



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

Option 1 (OO) A toddler participates in a shared book reading focused on farm animals.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers participate in a shared book reading and a follow-up activity focused on how toy farm animals are the same or different.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers participate in a shared book reading and a follow-up pretend play activity with farm toys.



Cognitive

Exploring Objects

Option 1 (OO) A toddler participates with a caregiver in playing with large blocks.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers participate with a caregiver in road-building block play.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers participate with a caregiver in building pretend items for toy farm animals.



Self-Regulation

Getting Calm

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers watch how a caregiver calms down after engaging in an exciting activity.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers practice calming down with caregiver guidance after engaging in an exciting activity.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers independently practice calming down after engaging in an exciting activity.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

Option 1 (OO) A toddler participates in open-ended block play with a caregiver.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers engage in open-ended play together with Duplo® building blocks.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers engage in open-ended play together with animal figures and blocks.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers practice clapping their hands as part of a song.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler practices clapping his/her hands along with a puppet as part of a song.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers watch and participate in a sequence of hand motions as part of a song.

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



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Awareness of print and pictures

A toddler participates in a shared book reading focused on farm animals.



Key Concepts

Pictures

Barn

Animals

In

Out

Up

Down



Materials Needed

Big Red Barn by Margaret Wise Brown



Also Promotes

Cognitive

BEGIN: [Invite a toddler to join you 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: Our book is called *Big Red Barn*. There is a picture of a red barn on the cover of our book.

[Point to the barn.]

This book is about animals that live in the big red barn!

ASK: What animals do you think are going to be in our book?

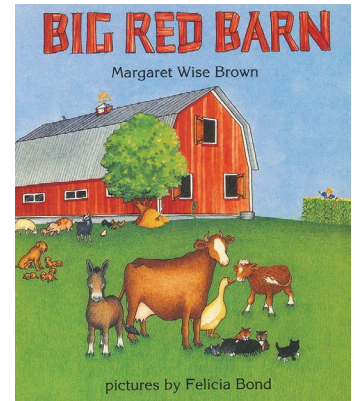
[Pause for the toddler to respond. Repeat and extend each response. Example: “You said ‘cow.’ There might be a cow in our story!”]

Let’s read our book and find out!

ACT: [As you read the book, point to and describe items on the page that toddlers may be interested in, such as the big red barn, colorful flowers, tiny butterfly, and peeking sun.

Also, use strategies, such as the following, to engage the toddler in the story:

- Ask the toddler what he/she thinks we might see on the next page.
- Encourage the toddler to point to and name pictures with you. Example: “Look at this animal! It has feathers and is sitting on eggs. What do we call this animal?”
- Expand upon the book text with descriptions and questions. Examples:
 - “This is called a weather vane. It sits up high on top of the big red barn! A weather vane will turn when the wind blows.”
 - “The sun is going down. The day is over. All of the animals are going in the barn for the night. What do you think the animals are going to do in the barn?”



**Option 1 continued**

- Repeat and extend the toddler's comments and pointing. Examples:
 - "You said 'cat,' Sofia. Yes, this is a cat!"
 - "Yes, it is 'night-night' time for all the animals. The animals are in the barn and they are sleeping because it is nighttime."
- Read the text with an enthusiastic, rhythmic voice to add a dynamic quality.]

RECAP: Our book was about animals that live on a farm. When the sun comes up the animals come out of the barn to play! When the sun goes down, the animals go back in the barn to sleep. We had fun looking at all the different animals in our book!

 **What to Look For—Option 1**

The rhyming text and pleasing illustrations of familiar animals make this book a favorite of many toddlers. Talking with the toddler about words and pictures on each page can strengthen language and communication skills. In addition to animal names and characteristics, this book provides an opportunity to support a toddler's familiarity with the concepts of in and out (of the barn) plus up and down (the sun). At this age it is not appropriate to provide explicit instruction on these concepts, but it can be helpful to give the concepts some emphasis as you read and discuss the book.

Pay attention to whether the toddler notices some picture details that may be easy to miss or not fully understand. Examples: a duck peeking around a corner, a single egg under a hen, the bats flying out of the barn at night. Point to and describe picture details as appropriate.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

Extra support ■ Sit close to the toddler so he/she can see the pictures and hear your voice. ■ Follow the toddler's preferred pace with the book. If there is interest in a particular animal or picture, spend a few extra moments talking about what the toddler sees and thinks. ■ If a toddler begins to lose interest, you may wish to skip pages and read the end of the book, when the animals go back in the barn to sleep. ■ Use arm/hand motions to describe up and down.

Enrichment ■ Help the toddler connect the story with his/her experiences. Example: "The animals in our story sleep in the big red barn. You sleep in a house!" ■ Invite the toddler to find and point to specific animals or items in selected pictures. Example: "Where is the small piglet in this picture?"

12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Awareness of print and pictures

Toddlers participate in a shared book reading and a follow-up activity focused on how toy farm animals are the same or different.



Key Concepts

Picture

Animal

Same

Different



Materials Needed

Big Red Barn by Margaret Wise Brown

Farm animal figures (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive

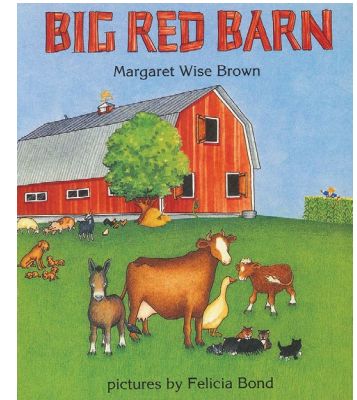
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Secure a larger and a smaller version of the same types of farm animals.
Example: a larger cow and a smaller cow.

Invite several toddlers to read a book with you about farm animals. As you read the book, pause on each page to talk about the pictures. Point out the parent animals and their babies on each page. Describe how the two animals are the same except for their size (one is larger, one is smaller). Acknowledge and extend toddlers' pointings and comments, and use other book reading strategies suggested in Option 1.

After the book sharing, give each toddler a larger farm animal to hold. Name (or invite the toddler to name) the animal he/she is holding. Find, display, and discuss the same animal in a book picture. Then put the smaller versions of the toy animals held by toddlers on the floor. Name (or invite toddlers to name) each toy animal as you place it on the floor. Explain these are the baby animals. We are holding the parent animals. Invite toddlers to find and pick up their animal's baby. After all toddlers have picked up a baby animal, describe how each pair of toy animals held by a toddler is the same. Example: "The mama pig is pink with a curly tail. Look, the baby pig is also pink!" Explain (or ask) how the animals are different in size. The baby animal is smaller, the parent animal is larger.

If time permits after helping toddlers compare the two toy animals each is holding, invite toddlers to play with their toy animals any way they wish. Some toddlers may want to carry them to another area of the room, such as the block area or toy barn. Other toddlers may prefer to move on to another activity. Describe what each toddler is doing with the animals. Example: "Alyssa is playing with the mama horse and the baby horse in the blocks. I think she is building a home for them. Tell me about what you are doing with the blocks, Alyssa!"



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

The book and follow-up discussion of how things are the same or different are ways to foster language and communication skills. Look for opportunities to foster discussion. The follow-up activity is not about finding the correct baby animal. The activity plan focuses on the concepts of same and different, which are essential to the more advanced concept and task of matching things that are the same or similar.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Some toddlers may enjoy holding a toy animal during the book sharing as well as during the follow-up activity. ■ If a toddler seems unclear about which smaller animal is the same as the animal he/she is holding, hold (or invite the toddler to hold) a toy animal (the same or different) next to the animal he/she is holding. Are these two animals the same or different? How? ■ If you anticipate it will be too challenging for toddlers to find the baby animal that is the same as the parent animal they are holding, invite all toddlers to hold any one of the smaller toy animals and talk about how the two animals each is holding are the same and different.

Enrichment ■ Invite toddlers to tell how the larger animal they are holding is different from the larger toy animal a person sitting next to them is holding.

12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Awareness of print and pictures

Toddlers participate in a shared book reading and a follow-up pretend play activity with farm toys.



Key Concepts

Picture

Animals

Barn

Out

In



Materials Needed

Big Red Barn by Margaret Wise Brown

Farm animal figures

Toy barn

Sensory table or tub

Shredded or crinkled paper (see Be Prepared)

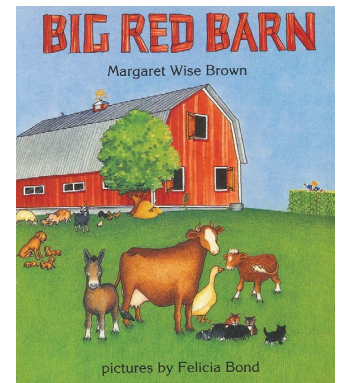


Also Promotes

Cognitive

Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Place shredded paper or several layers of crinkled tissue paper in the sensory table or a large tub. Add a toy barn and an assortment of animal figures to create a farm scene. If available, you may wish to select yellow (hay), brown (dirt), or green (grass/pasture) paper for the activity.



Invite several toddlers to read a book and play with farm toys in the sensory table. When you read the book, emphasize the concepts of animals coming out of the barn during the day and going back in the barn at night. At the conclusion of the book, introduce items in the sensory table, especially the barn. Show the book cover and explain how the toy barn is like the barn in the story. Invite toddlers to play with the new materials. As they play, talk about connections to the story. Example: “Some of our toy animals are the same as the animals in our book. Here is a picture of a cow in our book. And here is a toy cow we can touch and play with.” Also, talk with toddlers about what they are doing. Example: “Emilio is holding a cow. It is a brown cow like the picture of the brown cow in our book.”

During the play activity, ask questions that encourage more than a yes or no response. Example: “Jacob, you are making the dog move up and down. What is your dog doing?”

Repeat and extend a toddler’s comments. Examples:

- Child: Places pig in the barn and says “night-night.”
- Caregiver: “You put the pig in the barn because the pig is going ‘night-night.’ Where is your pig going to sleep in the barn?”
- Child: Places pig on its side and says “night-night” again.
- Caregiver: “Your pig went ‘night-night.’ Your pig is sleeping in the barn.”



Offer to enter into a child’s play. Examples:

- Child: Places a sheep under the paper and says “uh oh!”
- Caregiver: “Uh oh, where did the sheep go? I can’t see the sheep now. I think the sheep is hiding! Would you like me to look for the sheep?”
- Child: Brings sheep out and giggles.
- Caregiver: “Oh, you found the sheep! You hid the sheep and then you found it! Would you like to hide it again?”

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

The relatively open-ended play opportunity is likely to generate different types of participation. Toddlers who are beginning to engage in pretend play may enjoy moving the animals around the sensory table. Some may move the animals in and out of the barn or hide them in the paper. Others may be more interested in the materials, such as exploring the texture of the paper. Some toddlers may prefer to watch and listen to what is happening around them. Toddlers can benefit from your descriptions of what you see happening and from questions that invite descriptions of actions or plans. As always, be careful not to direct the play or talk all the time. Accept and positively acknowledge all forms of participation.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3**

Extra support ■ If toddlers seem to have difficulty engaging in play with the farm toys, suggest a theme related to the book or toddlers' interests. Example: the animals going in the barn to sleep and then coming out when it is morning. ■ To avoid conflict, ensure there are enough animals for each toddler to interact with.

Enrichment ■ Without crowding the space, add several related materials to the sensory table, such as blocks, a toy tractor, or people figures. ■ Some toddlers may enjoy listening to relevant pages of the book being read as they play.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown and other books with pictures of farm animals, farm animal figures, toy barn

Arrange the book, animal figures, and toy barn on the floor or low table. Invite toddlers to interact with the materials in ways of their choosing. Some toddlers may enjoy looking at pictures of farm animals in the books, others may play with the animals and toy barn. Talk with toddlers about their ideas and actions as they interact with the materials.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown, farm animal figures in a basket

Children of all ages will enjoy this book with rhyming text and interesting pictures of familiar animals. After the book reading, invite children to pick a farm animal from the basket. Sing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" with each child's animal in a verse. Encourage the child to hold up the named animal in the song. Children who are familiar with the song may join in, whereas others may prefer to watch and listen.



12–24 Months

Option 1
One-to-One

Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

A toddler participates with a caregiver in playing with large blocks.



Key Concepts

More
Push
Carry
Move



Materials Needed

Blocks (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Secure big soft blocks, or big cardboard building bricks. Identify a space where a toddler may move around and play with blocks.

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to join you in playing with large blocks. Place several blocks in the center of the activity area.]*

EXPLAIN: Today we can play with big blocks. I want to show you two ways to use blocks.

[Demonstrate and describe each of the following two arrangements:

Arrange three blocks side by side. Explain: “We begin with one block and put more blocks next to it.”

Stack two blocks. Explain: “One block is on top; the other block is on the bottom (or on the floor).”]

Now it is your turn to use the blocks the way you want.

ASK: How do you want to use the blocks?

[Provide ample time for a toddler to consider what he/she wants to do.]

ACT: *[Describe a toddler’s actions with the blocks. Example: “Margaret, you pushed all the blocks to the wall. You put the blocks in a line. What are you going to do next?”*

Talk with the toddler about what he/she is doing without giving specific directions. Example: If a toddler piles the blocks in a random mound, simply say “You made a big mound of blocks!”

It is not necessary or helpful to talk throughout the activity, but there is cognitive benefit in showing that you are paying attention and in describing what is happening.

If a toddler is unsure about how to start playing with the blocks, ask him/her to help you line up the blocks or stack the blocks. Another option is to invite the toddler to move one or more of the blocks you put in an arrangement at the beginning of the activity.]

RECAP: *[Describe what the toddler did with the blocks. Example: “You carried the big blocks all around our area. The blocks were here, and you moved them to the edge of the rug. Now the blocks are side by side in a line.”]*

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

Typically blocks are used to build a representation of a thing or place, such as a house or a plane. Young toddlers generally do not make enclosures with blocks, however. It is more likely a younger toddler will put blocks together in ways that are similar to the two arrangements you offer in the opening segment of the activity. It also is likely that a younger toddler will approach blocks as interesting objects to move about the room. Carrying objects from place to place is a favorite activity for children who are new to walking and moving objects. This action can support the development of spatial awareness, among other benefits. If a toddler wishes to carry a block to another area, observe to learn his/her objective. Walk along with the toddler. Describe his/her actions and your response. "Philip, you are carrying a big block. I will watch you to find out about your idea." You may see a toddler use a block as a chair.

Look for opportunities to suggest a theme or a special interest for a toddler's work with blocks. Example: If a toddler likes trains, line up several blocks and use your hand as a pretend train. Make a toot-toot sound.

Provide a solid amount of time for a toddler to consider what to do with the blocks without risking the chance the toddler will lose interest. Keep in mind that some toddlers may need you to model block play and to provide some ideas, as suggested in the activity plan description.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ If the toddler builds a tower, suggest that the toddler begin a second tower when his/her first tower has three or four blocks. A good guideline is to limit the height of a tower to the shoulder of the toddler. ■ If a toddler stacks the blocks and then knocks them down, describe what the toddler is doing and, after several rounds of building-and-knocking down actions, suggest a different way to stack the blocks.

Enrichment ■ Encourage the toddler to stand next to a tower of blocks. Draw attention to the height of the blocks by saying it is bigger or smaller than the child. ■ Add one or two large animal figures the toddler may use with blocks.



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers participate with a caregiver in road-building block play.



Key Concepts

More
Next to



Materials Needed

Cardboard bricks
Small vehicles



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: In the building area, place three cardboard bricks end to end with a small car on top. By limiting the number of toddlers, the activity sets the stage for children to explore shapes and sizes of the blocks. With a few toddlers participating, each child has enough space to move or arrange blocks in various ways. Identify several toddlers who have similar experiences and skills with blocks.

Invite 3–4 toddlers to join you to play with blocks. Draw attention to the little toy car on the block and suggest the blocks are like a road. Explain that our blocks are a pretend road. Begin to add more blocks. Toddlers will enjoy lining up blocks side by side on the floor. As toddlers extend the road or make new roads, explain that we can make a road longer by putting more blocks next to the blocks at the ends of the road.

One or more toddlers may not be interested in a road-building theme and opt to pursue their own interests with the blocks. Some toddlers may build something from their imagination. At this age, even two blocks together can stand for any idea a child holds in his/her mind. It is important to have an adequate supply of blocks available so individual pursuits can be explored.

What to Look For—Option 2

Young toddlers most likely will engage in parallel play and focus on their own task. Although the road-building theme will appeal to many toddlers, pay close attention to each toddler to determine his/her interest in the blocks. Talk with toddlers who are interested in building roads as well as the children who simply explore stacking. Some toddlers may simply move blocks from one spot to another or investigate the block shapes. A toddler's work does not need to represent anything. Allow plenty of time for toddlers to explore and to express themselves with words or actions.

Some toddlers may get satisfaction from removing blocks from the shelves. If a toddler feels determined to get all the blocks off the shelf, observe and give verbal supports. Describe the toddler's actions and announce the completion of the task. Example: "Okay, Joey. Now you have moved all the blocks." Guide the toddler's attention to building with the blocks. Example: "What would you like to do with the blocks next?" Or, "Would you like to build with me?"

Maintain a positive play environment by using a friendly voice and making positive comments about each toddler's block play. The toddlers will be aware of your expressions and tone of voice.

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

Extra support ■ Show toddlers how to hold a big block with one hand on each side. ■ Offer each toddler his/her own toy vehicle for traveling on the road. ■ Suggest that a toddler may need to build a new road to reach a desired destination.

Enrichment ■ If young toddlers have previous experience with blocks, add props, such as animals or dolls.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Object inquiry skills

Toddlers participate with a caregiver in building pretend items for toy farm animals.



Key Concepts

Build



Materials Needed

- Farm animal figures—2 per toddler
- Cardboard blocks
- Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown
- Farm Animals* by Phoebe Dunn
- My Big Farm Book* by Roger Priddy



Also Promotes

- Communication/Language
- Social-Emotional
- Self-Regulation



Optional Reading

- Night Night Farm* by Roger Priddy

Be Prepared: Place farm books and farm animals in the block area. Learn the words and tune for the Old MacDonald song. The goal of the activity is to introduce the idea of using blocks to represent a structure or place. The activity can be adapted to other play themes.

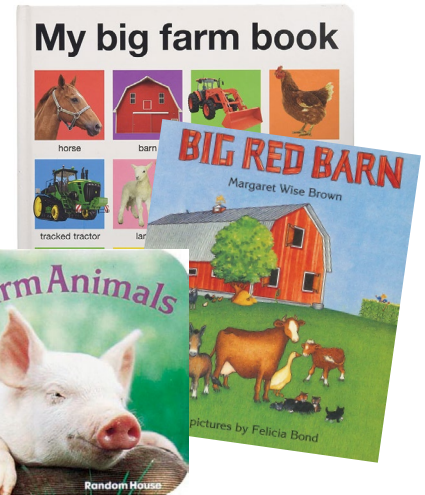
Invite 3–4 toddlers to join you in the block area. Sit on the floor facing the toddlers and sing several verses of “Old MacDonald Had a Farm.” Explain that we will play with some farm animals and blocks. We can use the blocks to build things for the farm animals. The things we build can be part of a farm.

Say the names of the farm animal figures as you distribute two animals to each toddler. Then invite toddlers to use blocks to make something for their two animals. Provide time for toddlers to think about what they might make for their animals. Offer suggestions if toddlers seem uncertain about what to build. Examples: beds for animals to sleep on, a path (road) for animals to walk on, a fence to keep animals in one area, a home to live in. If it seems a concrete illustration would be helpful, place two blocks end to end and encourage a toddler to add more blocks for a road to a field where animals play.

Describe what toddlers do with their blocks and toy animals. (Giving toddlers an animal for each hand reduces the chance of disputes over sharing.) Invite the toddlers to make a farm with the blocks. Suggest ways to enhance the play, when appropriate. Remind toddlers that together we are making a farm. Give plenty of encouragement for all types of efforts. Allow ample time for putting blocks away. Playfully approach cleanup as taking “our farm apart.” Generally, toddlers can put two items back on the shelf.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 3

Early block building may appear disorganized because toddlers generally do not yet understand the properties of blocks. You may see toddlers arrange blocks in lots of different ways. Some toddlers may line up blocks end to end. Two toddlers might cooperate in making a pile of blocks. A pile of blocks may represent something fantastic because it is big! It is not necessary for blocks to be organized in a particular manner. You may see toddlers get blocks on their own and arrange them in their own way. Because toddlers in most room configurations differ in age, there will be a range of abilities in manipulating objects. Some toddlers may begin to understand the concept of making a



**Option 3 continued**

structure, whereas other toddlers will simply enjoy moving the blocks. When you place two blocks side by side and say it is a bed or a home for animals, you introduce the idea blocks can be used to represent things and places. With time and repeated experiences, young children begin to understand more ways to use the blocks.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3**

Extra support ■ Acknowledge toddlers who wish to observe. ■ Engage a toddler in a book about a farm if you anticipate the toddler needs a clearer image of a farm for animals. ■ If a toddler seems interested in using the blocks but uncertain about how to act, start making an item, such as a bed for his/her animals. Hand one block to the toddler and encourage him/her to add it to the farm. Describe the building action without giving suggestions.

Enrichment ■ Support naturally occurring opportunities for two or more toddlers to work together in using blocks for something their animals do.

 **Interest Area**

Materials Needed: cardboard building bricks, big foam blocks, carts, carriages and/or wagons, cardboard boxes

It is beneficial for toddlers to have access to block play each day. Cardboard bricks and big foam blocks can be placed in two separate areas of the room. Table blocks can be displayed on or near a flat surface. Toddlers need ways to haul the blocks around indoors, such as carts, carriages, or wagons. Putting objects into a toy shopping cart and moving it to another spot involves spatial learning. On another day, provide cardboard boxes of the same size and encourage the toddlers to manipulate them.

 **Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: small balls, pail, different-sized building materials, beanbags.

Mobile infants will enjoy taking objects apart or taking objects out of a container. Provide simple toys that mobile infants can control themselves, such as small balls and a pail. Infants will enjoy putting balls into the pail, carrying the pail of balls, and taking them out. Demonstrate making a simple house or farm for animal figures. Sit on the floor with toddlers to talk about how to make the farm bigger. Provide a variety of building materials in different sizes. Help a toddler stack up a pile of beanbags. Preschool-age and older children normally enjoy using fit-together builders.



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Self-control

Toddlers watch how a caregiver calms down after engaging in an exciting activity.



Key Concepts

Ring
Up
Down
Loud
Quiet
Calm down



Materials Needed

Caged bell



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join to learn a new song with a bell.]*

EXPLAIN: I have a bell. This is what it sounds like when I ring it!

[Shake the bell to make it ring.]

I am going to ring my bell while I sing a new song!

[Demonstrate each way you will ring the bell during the song.]

I am going to ring it up and then down—like this. I am going to ring it loud—like this!

[Speak quietly.]

I am going to ring it quietly. Listen to the quiet sound of the bell!

ACT: Are you ready to hear the song?

[Enthusiastically sing the following song. Shake the bell in ways described in the song. Smile and make eye contact with each toddler as you sing. (Tune: Row, Row, Row Your Boat.)]



**Ring, ring, ring your bell,
Ring it up and down.
Ring it loud, ring it soft,
Ring it to the ground.**

ASK: Would you like me to ring my bell to the song again?

ACT: *[If the toddlers respond positively, repeat the song rhyme enthusiastically with actions.]*

I had fun ringing my bell to this song! I got excited when I rang the bell and sang the song! I put my bell to the floor when it is time to be calm.



Option 1 continued

EXPLAIN: The song is over. I am going to take a break to calm down. I am going to place my bell on the floor and take a deep breath. I am going to breathe slowly and close my eyes.

ACT: [*Close eyes briefly and take a slow deep breath.*]

RECAP: I had fun ringing my bell to this song! I rang it up and down, then loud and quiet! I put my bell on the floor when it was time to calm down. I rested my body at the end of the fun song. Now I feel calm.



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Self-control

Toddlers practice calming down with caregiver guidance after engaging in an exciting activity.



Key Concepts

Ring
Up
Down
Calm down



Materials Needed

Caged bells—1 per toddler



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Invite several toddlers to join you on the floor with the bell shakers. Give each toddler a bell and invite toddlers to explore the sound they make. You may wish to demonstrate ringing the bell up and down, and making louder and quieter sounds.

After the toddlers have explored the bells, invite them to watch and listen

to a song about ringing a bell. Then enthusiastically sing the song with actions offered in Option 1. Invite the toddlers to move their bells and join you in singing the song. Again, enthusiastically sing the song while demonstrating the corresponding actions with the bell. Encourage toddlers to join you.

After one or two rounds of toddlers joining you in moving their bells with the song, explain that our song and bells have made us feel excited and it is time for all of us to calm down. Lead toddlers in calming down. Explain and demonstrate: “We put our bells on the floor when it is time to calm down. We sit quietly and take a deep breath. We can close our eyes, too. Our bodies get calm.”

Acknowledge toddlers’ efforts to calm down with you after the exciting activity. Example: “We got excited ringing our bells. Now we are calming down. We are sitting quietly and resting our bodies.”





12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Self-control

Toddlers independently practice calming down after engaging in an exciting activity.



Key Concepts

Ring

Up

Down

Calm down



Materials Needed

Caged bells—1 per toddler



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Physical/Health

Invite several toddlers to join you on the floor with the bell shakers. Invite each toddler to select a bell and explore the sound it makes. Introduce the song and show the toddlers how to ring their bells to the words of the song. Enthusiastically sing the song and demonstrate the corresponding actions, encouraging toddlers to

join you. Emphasize the actions of up, down, loud, and quiet. Describe and demonstrate how to calm down, using the procedures described in Option 2.

Then invite the toddlers to do the actions independently as you sing the words. Some toddlers may want to join you in singing as well as ringing their bells. Repeat the song several times without the calming down segment if toddlers remain interested and engaged. Acknowledge each toddler's participation and enthusiasm during the song. Example: "You rang your bell up high, Amelia! Then you rang it down low. You liked ringing your bell. You are laughing and having fun!"

After one or several rounds of song and actions with the bells, announce that it is time to calm down. Remind toddlers that we put our bells on the floor and then calm our bodies. Offer verbal guidance on taking a deep breath and maybe closing our eyes for a little bit. Remind toddlers that we are quiet when we rest our bodies.

Recognize and acknowledge each toddler's efforts to calm down after the exciting activity. Example: "You had fun ringing your bell, Aaron! At the end of the song, you put your bell on the floor and sat quietly. You are practicing how to calm your body."



👁️ What to Look For—Options 1– 3

The calming down segment is an important part of this activity plan. Look carefully at the ease with which toddlers notice and practice how to calm down. You may wish to repeat this part of the activity by again demonstrating and/or leading toddlers in calming down. Some toddlers will find it challenging to calm down, including not touching or moving their bell. As suggested in an Extra Support tip, it may be helpful for toddlers to place their bells in a basket that is out of their reach while practicing how to calm down. One-to-one use of Option 2 may be appropriate to pursue with toddlers who find the calming down segment to be especially challenging. It is important for each toddler to experience success with at least part of the activity.



The primary purpose of the song and actions is to provide some excitement prior to practicing how to calm down. Precise or uniform actions are not the activity goal. At the same time, pay attention to signs of toddler awareness of the concepts of up, down, loud, and quiet. Each of these is named and demonstrated in the song. You may wish to emphasize or repeat a demonstration of a concept that seems unfamiliar to toddlers.

Toddlers are not expected to learn and sing the song in its entirety, although encouraging toddlers to say or sing “ring” may add to their enjoyment of the activity.

Option 3 is the most challenging, by design. The Option 3 plan suggests you sing the song but encourage toddlers to move their bell independently. You may wish to modify this suggestion by moving your bell while singing the song. Independent practice in calming down can be encouraged by providing verbal guidance, as suggested in the plan.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

Extra support ■ If you anticipate the song and bell actions will overstimulate toddlers, offer a slower, quieter version of the bell song. You may wish to replace the word ‘loud’ with the word ‘slow.’ ■ Some toddlers may benefit from a slightly stronger indication that the bell activity is done. Example: “It is time to put the bells away. The bells are quiet. It is time to calm down and rest.” ■ An additional option for calming down is to quietly and briefly hum a little song and/or to softly say something like “quiet, quiet, quiet the bells, all around our room.” ■ In Options 2 and 3, invite toddlers to place their bells in a basket instead of on the floor if you anticipate it may be too challenging for toddlers to have their bells close at hand during the calming down segment.

Enrichment ■ If toddlers readily engage in the song’s action words (up, down, etc.), add new actions words, such as fast/slow or back and forth. ■ Invite toddlers to ring their bells in any way they choose for several moments. Then sing the last line of the song that invites toddlers to place their bells on the ground.

Interest Area

Materials Needed: Baby Bell Set (caged bells, age 3 months +), assorted age-appropriate musical instruments, basket, music player with soft music

Place the bells and other instruments in a basket. Invite several toddlers to play a game of ‘play’ and then ‘stop.’ Play soft music and encourage toddlers to play their instruments and bells. Stop the music and encourage toddlers to put down their instruments. Repeat this game several times, encouraging toddlers to quiet their instruments each time the music stops. After the game, invite the toddlers to sit quietly with you and practice calming down (see activity plan) before moving on to another activity.

 Family Child Care

Materials Needed: variety of age-appropriate musical instruments (including baby bells), basket

Children of all ages enjoy making music with toy instruments. Place the instruments in a basket and invite each child to select and “play” an instrument. (If conflicts arise over particular instruments, you may wish to pass the instruments out and encourage the children to exchange instruments every several minutes.) Sing a variety of songs with children, such as the bell song in the activity plan (see Option 1). Encourage children to play their instruments with corresponding actions such as ‘up’ and then ‘down.’ Babies will enjoy holding their own baby bell to shake and ring. Before moving to the next activity, invite all the children to place their instruments in the basket and sit quietly for a few moments.



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler participates in open-ended block play with a caregiver.



Key Concepts

Play together



Materials Needed

Blocks



Also Promotes

Physical/Health

Communication/Language

Cognitive

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to join you on the floor to play with blocks.]*

EXPLAIN: I have blocks that we can play with together!

ASK: What would you like to build with the blocks today?

[Pause for toddler to respond. If the toddler appears unsure of what he/she would like to do with the blocks, offer one or several simple possibilities, such as stacking the blocks or lining them up end to end or side to side.]

ACT: Let's build with the blocks together!

[Encourage the toddler to explore and build with the blocks. Use strategies, such as the following, to support the toddler's play and create awareness of your actions with the blocks:

- *Talk with the toddler about his/her actions as the two of you play. Example: "You put a block on top of my block. We are building together."*
- *Acknowledge the toddler's gestures and provide language supports. Example: "You are pointing to my long block. Would you like to play with this block? You can say 'block, please.' Here is the long block!"*
- *Follow the toddler's lead with the blocks. Describe your actions that build on the toddler's actions. Example: "I am stacking one block on top of another. I am building a tower just like your tower!"*
- *Offer suggestions to extend the toddler's play. Example: "You put all of your blocks side by side to make a line. You have used all your blocks. Would you like some more blocks to add to your line?"*
- *Encourage the toddler to talk about his/her actions with the blocks. Example: "Tell me about what you are building with the blocks!"*

RECAP: *[Describe the time together, focusing on the interactions. Example: "We had fun playing together with the blocks today! You made a line with your blocks. Then we worked together to build a tower! Thank you for playing with me, Demarion."]*

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

The word 'with' in the activity goal of "open-ended block play with a caregiver" is important because your role is to be an active participant in following the toddler's actions with blocks. Look for opportunities to comment on and manipulate the blocks in ways that support the toddler's efforts. Avoid serving as an observer only or as a director of the play. Some toddlers may be fully focused on their explorations with the blocks and not acknowledge anything you say or do. Continue to gently describe your actions as well as the toddler's actions during the activity.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ In the opening segment, position the blocks between you and the toddler so each of you has easy and equal access to the blocks. ■ State desired or expected behavior if the toddler engages in inappropriate actions. Example: "Our blocks are for building. We are not safe when we kick the blocks. What do you want to build with our blocks?"

Enrichment ■ Provide props, such as people figures or cars that relate to the toddler's block play. ■ Invite the toddler to play a copycat game with the blocks. Start by copying what the toddler is doing with the blocks and then encourage him/her to copy you.



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Toddlers engage in open-ended play together with Duplo® building blocks.



Key Concepts

Play together



Materials Needed

Duplo® building blocks



Also Promotes

Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Invite several toddlers to play together with Duplo® building blocks on a low table. Toddlers who are unfamiliar with Duplo® blocks will benefit from a demonstration of how to connect them. Encourage toddlers to build simple structures with 2–3 blocks. Toddlers may enjoy taking their structures apart and building them again. Toddlers may play independently at the table (parallel play) or work together to build a structure. Both of these approaches are ways to play together. If the toddlers are playing independently at the table, encourage them to notice one another’s actions. Examples: “Brailey is building with the blue blocks. She is putting the blue blocks together to make a tower.” “Micah is lining up his blocks in a row. See how his blocks are in a line?” Describe positive social interactions that you observe. Example: “You gave Brailey your blue blocks, Micah! You saw that she was building with the blue blocks and you helped her. You are being a good friend to Brailey.”

What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers will likely play side by side during this activity. Look for opportunities to describe each toddler’s actions and encourage toddlers to notice what others at the table are doing. Some toddlers will enjoy watching and imitating others. Others may work together to build a structure. Recognize interactions that are both verbal (asking for a block) and nonverbal (giving an animal to a peer). Acknowledge all forms of participation and emphasize the opportunity for toddlers to become aware of what their peers are doing with the blocks.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ If the Duplo®-sized blocks are too challenging for a toddler, you may wish to offer the larger Mega Bloks®. ■ When appropriate, provide words for a toddler to communicate with a peer, such as asking for an item. Example: “Jaquan, I see you are looking at the red blocks in front of Micah. Would you like to use the blocks? You can say ‘can I have the blocks?’ to Micah.” ■ If a toddler is new to Duplo® building blocks, you may wish to offer some one-to-one time with you for the toddler to practice putting the blocks together and taking them apart.

Enrichment ■ Provide people figures, such as Duplo® people figures, to add to the toddlers’ play. Invite toddlers to explore new play themes with the figures. ■ Invite toddlers to choose new materials they would like to bring into the play activity, such as cars or animal figures.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Toddlers engage in open-ended play together with Duplo® building blocks.



Key Concepts

Play together



Materials Needed

Duplo® building blocks



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: Create several simple structures with an assortment of blocks and place the animal figures on and around the structures to invite play.

Invite 2–3 toddlers to play together with the animals and blocks. Encourage the toddlers to explore the materials and to decide how they would like to engage with the animals and blocks. You may wish to suggest the toddlers rework the structures you created with the blocks. Examples: “The zoo animals need a home. Maybe you would like to build a house or a zoo for the animals.” Toddlers may play side by side or work together to build a structure for the animals. Encourage the toddlers to notice one another’s actions as they play. Examples: “Quinn is putting the animals on a large block. I wonder what her animals are doing!” “Emmett is stacking the blocks on top of each other. He is making a tall tower.” Invite toddlers to imitate the actions of their peers with the blocks. Example: “Quinn is dancing her lion on a block. Let’s all dance an animal on a block like Quinn!” Encourage toddlers to work together when there is a natural opportunity to do so. Example: “Quinn and Emmett, you both have a lion. Maybe the lions are a family and would like to live together! Would you like to build a house together for the lions?” Describe positive social interactions that you observe. Example: “You are building a house together for your lions!”

What to Look For—Option 3

This activity offers more materials (play animals plus blocks) for toddlers to manipulate than offered in Option 2. The additional materials may prompt joint work guided by a shared purpose, such as building a house together for two lions to live in. Look for natural opportunities to support shared work with the animals and blocks, as suggested in the activity plan. But also anticipate that some toddlers may prefer to play independently next to their peers. Parallel play is common at this age. Look for opportunities to encourage toddlers to notice the actions of one another as they play. Some toddlers may enjoy imitating the actions of their peers. This is a first step in developing joint play skills with peers. Recognize and acknowledge positive social interactions as the toddlers play.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ If a toddler is not engaged with the materials, sit next to the toddler and offer gentle guidance on ways he/she could participate, such as describing what another toddler is doing or offering a suggestion of what he/she might do with a block or animal figure. Some toddlers may prefer to watch. ■ Model language for initiating play with a peer. Example: “I see you watching Emmett build his tower, Quinn. Would you like to help him build?”

**Option 3 continued**

Let's ask him! You can say 'Can I help?'" ■ If you anticipate your creation of simple structures (see Be Prepared) might hinder toddlers' engagement of the materials, begin the activity with a small pile of animals and blocks for each toddler.

Enrichment ■ Add additional figures and props that may enrich play themes. ■ Encourage toddlers to watch and imitate the actions of one another by describing and narrating their interactions with the materials.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: Duplo® building blocks, Duplo® people figures, blocks, zoo animal figures

Building blocks and other building materials, such as Duplo® blocks, can be placed in different areas to encourage toddlers to interact in small groups. Some toddlers may enjoy small soft blocks on a low table. Block play and dramatic play materials are easily combined to enrich learning. Place animal figures and family figures near the blocks. Encourage toddlers to take notice of the actions of their peers while they play.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: block area, zoo animal figures, people figures, felt pieces in natural colors in a variety of sizes and shapes (such as green for grass, brown for dirt, gray for stone), several books about zoo animals

Children of all ages will enjoy interacting with the new materials in the block area. You may wish to use one of the books about zoo animals and their habitats to read with the group. Place the books and materials in the block area and invite children to explore and play. Encourage older children to interact with the toddlers as they play together. Toddlers will enjoy watching older children and may imitate their actions. Babies may enjoy playing with soft blocks and chunky age-appropriate animals.



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Fine motor development

Toddlers practice clapping their hands as part of a song.



Key Concepts Clap



Materials Needed None



Also Promotes Self-Regulation Communication/Language



Optional Reading *Clap Your Hands* by Lorinda Bryan Cauley

Be Prepared: Learn the words of the first verse and tune to “Clap Your Hands” by Little Fox. Sources include the internet and CDs.

BEGIN: *[Invite toddlers to join you to sing some songs. Use one of the Informal Gathering Starters from the ELM User Guide: Birth–36 Months. Kneel or sit facing the toddlers.]*

EXPLAIN: I have a fun song to sing. We listen to songs with our ears.

[Point to your ears.]

You can watch me with your eyes.

[Point to your eyes.]

Our song is going to tell us to clap. When we clap, one hand pats our other hand.

[Demonstrate clap in a pronounced way using your arms while also saying clap.]

ASK: Would you like to clap with me?

[Wait. Comment on toddlers’ responses. Example: “I heard clapping sounds! One hand patted the other hand!”]

ACT: Please listen to the song I will sing.

[Sing “Clap Your Hands.” Smile and clap your hands. Encourage toddlers to clap their hands. At this age toddlers are not expected to clap in unison.]

Repeat the first verse. Encourage toddlers to clap again. Invite toddlers to sing along with you.]

RECAP: Today we learned a new song. Our song told us to clap. You listened to the song, and you watched me. We all clapped our hands.

What to Look For—Option 1

The song and clapping are likely to be of interest to toddlers. Emphasize clapping and anticipate differences across toddlers in clapping abilities. This fine motor action involves several skills, including spatial awareness, and requires supportive practice to develop. Although the activity plan suggests inviting toddlers to sing with you, probably most will not do so. With repeated

**Option 1 continued**

experience, many toddlers will begin to join you in singing according to their ability. At this age toddlers are not expected to sing in an organized activity or to clap in unison.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Sing the song slowly to help toddlers become familiar with words and to concentrate on the motor coordination involved in clapping two hands together. ■ Demonstrate in slow motion how to move both arms to bring two open hands together in a clap.

Enrichment ■ If toddlers are interested in more singing, introduce an action related to a part of the body they can see, such as “pat your tummy.” ■ For toddlers who are familiar with the song and actions, vary the way you sing it, such as faster. ■ Change the words to clap your paws if the toddlers enjoy pretending.



12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Fine motor development

A toddler practices clapping his/her hands along with a puppet as part of a song.



Key Concepts

Watch
Imitate
Clap



Materials Needed

1 puppet
Clap Your Hands by Lorinda Bryan Cauley



Also Promotes

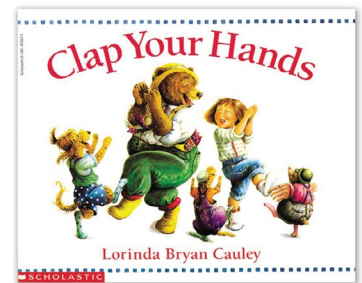
Self-Regulation
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Learn the words of the first verse and tune to “Clap Your Hands” by Little Fox. Sources include the internet and CDs.

Sit on the floor with one toddler during playtime. Introduce a puppet. Explain that our puppet would like to sing a song with us. Example: “Let’s sing a song with our puppet.” Animate the puppet by moving the head and arms. “I think our (name of puppet) can clap!”

Begin singing “Clap Your Hands” by Little Fox and move the puppet’s arms as if it is clapping. Encourage the toddler to watch and imitate the puppet. Emphasize slow and quick clapping included in the song.

As a follow-up activity, sit next to the toddler with the book *Clap Your Hands* by Lorinda Bryan Cauley. Read the text and point to the pictures. Toddlers will enjoy the opportunity to point to pictures and respond to the humorous pictures in a book that connects to their clapping practice.



👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Notice whether the toddler wants to interact with the puppet before you sing the song. Encourage the toddler to touch the puppet gently. A toddler may not want to clap along with the puppet. Watching the clapping action of the puppet can be beneficial. The follow-up book segment provides the toddler an opportunity to connect the book pictures and information to his/her experience in clapping (or watching the puppet clap).

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Take the puppet off your hand for the toddler to hold and explore. ■ Encourage the toddler to put his/her hand on the puppet’s hand.

Enrichment ■ Add other actions the toddler may imitate, such as “touch your head.” ■ Ask the toddler what action he/she would like to do with the puppet.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers watch and participate in a sequence of hand motions as part of a song.



Key Concepts

Hands together
Clap



Materials Needed

None



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Learn the words and actions for the “Bubble, Bubble Pop” song. Internet sources are available. The activity introduces one new action for toddlers to make with two hands.

Invite toddlers to join you to sing a fun song about a fish that also involves our hands. Example: “We have a fun song to sing. Our song is about a fish. We will do some things with our hands when we sing the song.”

Explain that we can put our hands together and move them side to side when we sing about the fish. Demonstrate putting the palms of your hands together and moving them (when next to each other) to pretend a fish is swimming. Example: “Let’s make our hands move like a fish swimming.”

Then our song says “bubble, bubble pop!” We clap our hands to pop the bubbles! Demonstrate clapping your hands while saying “pop!”

Sing the song all the way through with the actions. Repeat the song and encourage the toddlers to watch and imitate your hand movements.

What to Look For—Option 3

The activity promotes fine motor skills through different hand positions and actions plus the sequence of two different sets of hand actions. Repeated exposure to and experience with the song and actions will support toddlers’ eventual participation. Some toddlers may make their own hand movements for the fish and enjoy making a clap at the end. Learning a sequence of actions for a song fosters the mental skill for learning ordered steps for skills, such as toileting, handwashing, and getting onto a riding toy.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Repeat the first part of the song several times as toddlers begin to understand how to place their hands together. ■ Exaggerate the motions to create the idea of big fish swimming.

Enrichment ■ For toddlers who have experience with the song, offer variations, such as singing about big fish.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: *2 display pictures as shown, bubbles, *Clap Your Hands* by Lorinda Bryan Cauley **or, if available** *Clap Your Hands* by Kay Widdowson

Display two pictures of adults and young toddlers clapping. Sit on the floor with one or two toddlers at a time to look at and talk about the pictures. Offer one of the suggested books. Recite rhymes you think will be of interest to the children in your gathering. If toddlers seem especially interested in a particular rhyme, set aside the book and repeat the rhyme with your own hand motions. Toddlers will enjoy looking at the pictures and hearing the rhymes. Outdoors, blow bubbles and encourage toddlers to clap their hands to pop the bubbles.



*Printables provided

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Family Child Care

Gather toddlers and infants for 5–10 minutes of singing time. After a familiar song, such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” with the actions, introduce the new clapping song. Repeat several times. Babies will enjoy the melody and may kick their feet. Older children may enjoy demonstrating a clapping action. Vary the activity by singing softly and encouraging the children to clap quietly. Also, sing the song with extra enthusiasm and encourage the children to clap their hands a bit harder. Help children notice the difference.