



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about frogs who enjoy eating delicious bugs and doing silly things.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about frogs who learn to dance.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers repeat key words and actions emphasized in a storybook.



Cognitive

Solving Problems

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in guided play with large fit-together blocks, including an opportunity to build a structure.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in guided play with small fit-together blocks, including opportunities to compare larger and smaller blocks and build a structure.



Self-Regulation

Getting Calm

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers watch a caregiver calm down by pretending to be seaweed moving in water.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in guided practice of a calming-down activity by pretending to be seaweed moving in fast and then slow water.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers practice a calming-down activity by pretending to be seaweed moving in fast and then slow water with minimal caregiver guidance.



Social-Emotional

Exploring Feelings

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing on how a boy's different experiences make him feel up or feel down.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers talk about helpful ways to respond to feeling down about a situation.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler uses tongs to transfer small blocks from a container with a larger opening to a container with a smaller opening.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler uses tongs to construct a road and/or a tower of small blocks.

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



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about frogs who enjoy eating delicious bugs and doing silly things.



Key Concepts

Speckled

Delicious

Munch

Yum

Crunch

Chomp

Gulp



Materials Needed

Five Green and Speckled Frogs by Priscilla Burris

*1 picture as shown



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Self-Regulation

*Printable provided

UPDATE: The book featured in this Option may be challenging to secure. Option 2 is an alternative activity that also promotes word knowledge with a book about frogs.

BEGIN: *[Playfully say “ribbet, ribbet” and invite 3–5 toddlers to join you to read a book about frogs.]*

We are going to read a fun book about frogs.

ASK: Why did I say “ribbet, ribbet”?

EXPLAIN: A frog makes a noise that sounds like “ribbet.”

Frogs live near lakes and ponds. They are small animals.

Let’s have fun together by saying “ribbet, ribbet.”

[Display a picture of a frog.]

Here is a picture of a frog.

Frogs eat bugs.

ASK: • Have you ever seen a frog?

• What was it like?

EXPLAIN: *[Show book cover and point to frogs when you describe them.]*

The frogs in our book are pretend frogs. Our book is for fun. The frogs in our book do silly things.

ASK: Look at the frogs on the cover of our book. What are the frogs doing?

EXPLAIN: Our book is called *Five Green and Speckled Frogs*.

[Point to book title.]

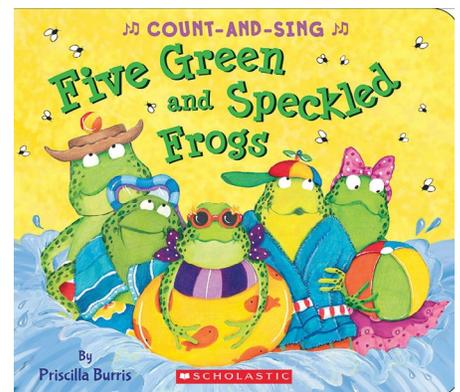
These words tell us the name of our book.

The word speckled means something has a lot of small spots.

ACT: Let’s find out about the frogs in our story.

[Use the book text and your own words to tell the story.]

Point to spots (speckles) on the log and on a frog.



**Option 1 continued**

Help toddlers connect the eating-related words emphasized in the text to their own experiences. Encourage toddlers to say the words repetitively as done in the book text.

- *delicious*: tastes good
- *munch*: chewing something
- *yum*: tastes good
- *crunch*: chewing/biting something hard like a carrot
- *chomp*: making a noise when we chew
- *gulp*: swallow something quickly

Accentuate rhyming words: frog, log; pool, cool

Encourage toddlers to describe pictures.

Engage toddlers in talking about silly things in the pictures, such as a frog wearing sunglasses, tossing a beach ball, and floating in an inner tube.]

RECAP: The frogs in our story ate a lot of delicious bugs! The frogs went munch, munch, yum, yum, crunch, crunch, chomp, chomp, and gulp, gulp. What silly things did the frogs do in our story?

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Encouraging toddlers to notice and talk about silly aspects of the story can help toddlers appreciate the book's humor and understand the difference between real and pretend. Emphasize this difference by asking questions about reality, such as "Do real frogs wear sunglasses?" and "Do you think a frog needs an inner tube to float around?" You might wish to broaden the contrast to all animals, such as "Do animals wear sunglasses?"

The informal exposure to numbers 1–5 offered in the book is not intended to be a focus of this activity. Counting backwards is especially challenging. Numbers and counting are appropriately emphasized in the ELM Curriculum's activities for preschool-age children.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Explain that a log is a large part of a tree that has fallen or been cut off. ■ Put sunglasses on a toy animal in your room, such as a bear, and ask what is silly about the arrangement. ■ Ask why the frog sitting by itself feels lonely.

Enrichment ■ Encourage toddlers to look closely at pictures to find and describe less prominent images. Examples: hats, swim goggles, sandals, swimsuits. ■ Show the provided picture of a frog alongside a book page with 1–3 frogs. Encourage toddlers to talk about what is the same and what is different.

24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about frogs who learn to dance.



Key Concepts

Hop
Jump
Float
Dance
Turns
Leaps
Curious



Materials Needed

Hop Jump by Ellen Stoll Walsh

*1 picture as shown



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Cognitive
Self-Regulation

*Printable provided

Revised: 6/30/2023

BEGIN: *[Invite 3–5 toddlers to join you to read a book about frogs. Tell children that the frogs in our book learn to dance!]*

ASK: I wonder what we know about frogs. Where do frogs live? How do frogs get around (move from one place to another place)?

EXPLAIN: *[Promote a conversation with toddlers that builds on their responses to your questions. Emphasize that frogs live near lakes and ponds. Frogs are small animals.]*

Display a picture of a frog. Point to legs when you name them.]

Here is a picture of a frog. Look at the frog's legs. Frogs use their legs to jump and hop.

[Show book cover.]

I see three frogs on the cover of our book.

[Point to each frog.]

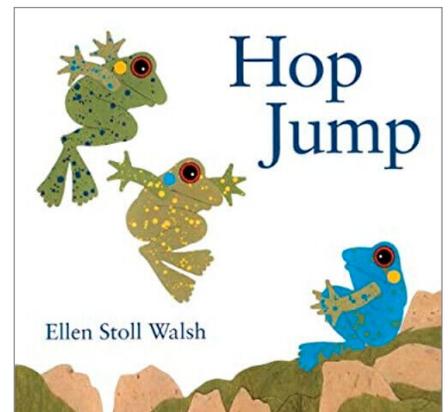


ASK: What are the frogs doing?

[Encourage toddlers to point to the frog they describe. Emphasize that two frogs look like they are jumping. Their feet are not touching the ground. One frog is sitting on the ground and watching the other frogs.]

EXPLAIN: Our book is called *Hop Jump*.

[Point to book title.]



These words tell us the name of our book.

The frogs in our story are pretend frogs. Our book is for fun. The frogs in our story do silly things.

ACT: Let's learn about the frogs in our book.

[Use the book text and your own words to tell the story. Point to and describe (or encourage toddlers to describe) what is happening in the book pictures.]

Emphasize the following important parts of the story, using the suggested questions to engage toddlers with key concepts:

**Option 2 continued**

- *Betsy watched the leaves float in the air. The leaves were turning and falling in different ways. Betsy tried to float but she could not float. Watching the leaves float in the air gave Betsy the idea of dancing. She decided to dance like the leaves move in the air.*
- *Emphasize the difference between jumping/hopping and dancing by pointing to book pictures and describing the actions of a jumping/hopping frog and a dancing frog. Encourage toddlers to tell what they see. Examples: "What does a frog look like when it jumps or hops?" (legs push up, arms up or out to the side or behind the frog). "What does a frog look like when it dances?" (moves its arms, turns its body, puts out its leg to leap) Point out how Betsy turns (moves her body from one side to the other) and leaps (like taking a big step with one leg) while dancing.*
- *Explain that the word curious is a big word. Talk with toddlers about what it means to be curious (want to know or learn something). Who got curious in our story? (the frogs that were hopping and jumping). What were the frogs curious about? (the frogs wanted to see how Betsy was dancing) Invite toddlers to say the word cur-i-ous with you.*
- *How did the other frogs learn to dance? (by watching Betsy, doing what Betsy does)]*

RECAP: Betsy is a frog who wanted to dance instead of jump and hop like other frogs. In the first part of our story, the frogs did not want Betsy to be with them when she danced. So Betsy found her own place to dance. But then what happened? (the frogs got curious about Betsy's dancing and they learned to dance!)

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers are likely to differ in what part(s) of this story appeals to them: Betsy's interest in dancing, the ways in which the frogs jump/hop and dance, how the frogs did not want Betsy to dance with them while they jumped and hopped, and/or how the frogs changed their idea about dancing and learned to dance. Support the varied interests of toddlers in your gathering while also looking for opportunities to promote their understanding of words highlighted in the activity.

Pay attention to toddlers' early understanding of a basic difference between hopping/jumping and dancing. Avoid teaching a way to dance. It is not appropriate in this activity to emphasize differences between hopping and jumping. These topics receive detailed attention in ELM activities offered for children 3–5 years of age. Other ELM activities for toddlers 24–36 years of age give attention to jumping (Blocks 10 and 22, Physical/Health).

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Point out that Betsy is the blue frog. ■ Offer prompts to toddlers who seem hesitant to respond to questions about the word "curious." Example: "Was Betsy curious or were the other frogs curious about dancing?"

**Option 2 continued**

Enrichment ■ Talk with toddlers about why Betsy could not float in the air like the leaves. Explain in your own words: things that float in the air are usually thin and light. Betsy weighs more than a leaf. You may wish to demonstrate floating with a thin piece of paper. ■ Remind toddlers that in the first part of the story, Betsy said that hopping and jumping are “always the same.” She wanted to move her body in different ways. She wanted to dance. She did not want to hop and dance like the other frogs. Point out that during our story, Betsy decided that hopping is okay, too. At the end of our book, Betsy said there is room for dancing and for hopping.

24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

Toddlers repeat key words and actions emphasized in a storybook.



Key Concepts

Delicious
Jump
Log
Turn



Materials Needed

Five Green and Speckled Frogs by Priscilla Burris

or

Hop Jump by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Carpet squares—1 per toddler



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Physical/Health
Cognitive

Revised: 6/30/2023

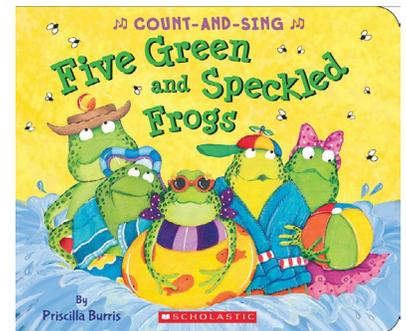
Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with the book *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* or *Hop Jump* through participation in Option 1 or Option 2 or a similar book sharing. Use the book that is familiar to the toddlers in your gathering. This activity is organized by book.

If you use the *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* book, place the carpet squares in a line to represent a log, with sufficient distance between each square for toddlers' jumping actions.

If you use the *Hop Jump* book, place the carpet squares in a large circle so toddlers can see one another's actions. Leave sufficient distance between square for toddlers' jumping actions.

Five Green and Speckled Frogs book

Invite 3–5 toddlers to join you in pretending we are frogs. Show the book cover and remind toddlers our story is about frogs that sit on a log, eat delicious bugs, and jump into a pool of water. Remind toddlers that delicious is a big word. Ask toddlers to repeat de-li-cious with you and tell what the word means (something tastes good).



Invite each toddler to stand on a carpet square. We will pretend our carpet is part of a log. Remind toddlers that a log is a large part of a tree that has fallen or been cut off. In our story, the log is in a pool of water. The frogs jump into the pool. We will pretend the floor is a pool of water. Encourage toddlers to practice jumping (once) into the pretend water in front of us.

Explain that you will read part of our story. We will say the words a frog says when it eats a delicious bug. Then we will jump from our pretend log into our pretend pool of water. We will climb back onto our log and do it again. Each time we can say a different word about eating a delicious bug. We need to listen carefully so we know what to say and when to jump.

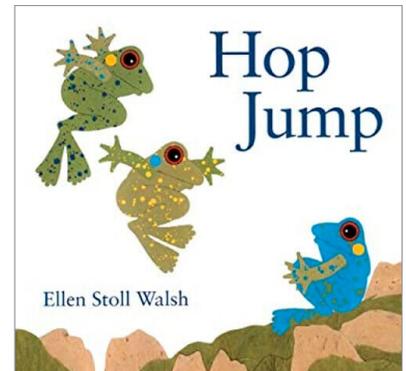
Offer 3–4 different opportunities to repeat one eating word and jump into the pretend water. Follow the book's order (munch, yum, crunch, chomp, gulp) but select words that you think would be of interest to toddlers in your gathering. Show the book page as you read it. Point to the eating word when you say it. Lead toddlers in repeating the eating word. Then read the remaining text about jumping into the "nice and cool" pool of water. Provide a clear signal ("nice and cool") when it is time to jump. Then encourage toddlers to return to their pretend log. Use the same approach for each eating word and jump.

Conclude the activity by inviting toddlers to tell what happened. Review the words emphasized in the activity. Remind toddlers that we listened carefully so we knew what to say and when to jump.

Option 3 continued**Hop Jump book**

Invite 3–5 toddlers to join you in pretending we are frogs. Show the book cover and remind toddlers our story is about frogs who learn to dance.

Encourage each of the toddlers to stand on a carpet square. Explain that our carpet square is where we can jump and dance. Tell toddlers that we will jump first and then do some of the things the frogs did when they danced. Explain that all of us will say the word that tells what we are doing. Remind toddlers that all of us will need to listen carefully so we know what to say and do.



Use the following sequence and explanations:

- Show one or several book pages of frogs jumping. Remind toddlers the frogs in our story liked to jump and hop. Say the word jump and encourage toddlers to say jump with you when they jump. Toddlers may wish to jump on their carpet square or jump from their carpet square to the floor. After the jump, ask toddlers to say what we just did (jump).
- Remind toddlers of the frog in our story who likes to dance. Her name is Betsy. Explain that leaping is one of the things Betsy did when she danced. Show a book picture of Betsy leaping with one of her legs. Show (or invite a toddler to show) leaping forward with one leg. Lift one leg and take a big step forward. Say the word leap and encourage toddlers to say leap with you as they take a big step forward (leap). After the leaping actions, ask toddlers to say what we just did (leap).
- Remind toddlers that Betsy (the frog who likes the dance) turned her body while she danced. Show (or invite a toddler to show) turning our body from one side to the other side. Move arms with the turn. Say the word turn and encourage toddlers to say turn with you. Move their bodies and arms from one side to the other. After the turning actions, ask toddlers to say what we just did (turn).

Conclude the activity by inviting toddlers to tell what happened. Review the words emphasized in the activity. Remind toddlers that we listened carefully so we knew what to say and when to jump, leap, and turn.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 3

This activity integrates support for gross motor, vocabulary, and self-regulation skills. Toddlers will likely differ in where extra support may be most needed. Some toddlers may jump before they hear you ask them to say jump with you, whereas others may take their clues for action from a peer and not what you say. Be flexible in accepting a range of responses to the activity. Use pauses (see Extra Support tip) to help toddlers focus. You also may wish to limit the number of movement opportunities.

Frogs are appealing at this age and most toddlers are likely to welcome the opportunity to be a pretend frog. Saying the key words emphasized in the activity (from the pertinent storybook) as part of physical movement is a useful and fun way to strengthen word knowledge.

Option 3 continued

The activity associated with the Hop Jump book (featured in Option 2) is a chance for toddlers to practice saying a word that describes what they are also doing. It is a direct, in-the-moment link between word and action. Look for signs of each toddler connecting the requested word with his/her action, such as saying jump when he/she jumps. This activity is focused on language skills, especially an understanding of action words emphasized in the book sharing. It is not necessary or appropriate to teach specific aspects of how to jump or engage in the activity's other gross motor actions. It is fine for a toddler to do a small jump or take steps with both feet (one foot at a time) while saying "jump," for example.

 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Lead toddlers in pointing to their ears when you explain we listen carefully. ■ Provide individual support to a toddler who seems hesitant to say an action word or unclear on what word to say. ■ Help toddlers remain focused on the separate sets of words and actions by leading them in taking several slow, deep breaths before engaging in another jump or other gross motor movement.

Enrichment ■ Ask toddlers what parts of our body we use to jump. ■ Invite toddlers to describe and act out another way Betsy danced in the story. Show book pictures as a reminder.

 Interest Area

Materials Needed: *1 picture as shown, white paper (1 per toddler), crayons, markers

Invite toddlers to create their own picture of a frog with little spots. Point to and describe the spots on the picture of a frog. Provide crayons and markers for drawing a frog and adding dots. Demonstrate making a dot, if appropriate. Do not encourage toddlers to copy the picture of the frog. Invite the toddlers to put dots wherever they want to on their picture. Encourage toddlers to describe what they are doing. Offer to point words said by the toddler on their picture.

 Family Child Care

Materials Needed: *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* by Priscilla Burris, toy frogs, item that represents a log

Share the *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* book with all children in your setting (Option 1). Give younger children a toy frog to hold. Invite older children to act out the story while younger children watch and repeat the eating-related words emphasized in the book text. Encourage preschool-age children to pretend to be frogs sitting on a log (using props such as a couch, chairs in a line, carpet squares) and jumping into a pool (Option 3).



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Problem-solving
Object inquiry skills

Toddlers participate in guided play with large fit-together blocks, including an opportunity to build a structure.



Key Concepts

Fit together
Bigger
Longer



Materials Needed

Fit-together blocks—6–8 per toddler (see Be Prepared)
Small toys (see Be Prepared)
Basket or large tray



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language
Social-Emotional

Be Prepared: Secure larger fit-together blocks, such as Grid Blocks or Little Tikes® Big Waffle Blocks. (Smaller versions of fit-together blocks are offered in Option 2.) Also gather a small assortment of small toys, such as animal and people figures, dolls, soft animals, and toy vehicles. Select small toys that you anticipate will be of interest to toddlers who participate in the activity. Include several small frog toys as an extension of the book sharing focused on frogs in the current block. Place the toy assortment in a basket or on a tray.

Offer the activity at a large, low table or on the floor, away from usual traffic flow. Set up the activity space so all blocks are next to you for distribution to toddlers.

Consider identifying several toddlers in your room who rarely engage in block play. The novel material offered in this activity may be appealing. Example: “We have special kinds of blocks to play with.”

Invite 2–4 toddlers to join you in playing with special blocks. Show the basket or tray of small toys and invite each toddler to take a toy. Explain that we can use our special blocks to make something for our toy. Some toddlers may want several toys. Put aside the basket or tray of unselected toys.

Give each toddler 3–4 blocks. If the special blocks are new to toddlers, encourage them to use their fingers to feel one of the blocks. Use your own fingers to explore a block and describe what you feel and see. Describe toddlers’ initial actions with, or reactions to, the blocks.

During the period of block exploration, draw attention to a toddler’s efforts to fit together two or more blocks. Demonstrate and describe how two blocks can fit together or invite a toddler to show and tell how blocks can fit together.

Encourage toddlers to use their blocks to build something for their toy. Emphasize that we can build whatever we want. Pause for toddlers to consider this invitation. Offer suggestions only if needed. Examples: a runway for a toy plane, a road or garage for a truck or car, a house for a doll, a barn for an animal. Offer suggestions that align with a toddler’s block-play skills.

Support each toddler in playing with blocks as he/she wishes. The selected toy may not be part of a toddler’s play.

Demonstrate how to build a road/runway or simple structure if these are of interest to one or more toddlers in the gathering. For a structure, use three blocks to create sides of a building that is open at one end. Do not fit together the blocks in a road/runway or structure if you anticipate connecting the blocks may be too challenging for toddlers in the gathering.

Describe each toddler’s efforts. Offer suggestions when appropriate. Draw attention to size by asking whether a toy needs a bigger house or a longer road/runway. Ask toddlers if their creation needs anything else. Provide more blocks to toddlers who need them.



Option 1 continued

If a toddler builds a structure without an opening, suggest that he/she may want to add a door. A door might be a block that swings open/shut.

Stay actively involved in the building process by talking about the various ways the toddlers are creating. Example: "You are making your road longer by adding more blocks." Ask toddlers to talk about what they are doing. Encourage toddlers to look at what a peer is doing.

Conclude the activity by engaging toddlers in talk about their efforts.

24–36 Months

Option 2
Informal Gathering

Skill and Goal

Problem-solving
Object inquiry skills

Toddlers participate in guided play with small fit-together blocks, including opportunities to compare larger and smaller blocks and build a structure.



Key Concepts

Fit together
Smaller
Bigger
Longer



Materials Needed

Fit-together blocks—6–8 per toddler (see Be Prepared)
Small toys (see Be Prepared)
Basket or large tray



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language
Social-Emotional

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who have experience building with the larger blocks offered in Option 1. Secure smaller versions of fit-together blocks, such as Mini Grid Blocks or Little Tikes® Waffle Blocks. The Waffle Blocks may be more challenging for some toddlers than the Mini Grid Blocks because the connectors are somewhat smaller. Also secure one large block used in Option 1 for each toddler.

Gather a small assortment of small toys, such as animal and people figures, dolls, soft animals, and toy vehicles. Select small toys that you anticipate will be of interest to toddlers who participate in the activity. Include several small frog toys as an extension of the book sharing focused on frogs in the current block. Place the toy assortment in a basket or on a tray.

Offer the activity at a large low table or on the floor, away from usual traffic flow. Set up the activity space so all blocks are next to you for distribution to toddlers.

Invite 2–4 toddlers to join you in playing with special blocks. Show the basket or tray of small toys and invite each toddler to take a toy. Explain that we can use our special blocks to make something for our toy. Some toddlers may want to use the toy included in the Option 1 activity. Some toddlers may want to play with several toys. Put aside the basket or tray of unselected toys.

Give each toddler one small block and one large block. Point to and name each smaller block and bigger block. Demonstrate how one block is smaller than the other block by inviting toddlers to put their smaller block on top of their bigger block (flat on the table) or place the two side by side on the table for comparison. Collect the larger blocks at the end of this exploration.

Give each toddler more smaller blocks, so each toddler has 3–4 blocks. Use the strategies suggested in Option 1 for supporting toddlers in their play with the smaller blocks. Important actions include the following:

- Demonstrate and describe how two blocks can fit together or invite a toddler to show and tell how blocks can fit together.
- Encourage toddlers to use their blocks to build something for their toy. Emphasize that we can build whatever we want. Pause for toddlers to consider this invitation. Offer suggestions aligned with a toddler's block-play skills if needed.
- Support each toddler in playing with blocks as he/she wishes. The selected toy may not be part of a toddler's play. Encourage each toddler to talk about what he/she is doing.
- Demonstrate how to build a road/runway or simple structure if these are of interest to one or more toddlers in the gathering.
- Describe each toddler's efforts. Offer suggestions when appropriate. Draw attention to size by asking whether a toy needs a bigger house or a longer road/runway. Ask toddlers if their creation needs anything else. Provide more blocks to toddlers who need them.

**Option 2 continued**

- If a toddler builds a structure without an opening, suggest that he/she may want to add a door. A door might be a block that swings open/shut.
- Stay actively involved in the building process by talking about the various ways the toddlers are creating. Encourage toddlers to look at what a peer is doing.

Conclude the activity by engaging toddlers in a discussion of their efforts.

👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–2

This activity plan extends Block 19's use of identical fit-together figure toys to promote problem-solving skills in configuring novel material. Toddlers who are unfamiliar with Grid Blocks, Waffle Blocks, or a similar type of block may spend more time exploring characteristics of a block (object inquiry) than arranging blocks (problem-solving). Devote sufficient time for toddlers to compare block sizes in the opening segment of Option 2.

Both activity options also build on several prior Cognitive activities that offered opportunities to explore constructing a simple structure (Blocks 5, 11, and Option 2 in Block 17). The activities continue the practice of having a purpose for a structure, such as building houses for different types of toy animals. Toddlers who enjoy the early block play stage of stacking and knocking down blocks may benefit from an explicit invitation to build a structure. Example: "I know you like to knock the blocks down. Would you like to make a little house for your toy dog?"

Toddlers bring different fine motor skills to block play. Anticipate and enthusiastically acknowledge a range of approaches to explorations of the novel blocks. Fitting together the blocks may be too challenging for some toddlers, especially with the smaller blocks used in Option 2. The materials can be used creatively with and without fit-together arrangements.

Toddlers often enjoy building the same creation repeatedly. A child's label for a creation may change; a few blocks lined up may represent a boat one day and a plane the next day. Look for opportunities to talk with each toddler about his/her creation. Simple block arrangements may represent complex ideas.

Most likely, toddlers in the gathering will engage in parallel play with the blocks. Drawing attention to what each toddler is doing with blocks is a useful way to help toddlers notice one another. Problem-solving opportunities with block play become more challenging when several toddlers begin to create an arrangement together. Decisions need to be made about the direction of a runway or road, for example, or how large to make a pretend house. If several toddlers play together to create a large structure, they will generally need an adult close by to assist with peer-to-peer communication. Model and support taking turns and sharing.

Watch for opportunities to deepen toddlers' understanding of size differences. In addition to the sizes of blocks in Options 1 and 2, draw attention to size in pretend roads, runways, launch pads, houses, and barns. Block play is well suited to strengthening awareness of the concepts of bigger, smaller, longer, and shorter.



More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

Extra support ■ A toddler may prefer to use a small toy that is not in the assortment you offer. Invite the toddler to get the preferred toy, if available in the room. ■ Sit close to a toddler who seems hesitant or unclear on how to play with the blocks. Quietly offer specific ideas. ■ When larger and smaller blocks are compared in the opening segment of Option 2, encourage toddlers to move (trace) their finger around each block. ■ If a toddler has little experience with block building, suggest a familiar item, such as a bed. It may be helpful to demonstrate how to make double lines of blocks. Some toddlers may view themselves as the active participant and assume the role of a baby or puppy once the bed is constructed.

Enrichment ■ In Option 1, provide 1–2 standard blocks typically used in your room at the beginning or final segment of the activity. Encourage each toddler to hold, feel, and look at a standard block and one of the special blocks. Engage toddlers in a discussion of how a standard block is different than the special blocks used in today’s activity. ■ Suggest a toddler may want to put a roof on his/her structure to keep out rain. Offer ideas for a roof, such as another block or maybe a small cloth or piece of card stock you provide. ■ When larger and smaller blocks are compared in the opening segment of Option 2, invite toddlers to try fitting together their bigger and smaller blocks. ■ Sometimes toddlers want to make animal pens, or rooms in a house structure. Demonstrate the use of blocks to divide an area.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: Option 1 or 2 blocks, animal and people figures

Extend opportunities to play with the novel materials by placing the Option 1 or Option 2 blocks on a table with animal and people figures. If you provide both large and small blocks, place them on separate tables or on opposite sides of a large, low table.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Preschool-age and older children are likely to enjoy playing with the blocks offered in both options. Encourage them to work together in building a structure(s) or individually building a structure that becomes part of a larger arrangement. Example: One child could build a barn with the smaller (Option 2) blocks and another child could create a house with the larger (Option 1) blocks that sit near each other in a pretend farm.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Self-control

Toddlers watch a caregiver calm down by pretending to be seaweed moving in water.



Key Concepts

Seaweed
Calm
Focus



Materials Needed

*1 picture as shown



Also Promotes

Physical/Health

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Arrange for an adult or a preschool-age child in your center to demonstrate the seaweed movements if you do not wish to do so.

BEGIN: [*Invite 3–4 toddlers to help you pretend to be seaweed.*]

We are learning some ways to calm our bodies and our minds. Today I will show a way to calm down by pretending to be seaweed.



EXPLAIN: [*Display a picture of seaweed.*]

This is seaweed. Seaweed is a plant that lives in water. Seaweed can live in oceans, lakes, and rivers. The seaweed in our picture lives in an ocean.

The roots of this seaweed grow deep in the floor of the ocean. Seaweed moves when the water around it moves. But the bottom of the seaweed stays in place because the roots keep it connected to the floor of the ocean.

- ASK:**
- Have you ever seen seaweed in water?
 - What was it like?

EXPLAIN: I am going to stand tall and pretend I am seaweed. My feet are the roots of the seaweed. The water will not move the bottom of my pretend seaweed because my roots are deep in the ground. The roots help me stay in one place when the water moves.

ACT: Please watch me pretend to be seaweed moving in water. The water is strong. The water is moving fast. Please pay attention to whether my feet move while the rest of my pretend seaweed is moving in the water.

[Sway your upper body back and forth while making bigger movements with your arms.]

After a brief period of swaying and arm movements, announce the following while continuing to move your body:]

The fast water is slowing down.

[Sway your upper body at a slower pace and make smaller movements with your arms.]

**Option 1 continued**

After a brief period, stop the movements and stand with your body in a relaxed position.]

EXPLAIN: My body feels calmer now. I focused on keeping my feet in the same place and moving my body. I did not think about other things. I thought about pretending to be seaweed in the water.

- ASK:**
- Did I move my body slower when our pretend water slowed down?
 - Did my feet move or lift up from the floor?
 - Do you want me to pretend to be seaweed again?

[If two or more toddlers respond positively, repeat the movements, beginning with larger upper body and arm movements and then moving at a slower pace with smaller arm movements.]

RECAP: Pretending to be seaweed in the water can help us calm our minds and bodies. I calmed down by focusing on my body. I thought about keeping my feet on the floor while moving my body in water that was fast and then slow.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Self-control

Toddlers participate in guided practice of a calming-down activity by pretending to be seaweed moving in fast and then slow water.



Key Concepts

Seaweed

Calm

Focus



Materials Needed

*1 picture as shown



Also Promotes

Physical/Health

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with the calming-down activity demonstrated in Option 1. Make arrangements for an adult or preschool-age child in your center to demonstrate the activity if you do not wish to do so.

Invite several toddlers to practice calming down by pretending to be seaweed moving in the water. Use Option 1 strategies to provide a brief description of seaweed. Show the picture of seaweed. Then remind toddlers of how we focus on our body while pretending to be seaweed moving in the water. First the water is fast. Then the water is slow.



Lead toddlers in pretending their body is seaweed moving in fast-flowing water. Encourage toddlers to sway their bodies back and forth and make big movements with their arms. Remind toddlers that we do not move our feet; our feet are the pretend roots of the seaweed. Encourage toddlers to focus on what their body is doing and not on other things.

Stop moving your body and invite toddlers to also stop moving. Ask toddlers what happens next. Affirm that the water slows down and our bodies move slower. Then lead toddlers in swaying their bodies back and forth at a slower pace and making smaller movements with their arms. The water is moving slow. Our pretend seaweed is moving slower.

After a brief practice of moving our bodies slower, stop moving your body and ask toddlers to stop moving. Talk about your actions. Describe how focusing on our body as a pretend seaweed in water can help our bodies and minds get calmer.

Then lead toddlers in another round of practice, this time without a pause between fast and slow water movements. Remind toddlers that first there is fast-moving water, then there is slower-moving water. Conclude the activity by inviting toddlers to talk about what it's like to pretend to be seaweed moving in the water.



24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Self-control

Toddlers practice a calming-down activity by pretending to be seaweed moving in fast and then slow water with minimal caregiver guidance.



Key Concepts

Seaweed
Calm
Focus



Materials Needed

None



Also Promotes

Physical/Health

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with the calming-down activity focused on pretend seaweed through participation in Options 1 and 2.

Invite toddlers to practice calming their bodies and minds by pretending to be seaweed that moves in fast water and then in slower water. Remind toddlers to keep feet on the floor and to focus on pretend water and moving their bodies. Offer verbal support. Provide a demonstration, if needed. It is not necessary for toddlers to move from fast to slower water at the same time. Offer two rounds, with a pause between each practice (that includes both fast and slow water) to briefly talk about the experience, including how we focus on the pretend water and moving our bodies in fast and slow water.

👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–3

This is a popular activity among toddlers. Some may find it challenging to keep their feet in place and to transition from faster to slower body movements. The questions asked of toddlers about these matters in Option 1 are intended to draw attention to important aspects of the activity. In Options 2 and 3, offer verbal support in an especially quiet, calm voice. Positively accept differences in how toddlers approach the activity.

Option 1 devotes some time to describing seaweed in ways that hopefully connect with toddlers' experiences. It is easier for toddlers to pretend they are seaweed when they have some knowledge of seaweed.

It is not necessary in Option 3 for toddlers to engage in a uniform transition from fast to slower water, as noted in the activity description. Pursuing independent practice as a group activity may prompt toddlers to pay more attention to what their peers are doing than to their own image of water and how their body moves in faster and then slower water.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

Extra support ■ In Option 2, repeat the faster and/or slower movement segments if it seems toddlers need more practice with this type of movement.

Enrichment ■ Revisit this activity and play soothing ocean wave sounds while the toddlers practice pretending to be seaweed flowing in the ocean.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: artificial flexible seaweed (often used in fish aquariums), duct tape, water table, sea-life items, such as sea animals and large shells

Prepare a pretend sea by using duct tape to adhere the artificial seaweed to the bottom of the water table. Then add several inches of warm water. Sea-life items are to be added by toddlers.

Invite several toddlers to play at the water table. Talk with toddlers about how the seaweed has roots in the bottom of the “sea” and how it can sway and flow in the water. Remind toddlers of how we can calm down by pretending to be seaweed moving in the water (Options 1–3). Encourage toddlers to add the sea-life items to our pretend sea and explore what happens to the seaweed when they move the water slowly with their hand.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Preschool-age and older children may enjoy demonstrating the seaweed movements in Options 1 and 2. Infants will enjoy watching any of the option activities.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Awareness of emotions

Toddlers participate in a book sharing on how a boy's different experiences make him feel up or feel down.



Key Concepts

Feel up
Feel down



Materials Needed

I Feel by Cheri J. Meiners



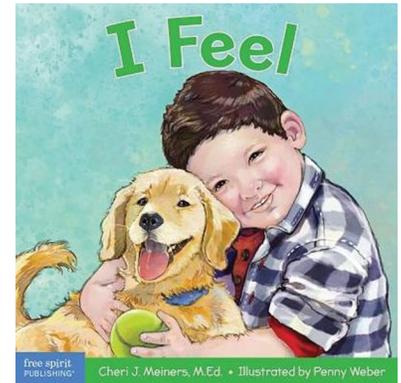
Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Cognitive

BEGIN: [Invite 3–5 toddlers to join you in reading a book about a boy and the different things he does. Show the book cover and point to the boy and dog when you describe each.]

Our book tells us about this boy.
Here is the boy's dog.

- ASK:**
- What is the boy doing? (hugging his dog, playing ball with his dog)
 - Do you think the boy is feeling happy or sad? (happy)
 - What in the picture tells us the boy is feeling happy? (smile on face)



EXPLAIN: The boy in our book does different things. Sometimes he does things that make him feel up. He feels good when he feels up. He is happy when he feels up.

Sometimes the boy does things that make him feel down. He does not feel good when he feels down. He is sad or angry or lonely when he feels down.

[Show book cover again and point to the title when you say it.]

Our book is called *I Feel*. These words say “I feel.”

Let’s read our book and find out what things the boy does.

ACT: [Use the following strategies to share the book:

- Use the book text and your own words to describe and explain what is happening. Emphasize the concepts of feel up and feel down. Examples: “The boy feels up. He is smiling and having fun with his dad! He feels good.” “Oh no, the boy’s kite crashed! Now he is feeling down. He is sad and crying. He is not feeling good.”
- Encourage toddlers to describe what is happening in pictures, especially the picture of the boy and girl and the ball.
- Ask what the boy might be feeling based on a picture and your description. Example: “The boy fell off his bike. Look at his knee! What do you think is feeling now?”
- Build on toddlers’ comments, facial expressions, pointing, and gestures.]

**Option 1 continued**

RECAP: Did the boy in our book always feel the same way in our story? (no!)

The boy did different things. Some things made him feel up. We feel good when we feel up. What things made the boy feel up?

The boy did some things that made him feel down. We do not feel good when we feel down. What things made the boy feel down?

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Look for ways to strengthen toddlers' awareness of (a) the basic difference between feeling up and feeling down, and (b) how different situations can make us feel different ways. A toddler's description of how he/she skinned a knee or felt afraid at night may be an opportunity for you to help toddlers connect the book content to their own experiences. The questions suggested at the conclusion of the session are designed to support these two big messages plus promote the cognitive benefits of recalling a story.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Encourage toddlers to point to features of book illustrations they describe, including facial expressions. Example: "How does the boy's face tell us he is feeling angry about what happened to the ball he was playing with?" ■ In discussion of the picture and text about feeling loved, remind toddlers of our story about Mama Fox always loving Little Fox, no matter what Little Fox did (Block 20).

Enrichment ■ Select several book illustrations that are highly informative and invite toddlers to tell what is happening. Then read the text.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Awareness of emotions

Toddlers talk about helpful ways to respond to feeling down about a situation.



Key Concepts

Feel up
Feel down



Materials Needed

I Feel by Cheri J. Meiners

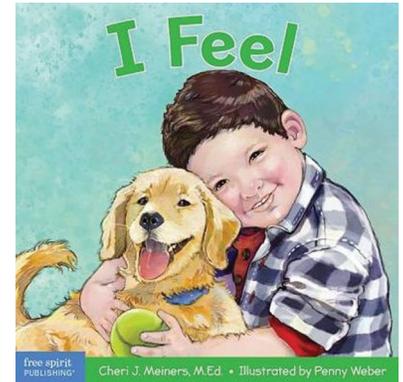


Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with the *I Feel* book through participation in Option 1 or a similar book sharing.

Invite 3–5 toddlers to join you to talk about a book about a boy’s different experiences. Show the book cover and remind toddlers that the boy did different things that made him feel different ways. Show pictures of situations you highlight. Invite toddlers to talk about what they remember about a situation(s) described in the book.



Turn to the page that shows the boy reaching out to an adult. (The adult is holding the boy’s hand.) Explain that our book says sometimes our feelings seem “too big” for us. Something that feels too big means we don’t know what to do.

Engage toddlers in a discussion of the following four things we can do when we feel down. Remind toddlers what the boy in the book did and use brief examples from your room or children who know. The book offers one illustration for each of the four ways.

- Ask for help: The boy in the book is reaching out to an adult because he feels afraid (prior illustration). How could the adult in our story help the boy feel better?
- Talk about it: The boy and the girl are talking about how to share the ball. Show the earlier book picture of the boy feeling angry about the ball. Does the boy look angry in the picture of the boy and girl talking together?
- Quiet time: The boy in our book is looking at a book. He is having some quiet time. What are some other ways we try to get calm in our room?
- Help someone: The boy feels up (happy) because he is helping someone.

Conclude the session by reminding toddlers that sometimes we feel down. There are things we can do to feel better when we feel down. Give firm assurances that adults in our room and our families can help us when we feel down.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Work to actively support toddlers’ participation in the session so it does not become a lecture. Pause frequently and use simple verbal and nonverbal cues to invite contributions. The “talk about it” strategy may be challenging for toddlers to discuss because generally the concepts of sharing are just

**Option 2 continued**

emerging at this age. Do not offer more information here than toddlers seem ready to grasp. On the other hand, asking toddlers how they help someone may prompt useful responses. The discussion of quiet time is a good opportunity for toddlers to recall ways we try to calm our bodies and minds in our room.

The session supports the idea that there are things we can do when we feel down. Toddlers are not expected to remember a range of different actions to take when they feel down.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

Extra support ■ Spend more time on practices that are especially pertinent to children in your room.

■ If toddlers seem unclear about ways we try to calm our bodies and minds in our room, offer reminders of yoga, breathing slowly and deeply, and pretending to be a cornstalk and/or seaweed.

Enrichment ■ Ask what the boy and girl (who had a disagreement about the ball) might be talking about. Offer 1–2 ideas about how the ball might be shared. ■ Engage toddlers in a discussion of different quiet time activities, such as playing with play dough, doing a puzzle, or drawing a picture. Enthusiastically acknowledge toddlers' suggestions of quiet things we can do.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: *I Feel* by Cheri J. Meiners, several puppets or stuffed animals

Invite two toddlers to look at the book and use the puppets/stuffed animals to act out what is happening in pictures of interest. Example: “The boy is happy because he can ride his bike all by himself. What can your puppets do that makes them feel happy?” Toddlers may follow the pictures in the book or choose to interact with the puppets in other ways.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: *I Can Handle It!* by Laurie Wright (for school-age children)

In addition to offering Options 1 and 2 to toddlers, invite preschool-age children to participate in Option 2. Also, share the *I Can Handle It!* book with school-age children in your setting. Encourage children to talk about some of the ideas suggested in the book.



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

A toddler uses tongs to transfer small blocks from a container with a larger opening to a container with a smaller opening.



Key Concepts

Tongs
Pick up
Push
Drop
Container



Materials Needed

Toddler-size tongs (see Be Prepared)
Small blocks of same size (see Be Prepared)
Small bucket
Taller transparent container (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Secure two pairs of toddler-size tongs (sometimes called jumbo tweezers) that work best by using a whole hand, not fingers only. Tongs that are less than four inches in length may be too small for whole-hand use. Some toddlers may be ready to manipulate larger-size tongs. One of the tongs is used by the toddler and the other is used by you during the activity. It is helpful for your tongs to be the same size as the toddler's tongs.

Secure small blocks of the same size (at least two inches) that can be readily picked up by the tongs you select. Use up to 10 blocks, depending on a toddler's fine motor ability. Place all of the blocks in the small bucket or a similar container with a wide mouth/opening.

Secure a taller container with a narrower opening made of a nonbreakable, transparent material so the toddler can see the blocks he/she drops into it. The use of containers with larger and smaller openings is an important part of the activity's support of fine motor actions with tongs. Begin the activity with the taller container empty.

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to join you in using tongs to move blocks from one place to another place. A toddler may wish to sit or stand at a low table or sit on the floor, with containers on the floor.]*

EXPLAIN: *[Point to the two containers when you describe each. Show the tongs, pointing to each of its two arms when you describe them.]*

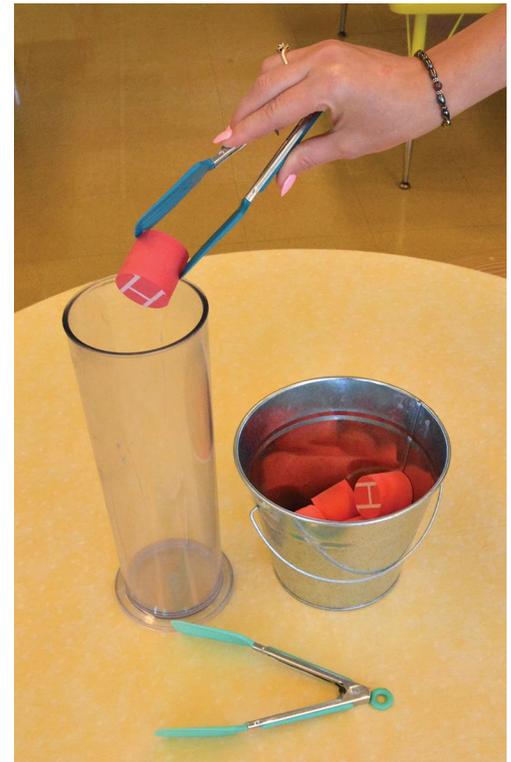
I would like you to help me move the blocks from this bucket to this container that has nothing in it.

It is fun to try to use tongs to move things from one place to another place. Here are our tongs.

Tongs have two arms. Here is an arm and here is another arm. We push the arms together when we use tongs to move something.

- ASK:**
- Who else has arms?
 - Have you used tongs? What did you do?

Follow-up prompts if needed: Have you ever watched other people use tongs? What did they do?



**Option 1 continued**

EXPLAIN: This is how we can use tongs to move blocks from the bucket to our container. We will move one block at a time.

[Demonstrate and describe how to pick up one block. Emphasize each step:

1. *Put the arms of the tongs around a block.*
2. *Use our whole hand to push the arms of the tongs together.*
3. *Pick up the block and move it to our other container while still pushing the arms of the tongs together.*
4. *Stop pushing the arms of the tongs together to drop the block in the container.]*

ACT: Now it is your turn to move a block from our bucket to our container.

[Invite the toddler to use his/her tongs to move a block. Offer verbal support by quietly describing or reminding the toddler of each step.

Explain that we pay attention to keeping the arms of the tongs pushed together when we move a block.

Encourage the toddler to watch the block drop into the container.

Emphasize that the block drops when we let go of it; we let go of a block when we stop pushing the arms of the tongs together with our hand.

Encourage the toddler to move as many blocks as he/she wishes. A toddler may be interested in setting a goal of moving all of the blocks, if appropriate. You may wish to offer a progress report to encourage persistence. Example: "Wow, you have moved most of our blocks into the jar. There are only two more blocks to move!"

RECAP: *[Engage the toddler in describing what happened. Emphasize effort, not outcome. Example: "You used tongs to move blocks from our bucket to our container. We use our hand to make tongs work. You paid attention to a lot of different things. You put the tongs around a block. You pushed the arms of the tongs together. You moved the block to our container. How did you make the block drop into our container?"]*

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

The task may be more than a one-handed process. A toddler may use two hands to push the arms of the tongs together. Or a toddler may use one hand to support the block (or be positioned to catch the block if it falls) while using the other hand to push the arms of the tongs together. Positively accept the problem-solving approach a toddler uses with the tongs. Using two hands involves important practice in coordination.



Option 1 continued

A toddler may try to do the task quickly by using his/her hand (rather than the tongs) to move a block or attempt to move more than one block at a time with the tongs. If this occurs, explain that we are not in a hurry and gently remind the toddler that we are learning how to use tongs by moving one block at a time with the tongs. It may be helpful for the toddler to pause and take several deep, slow breaths before trying again.

Toddlers are likely to differ in what is most challenging—putting the tongs around a block, figuring out how hard to push the arms of the tongs together, or letting go when the block is over a narrower opening. Be flexible in how you offer support. Example: If putting the tongs around a block in the bucket is difficult, encourage the toddler to use his/her fingers to remove the block from the bucket, put it on the table (or floor), and then try using the tongs with the block. Coordinating the tongs' arms with a block that is askew in the bucket may lead to unnecessary frustration. You may wish to put all blocks on the table (or floor) as their starting point and put aside the bucket.

If a toddler finds it too challenging to use the tongs, invite him/her to use fingers to move one block at a time. Acknowledge the benefits of this approach. The toddler is paying attention to each block and moving his/her fingers to grasp and then let go of each one.

Look for ways to draw attention to the toddler's efforts to pay attention to each part of the move (a self-regulation skill) and to the cause-and-effect connection of letting go of a block that then drops into the container (a cognitive skill).

The one-to-one configuration of this activity offers a good opportunity for you to focus on a step(s) of the task that may need further guidance or practice. It also is a good arrangement for taking turns with the toddler in transferring blocks with tongs, if you anticipate this informal form of repeated demonstration and support would be helpful.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Use another term, such as big jar, as a name for the larger container if you anticipate the word container may be too challenging. ■ Put five or fewer blocks in the bucket if you anticipate providing up to 10 blocks may be intimidating initially. ■ If a toddler has prior experience with tongs, invite him/her to show how to pick up, move, and drop a block from one container to the other (rather than offering the suggested demonstration). Describe the toddler's actions. ■ Use a container with a wider opening if the suggested narrower opening is too challenging for a toddler to navigate. ■ Ask what happens if we forget to keep the arms of the tongs pushed together when we move a block from one place to another. (The block drops.)

Enrichment ■ Extend the suggested question of "who else has arms?" by inviting the toddler to describe times he/she uses both of his/her arms to move something. ■ Draw attention to the different sizes of the openings of the two containers. ■ If a toddler remains interested, invite him/her to return the blocks to the bucket, one by one using the tongs. A challenge here is using the tongs in the smaller opening of the container holding the blocks. ■ Use different sizes of blocks, ensuring each block can be readily moved by tongs.

24–36 Months

Option 2
One-to-One

Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

A toddler uses tongs to construct a road and/or a tower of small blocks.



Key Concepts

Tongs
Pick up
Push
Let go



Materials Needed

Toddler-size tongs (see Be Prepared)
Small blocks of same size (see Be Prepared)
Small bucket



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Self-Regulation
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: This activity is for a toddler who has participated in Option 1 or has similar experience using tongs to transfer small blocks, one at a time, from one place to another. Use two pairs of toddler-size tongs that were used in Option 1. One pair of tongs is used by the toddler and the other is used by you during the activity. Secure small blocks of the same size (at least two inches) that can be readily picked up by the tongs you select. Use up to 10 blocks, depending on a toddler's fine motor ability. Place all of the blocks in the small bucket or a similar container with a wide mouth/opening.

Invite a toddler to join you to use tongs to make a road or a tower with blocks. The toddler may prefer to work at a low table or on the floor. Place the bucket of blocks in close proximity to the toddler but not in the space where he/she will build with blocks. Remind the toddler that tongs have two arms, just like we have two arms. We push the two arms together to hold a block with the tongs. Encourage the toddler to tell how he/she used the tongs to move blocks from a bucket to a container (Option 1) or another recent experience with tongs.

Ask the toddler whether he/she wants to build a road or a tower. If appropriate, explain that both a road and a tower can be built, one at a time. Initiate building the road or tower by putting the first two blocks in place with your tongs, one block at a time. Describe the steps in using the tongs or invite the toddler to describe how you are using the tongs. Draw attention to key actions:

1. Put the arms of the tongs around a block.
2. Use our whole hand to push the arms of the tongs together.
3. Pick up the block and move it to our road or tower.
4. Beginning with the second block: put the block next to another block (for a road) or on top of another block (for a tower).
5. Stop pushing the arms of the tongs together to let go of the block.

After you put two blocks in place, invite the toddler to use his/her tongs to continue building the road or tower. Offer verbal support by quietly describing or reminding the toddler of each step. Emphasize that we pay attention to keeping the arms of the tongs pushed together when we move a block. Encourage the toddler to build as much of the road or tower as he/she wishes. If the tower falls before all blocks are used, invite the toddler to build another tower. A toddler may wish to use the tongs to build something different.

Conclude the activity by inviting the toddler to help you describe what happened. Emphasize the use of our hand to push the arms of the tongs together and how we watched carefully to figure out where to put a block. Give more attention to use of the tongs than to the outcome.

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

Using tongs to put a block next to or on top of another block is considerably more challenging than the Option 1 task of using tongs to move a block to another container. In the current option, the Option 1 task of dropping a block once it is over the opening of a container is replaced by the challenge of letting go of a block when it is in the desired position in a construction effort.

A toddler may use his/her hands to adjust a block after using tongs to put it in place. Examples: moving a block closer to another block in the pretend road, lining up blocks in a tower. Positively accept these actions without tongs; they show attention to details and a good understanding of how blocks work together in constructing a road or tower. At the same time, be prepared for a road that has gaps between blocks or a tower that quickly falls because blocks are not well positioned. Avoid adjusting a toddler's placements of blocks. An attentive toddler will learn from whatever happens. This activity is primarily focused on the coordination and manipulation of tongs in relation to block building, not the outcome of block building.

Many of the possibilities described in Option 1's What to Look For section apply to the current activity, including working too fast to build a road or tower and differences across toddlers in what is most challenging in the use of tongs. See the Option 1 What to Look For suggestions on how to respond to these possibilities and others.

The activity description includes the ELM Curriculum's continuing suggestion that you describe your actions and the toddler's actions plus repeatedly say the names of objects. These suggestions support a larger goal of helping toddlers understand that we can use words to tell what is happening and what we are doing (pick up, push, let go) and use words to give something a name.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Offer as many blocks as you anticipate the toddler may be interested in manipulating with tongs in one session. Have extra blocks close at hand in case your initial offering is short. ■ Offer repeated demonstrations of using tongs by taking turns with the toddler in building a road or tower.

Enrichment ■ Provide 1–2 toy vehicles for a toddler to drive on the road. If the vehicle encounters a gap between blocks, you may wish to describe the situation (example: "Your car is falling into a hole in the road!"), but leave it to the toddler to decide whether to do anything about the gap. ■ Provide enough blocks for a toddler to build a tower of desired height and a road to the tower, all with the use of tongs.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: Option 1 materials, a nonbreakable transparent container with a wider opening, several different sizes of tongs

As an extension of the Option 1 activity, place on a low table the small blocks in a bucket for toddler(s) to use tongs to transfer to one of two transparent containers. Including different sizes of tongs and containers with narrower and wider openings as two possible destinations of blocks offers some differences in the level of challenge. Also, put some blocks on the low table or floor as well as in the bucket for toddlers to pick up with tongs. Invite toddlers to reverse the process by using tongs to transfer small blocks from a transparent container to the bucket or table.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: Option 1 and Interest Area materials

In addition to offering Options 1 and 2 to toddlers, as appropriate, invite preschool-age and older children to use kitchen-size tongs to move blocks of different sizes into a construction of their design. Mobile infants and younger toddlers will enjoy carrying small blocks from one location to another location. Offer a small container to a younger toddler for transporting 1–2 small blocks.