoy covering the scoop with sand so it is hidden. Use questions to encourage language development. Example: “Is the scoop under the sand?” The toddler may answer with one word. Follow up with a question that invites more than a yes or no response: “How did you hide the scoop?”

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Pretend you do not know how to find a buried scoop. Invite the toddler to give you verbal clues.

Enrichment ■ Provide a small toy for a toddler to hide in the sand. ■ Pat an area of sand flat and show the toddler how to draw a line with his/her finger.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: *Beach Day* by Karen Roosa and *Good Night Beach* by Adam Gamble, sensory table with sand, muffin pan or ice cube tray, plastic bottle and lid with sand and water, 2 freezer bags, damp sand, tape

Help children look at and talk about the pictures and stories in the books.

Leave the sensory table open for additional exploration. Smooth the surface of the damp sand. Press a pattern into the sand with a muffin pan or ice cube tray, so toddlers can see small holes. Put a small amount of sand and water in a clear plastic bottle and secure the lid. Encourage toddlers to watch the sand and water mix together and then separate.

On another day, put 2–3 cups of damp sand into a heavy freezer bag. Smooth the bag over the sand. Fold the end and fasten with clear packing tape. Secure the sand by placing the bag into a second freezer bag. Fasten the bag. Fold the end and tape with clear tape. Place the combined bags on a low surface and encourage toddlers to pat and push the sandbag to make it flat.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: outdoor or indoor sand, sensory table, dish tubs, or under-the-bed storage tubs with lids, vinyl tablecloth, infant toys, shallow tray

An outdoor sand area is optimal for toddlers' sensory activities. If outdoor sand is unavailable or weather prohibits outdoor activity, use a sensory table for indoor sand play. Another option is to use dish tubs or under-the-bed storage tubs with lids, placed on a vinyl tablecloth on a smooth floor. Infants less than 12 months of age will enjoy playing with toys on the floor where they can see you with the toddlers. Preschool-age and older children will enjoy drawing designs with their fingers in a shallow tray sprinkled with sand. To erase the design, simply shake the sand tray.



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers watch a caregiver help a toy fish go swimming and stop to eat and sleep.



Key Concepts

Fish
Swimming
Stop



Materials Needed

Toy fish



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join you on the floor to play with a fish. Hold up the fish and move it gently in the air as toddlers sit with you.]*

EXPLAIN: We can have fun playing with a toy fish. We can pretend our toy fish is going swimming. Our fish will need some help to go swimming.

ACT: How can I help the fish go swimming?

[Pause to allow time for toddlers to respond. Recognize each response. Example: "Ashton is moving his hands back and forth. Ashton is telling us that a fish can swim back and forth. I can move our fish back and forth to make him go swimming!"]

ACT: Let's all pretend that our fish is swimming. Please watch how I help the fish swim.

[Hold up the fish and move it gently in a back and forth motion for several moments.]

I am moving the fish. Our fish is swimming.

EXPLAIN: Our fish is getting hungry! The fish stops swimming because he is eating!

ACT: *[Hold the fish still for the toddlers to see.]*

I stopped moving our fish. The fish is not swimming. Our fish is eating!

[Begin moving the fish again.]

Our fish finished eating. The fish is swimming again. Swimming, swimming, swimming. Now our fish is getting sleepy. Our fish stops swimming because it is sleeping.

[Hold the fish still for toddlers to see.]

I stopped moving our fish. The fish is not swimming. The fish is sleeping.

I made our fish swim and then I made our fish stop swimming. Should I make the fish swim one more time?



BLOCK
1

Paying Attention *(continued)*



Option 1 continued

[If two or more toddlers respond positively, repeat the process of swimming and stopping the fish.]

RECAP: I helped our fish go swimming. I moved our fish and we pretended the fish was swimming. Then I stopped moving our fish. We pretended the fish was not swimming. We had fun watching the fish swim and then stop!



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers help a toy fish go swimming and stop to eat and sleep with caregiver guidance.



Key Concepts

Fish
Swimming
Stop



Materials Needed

Toy fish—1 per toddler and caregiver



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Invite several toddlers to join you on the floor to play with a fish. Introduce the toy fish and move it gently in the air as if it were swimming. Example: “We are going to have fun playing with toy fish. Our fish are going to go swimming. I am pretending my toy fish is swimming. See how I am helping my fish swim?” Give each toddler a toy fish to hold. Provide time for toddlers to explore their fish. Invite them to help their fish swim like you are doing. Example: “Let’s all pretend that our fish are swimming. Watch how I help my fish go swimming. You can help your fish go swimming like I am!” Encourage toddlers to imitate how you are moving your fish. Examples: “Anthony is moving his fish back and forth just like I am. Anthony’s fish is swimming!” “We are moving our fish. Our fish are swimming!”

Explain that the fish are getting hungry and that it is time for them to stop swimming. Example: “I am not moving my fish. My fish stopped swimming. My fish is not swimming because he is eating. Your fish are hungry too! Let’s all stop moving our fish. Our fish are not swimming.” Encourage toddlers to imitate your actions and stop moving their fish. Provide additional support and reminders for toddlers that do not stop. Example: “Now it is time for our fish to stop. Swimming stops.”

Explain that the fish finished eating. Begin to move your fish again and encourage toddlers to do the same. After several moments of the fish swimming, explain that the fish are getting sleepy. It is time for the fish to stop swimming because they are sleeping. Stop moving your fish and encourage toddlers to do the same. Example: “We stopped moving our fish. Our fish stopped swimming. The fish are sleeping.”

Acknowledge toddlers’ efforts in making their fish swim and stop. Example: “We had fun playing with the fish today. We helped our fish go swimming. Then we made our fish stop swimming. Now our fish are sleeping!”



12-24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers independently help a toy fish go swimming and stop to eat and sleep.



Key Concepts

Fish
Swimming
Stop



Materials Needed

Toy fish—1 per toddler and caregiver
Small basket



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Invite several toddlers to join you on the floor to play with a fish. Give each toddler a toy fish to hold and provide time for them to explore their fish. Explain that the fish are going to go swimming, and then they are going to stop swimming. Demonstrate how to make the toy fish go swimming. Examples: “Your fish like to swim. You can help your fish go swimming, like this.” Then show how to stop the fish by holding it still. “Your fish is going to get hungry. Your fish will stop swimming when he eats. Your fish is going to get sleepy. Your fish will stop swimming when he goes to sleep. This is how to make your fish stop swimming.”

After you demonstrate how to make the toy fish swim and then stop, invite toddlers to help their fish swim. Example: “Are you ready to play with your fish and make them swim?”

Describe toddlers’ actions. Example: “Norah’s fish is swimming. Jack’s fish is swimming. All of our fish are swimming!”

Announce that the fish are hungry and it is time for them to stop swimming. Describe toddlers’ actions. Example: “Jack stopped moving his fish. His fish is not swimming.” Offer guidance on stopping the fish to eat if toddlers seem unclear on what to do. Example: “It is time to stop moving our fish. Our fish are not swimming. Our fish are eating.”

Suggest that our fish may want to swim again after eating. Encourage toddlers to help their fish swim again. After a short period, explain that it is time for the fish to go to sleep. Invite toddlers to place the toy fish in a basket to go to sleep.

Acknowledge children’s efforts with their fish. Examples: “Norah, you enjoyed helping your fish swim. Your fish was swimming and swimming!” “Jack, you stopped moving your fish when it was time to eat!” Also encourage toddlers to tell what they did with their fish.



What to Look For—Options 1–3

Pay attention to toddlers' efforts to focus on your words and actions, especially in Options 1 and 2, and their control of movements with the toy fish. Some toddlers will find it challenging to stop moving their toy fish whereas other toddlers will listen intently for the word stop. Encourage toddlers to watch your examples. Example: "It is time for our fish to stop swimming. We are going to stop moving our fish now. We will hold them still, like this."

In addition to practicing control of actions with a toy, the activity is an opportunity for toddlers to explore different ways to help their fish swim. Acknowledge and support a range of movements. Avoid encouraging toddlers to move their fish in a uniform manner.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

Extra support ■ Some toddlers may prefer to stand and/or move around the gathering area with their fish. Invite toddlers who stand/or move around to sit with their fish when it is time for the fish to stop swimming. ■ Describe the fish action in a sing-song voice or repetitive chant. Example: "Fish are swimming, swimming, swimming. Our fish are swimming, swimming."

Enrichment ■ Invite toddlers to move their fish fast or slow, and up high or down low. ■ Invite toddlers to move their bodies like a fish. ■ Place a blue cloth or blanket on the floor as a pretend lake or ocean that fish can swim in.

Interest Area

Materials Needed: toy fish and other sea animals, water table or tub with 1–2 inches of warm water

Place the fish and sea animals in a small amount of water. Invite toddlers to play with the figures in the water. Encourage them to practice helping the figures swim and then stop. Talk with toddlers about their actions as they play with items in the water.

Family Child Care

Materials Needed: *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister, toy fish and other sea animals—1 per child

Children of all ages will enjoy participating in a shared book reading and then holding a fish or sea animal that they can help to swim and then stop for a rest or eating. Toddlers and older children may want to move their bodies like fish during the activity. Babies will enjoy being held and gently moved like a swimming fish.



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler engages in open-ended play with a caregiver focused on toys of interest to the toddler.



Key Concepts

Play together



Materials Needed

2 animal figures
2 people figures
2 toy vehicles
Other toys (see Be Prepared)
Basket



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Select and put in a basket toys that are likely to be of interest to the toddler who will participate in this activity.

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to sit facing you on the floor. Greet the toddler by name and introduce the basket of toys.]*

EXPLAIN: I have some toys in this basket that you may like!

ASK: Would you like to play together? You can pick the toys you'd like us to play with!

[Pause for the toddler to consider and respond. Continue with the activity if the toddler expresses interest. Interest may be indicated by smiling, nodding, or looking at the toys in the basket.]

EXPLAIN: What toys in our basket would you like to play with?

ACT: *[Encourage the toddler to remove toys from the basket. Talk with the toddler about each item he/she removes. Example: "You picked up the toy animals. You are putting the horse and the cow on the rug."]*

Follow the toddler's lead as he/she interacts with the toys. Join in the toddler's play, being careful to follow his/her ideas and actions with the toys. Promote back-and-forth interactions using strategies, such as the following:

- Offer play ideas if the toddler is unsure what to do with the toys. Examples:
 - "You are holding a cow. What is your cow going to do?"
 - "I have a horse. My horse is hungry and wants to eat. Is your cow hungry? Maybe we can feed our animals!"
- Describe the toddler's actions and offer suggestions to extend the play. Example:
 - "You are making the car drive back and forth. Vroom, vroom. I have a car, too. What should my car do?"
- Ask questions about the toddler's actions that may lead to more than a yes or no response. Examples:
 - "You are lifting your car into the air. I think you are pretending the car is flying! Where is your car going?"
 - "You pretended the cow was eating! Now what are you going to do with your cow?"
- Repeat and extend the toddler's responses. Example:
 - "You are making the sound of a car driving fast, 'vroom.' I am going to make my car drive fast, too. Vroom, vroom! What should we do with our cars next?"

**Option 1 continued**

- *Imitate the toddler's actions with the toys. Example:*
 - *"I am pretending my horse is sleeping, just like your cow is sleeping. I am doing what you are doing! We are playing with the animals together."*
- *Offer to take turns or share toys. Examples:*
 - *"Would you like to play with the car I have in my hand?"*
 - *"I gave you the car. It is your turn with the car. What can I play with now?"*
 - *"We traded toys! I gave you the car, and you gave me the cow. We are having fun playing together!"*

RECAP: [*Describe the time together, focusing on the interactions rather than the toys. Example: "We had fun playing together with the toys! You were driving your car really fast. Then I did the same with my car. Our cars went 'vroom, vroom!' We traded toys, too! Thank you for playing with me, Trinity."*]

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Take your cues for the play interaction from the toddler. Some toddlers will have many ideas about how to use the play materials. If a toddler is unsure how to interact with the toys, provide prompts and suggestions that may interest them, as suggested in the option plan. Toddlers may play with you on the floor or take a toy to another area of the room. If a toddler leaves your play space, wait for a moment to see if the toddler chooses to return or offers an indication (verbal or nonverbal) that he/she would like you to follow.

Pay respectful attention to the toddler's preferences for your role. If a toddler is content playing next to you on the floor, remain next to the toddler and engage in back-and-forth interactions. If a toddler does not talk with you, show positive regard for the toddler's play by describing and imitating his/her actions. If a toddler is playing quietly, play quietly next to the toddler while being mindful to not dominate the time together with talk and questions. Acknowledge and thank the toddler for the time together, whether the play period was short or extended. Use the toddler's name throughout the activity.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Describe the toddler's actions with the toys and provide words he/she can use as while interacting with the play materials. Examples: "Do you want to play with more cars? You can say 'more cars, please.'" "I can see you are all done with the toys. Let's say 'all done!'" ■ Accept and acknowledge each toddler's approach to one-to-one interaction. Example: "You played with the toy animals and people. I played with the cars next to you. We enjoyed our time together."

Enrichment ■ Provide a simple prop to support continuation of a play interaction. Example: offer small cube blocks for a toddler to use as food for animals or a flat block to make a car ramp. ■ Find a book related to a toddler's play to look at and discuss.



12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler participates in open-ended play with a caregiver, using and singing about toy farm animals of interest to the toddler.



Key Concepts

Farm animals
Song



Materials Needed

Toy farm animals (see Be Prepared)
Basket



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Select and place in a basket an assortment of toy farm animals that are likely to be of interest to the toddler who participates in this activity.

Invite a toddler to join you in playing with animals that live on a farm. Present the basket of farm animals and encourage the toddler to explore the animals. Talk with the toddler about each animal he/she removes from the basket. Encourage the toddler to name or make the sound of the animal, if appropriate. If a toddler remains interested in a particular animal, pause to talk about the animal's characteristics, such as color, shape, or size.

Once the toddler has explored the animals he/she is interested in, invite him/her to join you in the song, *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*. Ask the toddler which animal we should sing about first. Review the name and the sound of the animal. Example: "You are pointing to the cow. You would like to sing about the cow! What sound does the cow make?"



Invite the toddler to hold the named animal and to sing some of the words of the song with you. Smile and sing enthusiastically, encouraging the toddler to join you. If the toddler remains interested and engaged, repeat the process with additional animals of the toddler's choice. Acknowledge and affirm the toddler's participation.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers are more likely to participate in a singing activity when they are familiar with the song and/or the focus of the song (farm animals). Many toddlers are also familiar with farm animal names and sounds. Some toddlers may join in one or two words of the song, such as the animal sound or the phrase "E-I-E-I-O." Other toddlers may prefer to hold an animal and listen to you sing the words. A toddler who enjoys songs may want to sing several verses with different animals, whereas another toddler may choose to leave the activity after one or two verses. Recognize and acknowledge all forms of participation. Examples: "You smiled and held the horse while I sang the words of the song. I think you liked hearing me make the sound of the horse!" "You picked each animal you wanted to sing about. You helped me sing some of the words of the song! This was a fun song to sing together."



**Option 2 continued****More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

Extra support ■ If a toddler is unsure which animal to sing about first, offer two choices to choose from.

■ A toddler may want to play with the animal figures rather than join you in singing the song. Ask the toddler if he/she would like to hear you sing while playing. If the response is positive, sing a verse of the song quietly while he/she interacts with the toy animals.

Enrichment ■ Invite the toddler to help the animals “dance” during the song. The toddler may choose to hop the animal up and down, or to move it around on the floor. ■ Invite the toddler to select additional animals from the basket to sing about.





12–24 Months

Option 3 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler participates in open-ended play with a caregiver focused on toy vehicles and blocks.



Key Concepts

Play together



Materials Needed

Toy vehicles
Blocks



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language
Physical/Health

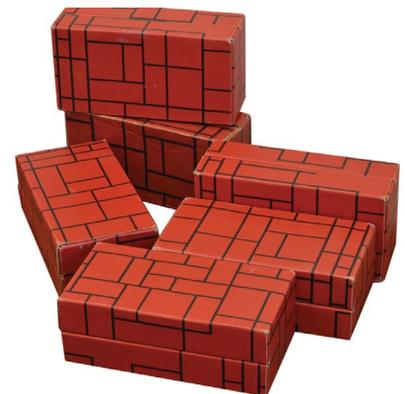
Invite a toddler to play with you in the block area. Introduce several toy vehicles and encourage the toddler to play with the toys. Some toddlers may need prompts or suggestions to get started. Example: “You have a red car. I have a yellow car. I am going to build a road for my car. Would you like to help me build a road? Then we can drive the cars on our road!”

As the toddler plays, initiate and sustain back-and-forth exchanges that support interaction skills. Use strategies, such as the following:

- Describe what the toddler is doing and respond with an action. Example: “You are stacking the blocks. Your block tower is getting high! I am going to stack blocks, too. What do you think I should build with my blocks?”
- Model turn taking with specific materials. Examples: “You are watching me drive the yellow car. Would you like a turn to play with the yellow car?” “I would like a car to drive. You are playing with the red and yellow cars. May I have a turn playing with the blue car?”
- Acknowledge and respond to the toddler’s efforts to interact during the activity. Examples: “You gave me a block. Would you like me to help you build your tower? We can work on the tower together!” “You are watching me build a road. Would you like to help me build? Here is a block!”
- Provide words for the toddler to use during play. Example: “I think you may need more blocks to build with. You can ask for more blocks by saying ‘more blocks, please!’”



Affirm the toddler’s efforts to interact during the activity. Example: “We played together to build a road and a tower for our cars! It was fun to play together with the cars and blocks.”



**Option 3 continued****👁️ What to Look For—Option 3**

Some toddlers may prefer to play independently with the materials. Consider using the Extra Support tip offered below if this occurs. Other toddlers may choose to play side by side, watching and even imitating your actions with the cars and blocks. As suggested in Option 1, remember to be respectful of the toddler's preferences for your role in their play.

Notice that some toddlers will enjoy the time with you, seeking your attention and interaction. The toys may be secondary to their interest. Acknowledge and positively respond to each bid for interaction. Example: "You are smiling at how I am driving my car on the bridge we built. You can drive your car on the bridge, too! We are playing together with the cars."

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ If a toddler prefers to play alone, play quietly with related materials close by. Provide opportunities for the toddler to observe your actions. ■ If the number of play materials is too much for a toddler, limit the activity to several blocks and two cars. ■ Acknowledge the toddler's attempts to express displeasure or object to something. Example: "You are shaking your head 'no.' You are done building with the blocks. What would you like to do instead?"

Enrichment ■ Add items to the block and car play. Toddlers may enjoy using small cardboard boxes to represent buildings or garages. People and animal figures may further extend play themes. ■ Ask a toddler to help you draw lines on a large piece of paper to represent "roads" to drive cars on.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: assortment of blocks in the block area, assortment of toy vehicles, several small cardboard boxes to represent buildings and garages

Arrange the materials on the floor in an inviting manner. Invite two toddlers to play with the materials. Describe each toddler's actions as they play. Facilitate interactions that support prosocial skills, such as working together, taking turns, and using words. Use each toddler's name frequently during the activity.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: assortment of blocks in the block area, assortment of toy vehicles, several small cardboard boxes to represent buildings and garages

Children of all ages enjoy playing with blocks and cars. Invite children in your setting to play with the materials in the block area. Ensure there are enough materials for each child. Older children may provide positive modeling for toddlers who are developing social interaction skills with peers. You may wish to sit on the floor where it is easy to talk with toddlers and to give guidance in playing with others.

BLOCK
1

Using Our Hands



Physical/
Health

12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Fine motor development

A toddler moves parts of his/her body as part of a sung finger play.



Key Concepts

Sing
Watch
Move hands
Up



Materials Needed

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
by Caroline Jayne Church



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Social-Emotional

Be Prepared: Learn the song and finger/hand motions for “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

BEGIN: [*Sit on the floor facing a toddler who is not currently focused in play. Greet the toddler by name and invite him/her to listen or join you in singing. Remember, your facial expressions and friendly tone of voice help create interest in the activity.*]

EXPLAIN: Let’s sing a song and move our hands. We can sing the song, “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Maybe you already know this song. I will sing and move my hands. You may move your hands, too.

[*Demonstrate the first action, making a star. Open and close both hands. Your hands represent the stars. Your open-close actions represent the twinkle.*]

Our song begins like this: Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

ACT: [*Encourage the toddler to open and shut his/her hands. Sing the first line again and demonstrate the hand movement.*]

Continue the song. Emphasize the word up when you move your hands/arms as part of the song. Some toddlers may watch you, or they may begin to imitate you. Affirm all types of participation. Examples: “Zoe, you listened to the song and watched my hands move.”]

[*Show the book cover to the toddler.*]

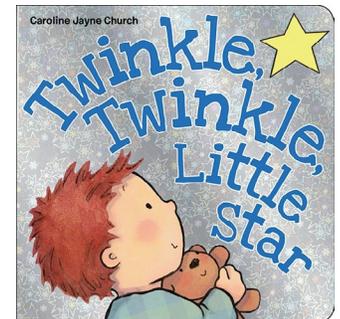
This is a book about a twinkling star.
Where is the star in this picture?

[*Help the toddler find the star on the book cover, if necessary. Describe other features of the book cover.*]

Our book is called *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*.

[*Read the book text and describe illustrations in your own words. On each page, ask the toddler if he/she wants to touch the star. Spend more time on pages of interest to the toddler. Continue as long as the toddler shows interest.*]

RECAP: [*Describe the toddler’s experience. Example: “We shared a fun song today. I sang “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” You moved your hands with the song. We looked at a book called Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. You pointed to pictures in our book. You said “star”!*]



**Option 1 continued****👁️ What to Look For—Option 1**

The activity is an introduction to songs and hand motions for some toddlers and review for other toddlers.

Some toddlers may be accustomed to singing games, whereas others will be new to the experience. At this age a toddler may understand there are hand motions for the song, but his/her fine motor skills may be in development for making some of the motions. A toddler may move his/her hands in random ways as you sing, or a toddler may repeat a specific motion, such as open and shut throughout the song. Notice and positively acknowledge different types of child participation, including (a) listen and watch, (b) listen and attempt to make motions, or (c) listen and make some or all of the motions.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ If the toddler wants to move to another activity after the song, present the book at another time during the day. ■ Encourage a toddler to do the actions with one hand if it appears moving fingers on both hands is too challenging. ■ Repeat the song and actions if the toddler shows interest. ■ When you ask the toddler whether he/she wishes to touch a star in the book, use your own finger to touch the star as a demonstration. Explain your action. Example: "I touched the star! Would you like to touch the star?"

Enrichment ■ Encourage the toddler to say words with you, such as up, high, or sky. ■ If the toddler shows interest in continuing this type of focused interaction, sing another song, such as "Mister Sun," with actions.



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Fine motor development

Toddlers move parts of their bodies and pretend their hands are twinkling stars as part of a sung finger play.



Key Concepts

Watch
Imitate
Open
Close
Up



Materials Needed

*1 picture as shown



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Learn the song and finger/hand motions for “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

Invite several toddlers to sit on the floor with you. Some toddlers may prefer to stand near you. Greet each toddler by name and ask him/her to join you for a song. Show toddlers the picture for the song. Describe the picture by naming and pointing to the child and the stars. Example: “This child is reaching up toward the stars. The child’s arms are up. Here are the stars, high in the sky.”

The activity focuses on toddlers imitating two actions:

- open and close fingers on both hands
- raising both arms up at the same time

Sing the first part of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” as you open and close both hands. Pause at the end of the first part to demonstrate open-fingers and closed-fingers motions as you say “open fingers” and “close fingers.” Encourage toddlers to imitate your hand motion.

Explain we are pretending our hands are stars. Example: “We are pretending our hands are stars. Let’s make our stars twinkle. First we open our fingers. Then we close our fingers. Open fingers. Close fingers.” Acknowledge toddlers’ participation by smiling and explaining “Great! Open fingers, closed fingers makes our stars!”

Sing the song all the way through. Sing each word clearly. Encourage toddlers to watch and imitate your motions.

Draw attention to “up above the world so high” by reaching up to the sky and encouraging toddlers to raise their arms, too.

Put emphasis on rhyming words, such as high and sky. It is not appropriate to teach rhyming at this age, but toddlers often enjoy hearing similarities in words.

Tell toddlers what they are learning to do. Example: “You know two actions for our song. You know how to open and close your fingers, and you know how to reach up!”



**Option 2 continued****👁️ What to Look For—Option 2**

At this age toddlers participate in songs and informal gatherings by watching and usually attempting to do some of the actions and saying some words. Positively acknowledging toddlers who are watching only may lead to their attempting some of the actions.

Some toddlers may stand and make a bounce motion by bending at the knee to express delight during or at the end of the activity. (See Enrichment tip.)

The fine motor skills (hand/finger actions) promoted in the activity are directly linked to cognitive skills. Remembering a sequence of actions or words is an important mental skill. As toddlers imitate your movements to the familiar song, they begin to develop memory of the sequence of actions associated with the tune and words. Remembering sequences is an important part of self-regulation skills. Repeated enjoyable experiences with a song and/or finger play foster skill in recalling sequences.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ When you draw attention to raising arms, point to and describe the child raising arms in the picture. ■ Repeat the song quietly to support a calm and enjoyable experience. ■ Sing the song with actions at a slightly slower tempo to help toddlers hear and remember the words, tune, and actions.

Enrichment ■ For toddlers who wish to continue, sing another song with actions. ■ Toddlers may enjoy clapping at the end of the song and saying “yeah” with you.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers move parts of their body and pretend their fingers are a spider as part of a sung finger play.



Key Concepts

Listen
Move
Wiggle
Up



Materials Needed

None



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Itsy Bitsy Spider by Cottage Door Press

Itsy Bitsy Spider by Annie Kubler

Revised: 6/30/2023

Be Prepared: Learn the song and finger/hand motions for “Itsy Bitsy Spider.”

The activity is an opportunity to help toddlers strengthen their fine motor skills by learning one or more of the following actions:

- Wiggle all fingers on both hands.
- Raise both arms up high.
- Lower both arms; touch hands together at midline; open arms wide.

Invite several toddlers to sit on the floor with you. Create interest in the gathering by singing a familiar song as soon as toddlers are in the area.

Introduce the song and finger play “Itsy Bitsy Spider.” Demonstrate each of the actions as you sing the song. Draw attention to how you make a spider action by wiggling your fingers on both hands. Explain that we are pretending our fingers are spiders!

Next, invite toddlers to make hand motions with you. Example: “Let’s make spiders move by wiggling our fingers.” Acknowledge all types of hand and finger wiggles.

Encourage toddlers to make a spider move and listen to the song. Demonstrate the actions again as you sing. Exaggerate words and actions to create a relaxed and enjoyable experience.

Conclude the activity by describing how we learned to wiggle our fingers, raise our arms up high, and then lower our arms.

What to Look For—Option 3

Some toddlers may attempt to imitate all the actions, and some toddlers may simply observe. The finger play involves complex actions that toddlers will enjoy watching but most likely will not be able to do in a precise way. At this age most toddlers are not able to alternate thumb and index finger movements. These skills are often emphasized in preschool rooms and are not important to promote in the current activity. Some toddlers will especially connect with the pretend elements of the activity, including the use of fingers as a spider and the sun coming up again.

Watch for and acknowledge toddlers’ attempts to remember what comes next in the finger play sequence. Learning the sequence of actions supports memory skills and helps toddlers develop a representation for other actions and routines that are done in order, such as getting ready to go outside. Remember that, although the songs are simple for adults and older children, they provide toddlers with an enjoyable experience, rich in language.

**Option 3 continued**

Look for impromptu opportunities to engage children in part or all of the “Itsy, Bitsy Spider” song and finger play. Example: A few moments may be available as children wait to go outside.

Toddlers who seem eager to repeat the song and finger play may be ready for the additional action of having the sun come out so the spider can climb up again.

Although this activity focuses on fine motor skills, it also is a chance for toddlers to learn and remember that songs have words and some songs have associated actions. Frequent opportunities to participate in songs are part of a high-quality toddler room.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Describe what is happening in the gathering. Example: “We are sitting together to sing.” ■ Describe the desired finger/hand actions of individual children. Example: “Josiah, you are raising one of your arms high in the air.” ■ If children remain engaged after one or two times of singing the song with actions, demonstrate and describe a specific finger/hand action that toddlers may find challenging or may not be noticing. Encourage toddlers to repeat the action. Example: opening your arms wide as you say “washed the spider out.”

Enrichment ■ Describe positive behaviors and responses to the activity. Examples: “We are having fun!” “This is a funny song about the spider. We like to laugh together!” ■ Use a paper spider or puppet with a cardboard tube to show how the spider goes up into a pipe and comes back down. ■ Share the book *Itsy Bitsy Spider* with toddlers who remain interested. Point to the pictures and talk about the spider. Encourage toddlers to point to the pictures. Encourage their vocalizations, especially the use of words.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: Nonbreakable mirrors, *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* by Caroline Jayne Church, an *Itsy Bitsy Spider* book as suggested in Optional Reading

Share books throughout the week with one or two toddlers at a time. Create an open space for toddlers to walk like a spider on hands and feet. Encourage use of nonbreakable mirrors so toddlers can watch themselves in action.

Revised: 6/30/2023



Family Child Care

Children of all ages enjoy songs with actions. Older children most likely will find it challenging and enjoyable to make a spider movement by placing the index fingertips on the opposite thumb pad and alternating movements.

Depending upon the experiences of the children, lead a game of *Copycat*. Demonstrate an action and invite children to mimic the action. All children will enjoy having a turn as an action leader.