



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing focused on saying goodnight.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler participates in a shared book reading with an opportunity to join a caregiver in saying a key word repeated in the story.

Option 3 (OO) A toddler participates in a shared book reading with an opportunity to point to and say the name of familiar items in pictures.



Cognitive

Exploring Objects

Option 1 (OO) A toddler practices putting a ball in a ball-drop toy and watching the ball fall.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers practice together in putting balls in ball-drop toys and watching them fall.



Self-Regulation

Focusing and Remembering

Option 1 (OO) A toddler watches how a caregiver matches identical pictures.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler identifies matching pictures with caregiver guidance.

Option 3 (OO) A toddler practices identifying matching pictures with minimal caregiver guidance.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

Option 1 (OO) A toddler participates with a caregiver in open-ended play that includes informal demonstrations of positive social interactions.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers engage in open-ended play with novel materials, with guided opportunities to notice positive social interactions.



Physical/Health

Moving Our Bodies

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers practice walking, bending, and carrying a small item as part of open-ended play with animal figures in a sensory table.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler practices walking with, and putting items in, a push cart.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers practice running as part of guided pretend play.

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

Revision: 03/04/2020



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

Toddlers participate in a book sharing focused on saying goodnight.



Key Concepts

Goodnight
Moon



Materials Needed

Goodnight Moon by
Margaret Wise Brown



Also Promotes

Cognitive

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join you to read a book. Show the cover of the book. Point to features of the cover picture as you describe each.]*

EXPLAIN: Our book tells us about a bunny going to bed. It is nighttime. It is time for the bunny to sleep.

[Point to the moon.]

This is the moon. The sky is dark. Look at the stars in the sky.

We can say goodnight when it is time to go to bed. Let's say "goodnight" together.

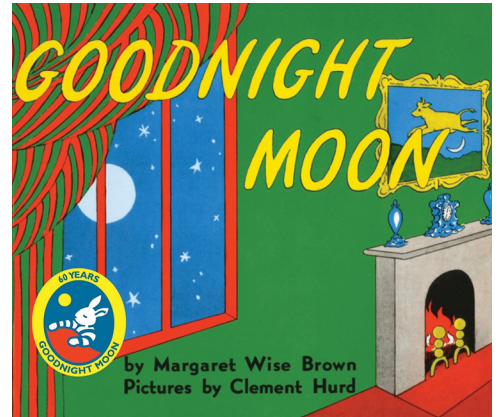
[Encourage the toddler to say "goodnight" with you. You might wish to wave when you say "goodnight."]

Our book says "goodnight" to lots of different things. Some parts of our book are silly!

ACT: *[Use the following strategies to engage the toddler in the book:*

- *Point to objects you describe and read about, especially items that are the focus of "goodnight."*
- *Invite toddlers to point to familiar pictured objects you name.*
- *Acknowledge and expand on the toddler's comments and pointing. Examples: "Michael, you are pointing to the red balloon and smiling." "You said 'moon,' Alexander. There is the moon! The moon is in the sky."*
- *Help the toddler connect items shown in the book to items in your room or at the toddler's home. Example: "This is a little house. We have a little house in our room. Let's point to the little house in our room."*
- *Spend more time on pages/illustrations that seem to be of particular interest to the toddler.]*

RECAP: Our book said goodnight to lots of different things. Some of the pictures were silly!



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

The bright pictures and rhyming text make this book an enjoyable experience for toddlers. Toddlers will be familiar with many of the items shown in the pictures. Some toddlers may say the names of some objects, and others may find and point to familiar objects you name.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Describe items that may not be familiar to the toddler, such as the traditional telephone, pair of mittens, and bowl of mush.

Enrichment ■ Ask toddlers what they see on each page. Encourage toddler to name or point to the item they are looking at. ■ Incorporate into the book reading a fun task of looking for the young mouse on each colored page. Toddlers may need help with this task.

12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Receptive language Expressive language

A toddler participates in a shared book reading with an opportunity to join a caregiver in saying a key word repeated in the story.



Key Concepts Goodnight



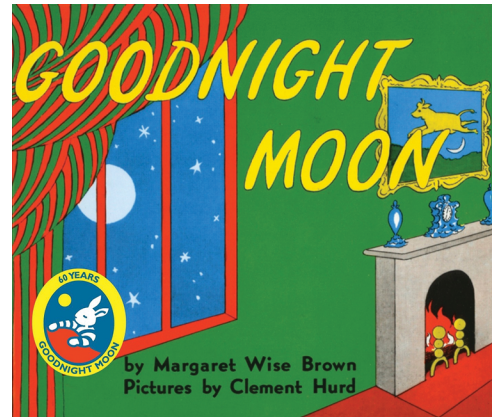
Materials Needed *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown



Also Promotes Cognitive

Invite a toddler to help you read *Goodnight Moon* by saying some of the book's words with you. Use the strategies suggested in Option 1 plus opportunities for the toddler to repeat or say with you “goodnight” each time it appears in the book, including its title. You may wish to develop a simple cue for when we say “goodnight,” such as raising your eyebrows and nodding, slightly raising a finger, or lightly touching the toddler's arm.

Acknowledge the toddler's contribution to the book reading when you conclude the session. Example: “You helped me read our book! You said the word “goodnight.” We had fun reading this book together.”



👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Some toddlers may promptly begin saying “goodnight,” some toddlers may begin saying “goodnight” with you partway through the story, and others may prefer to listen only. It is helpful to accentuate the book's rhyming words and “goodnight” each time it is included in the book text.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Offer a gentle second opportunity for a toddler to join you in saying “goodnight” if he/she initially does not pursue your suggestion but seems interested in saying “goodnight” partway through the book. Example: “Maybe you'd like to say ‘goodnight’ with me. Let's try it. Goodnight.”

Enrichment ■ Point to familiar objects in pictures and encourage the toddler to say its name.

12–24 Months

Option 3 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

A toddler participates in a shared book reading with an opportunity to point to and say the name of familiar items in pictures.



Key Concepts

Goodnight



Materials Needed

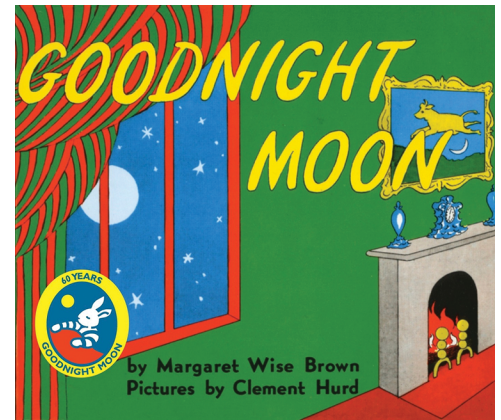
Goodnight Moon by
Margaret Wise Brown



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Invite a toddler to help you read *Goodnight Moon* by pointing to and saying the names of things in pictures. Explain that the book says ‘goodnight’ to many different things. Encourage the toddler to point to and repeat the names of items the moon recognizes with a “goodnight.” Begin with “goodnight moon.” Say the text, invite the toddler to point to the moon, and repeat “goodnight moon.” Demonstrate if needed. Continue this approach with all pages. Make this a fun and lighthearted activity, and provide assistance if the toddler has difficulty finding the object.



Positively acknowledge the toddler’s participation when you conclude the session. Example: “You helped me read our book! You said “goodnight” and pointed to many things in our book. We had fun reading this book together.”

👁️ What to Look For—Option 3

Some toddlers may prefer to point to items named in the book text but not repeat the names of items. Other toddlers may say names but not point. Both approaches are beneficial. If a toddler prefers to listen only, the strategies suggested in Option 1 may be more appropriate.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ After the named item has been identified in a picture, point to and talk briefly about other parts of the picture. Emphasize parts of the picture that directly relate to, or offer a contrast with, the identified item. Example: dark sky surrounding the bright moon.

Enrichment ■ Invite the toddler to find and point to less prominent objects in a picture, such as a book or toy giraffe.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (oversized version if available), *Goodnight Moon* picture cards

The picture cards for this activity may be purchased, printed from online sources, or handmade. Place the book open on a low table with the picture cards. Invite toddlers to look at the picture cards, one at a time, and find the same picture in the book. Encourage toddlers to name or describe what they see in the picture. Toddlers will likely need support with this task. Limit the number of cards you make available and rotate them periodically.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (oversized version if available)

Using an oversized version of the book can make it easier for children of different ages to look closely at details of pictures. Consider using a combination of the strategies suggested in Options 2 and 3 to share the book, depending on the ages and book experiences of children in the gathering. The contributions of older children can enhance young toddlers' understandings of pictures and words. Infants may enjoy holding a *Goodnight Moon* board book during the activity.



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills
Problem-solving

A toddler practices putting a ball in a ball-drop toy and watching the ball fall.



Key Concepts

Hole
Fall
Top
Bottom



Materials Needed

Ball-drop toy
Container for balls



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Physical/Health

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to join you to explore the ball-drop toy. Sit next to the toddler with the toy in front of the toddler. Place a container of balls next to the toy.]*

EXPLAIN: Let's watch our balls go down this special toy!

[Put one ball at a time in the top hole. Pause so the toddler can watch the ball drop. Then put 1–2 more balls in the top hole, one at a time. Put balls in the container when they reach the bottom of the toy.]



Would you like to put a ball in our special toy?

[Encourage the toddler to put 1–3 balls in the top hole, one at a time. Put “dropped” balls in the container. Show excitement about the ball actions.]

Point to parts of the toy you describe as suggested below, including the top and bottom of the toy.]

Let's look closely at how our toy works. We put a little ball in the top hole. The ball falls and goes through another hole. Then the ball falls again and goes through another hole.

Our ball keeps falling and going through holes! The ball starts at the top of our toy and falls to the bottom of our toy.

ACT: *[Encourage the toddler to practice putting balls in the top of the toy. When the toddler is holding a ball above the top of the toy, say “Ready, set, go!” Explain that “go” means we let go of the ball.]*

Pause slightly after saying “ready” and “set.” Use a playful approach to help the activity remain lighthearted.

Describe the toddler's actions using short, full sentences. Repeat and expand on the toddler's utterances. Example: If a toddler says “fast,” respond with “Your ball is going fast.”

Bring the activity to a close after about 10 minutes of active exploration. Tell the toddler when he/she is nearing the time to stop.]

**Option 1 continued**

RECAP: We played with the ball drop. You made our little balls go down, down through the holes!

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Look for ways to support specific skills involved in this activity:

- holding and releasing the ball at the top hole (fine motor development),
- waiting to act when hearing “go” (self-regulation), and
- awareness of the cause and effect (release ball = ball falls) of actions with the toy (cognitive).

Verbal support and demonstrations are appropriate ways to help a toddler with the above skills.

Examples: Demonstrate holding and releasing a ball with your hand. Explain how letting go of the ball in the top hole causes the ball to fall to the bottom of the toy. Practice “ready, set, go” with another toy that can be dropped to the floor or top of a table.

Early awareness of cause and effect can be fostered with simple explanations that emphasize what happens when we do something. Example: “What happens when you let go of the ball?” It is not necessary or appropriate to teach the words “cause” and “effect” to toddlers.

Keep good track of the balls. Typically the balls that come with a ball-drop toy are a special size and other balls will not work.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Use 1–2 sections of the toy initially if you anticipate the fully assembled toy may be too challenging to use in an introduction. ■ A toddler may be more comfortable standing to use the toy on a low table. Assist a toddler in assembling the toy if it falls apart.

Enrichment ■ Invite the toddler to put 2–3 balls in the top hole, one immediately after the other. ■ Help or watch a toddler put the toy together, beginning with the bottom section. ■ Take turns dropping balls into the top hole.

12–24 Months

Option 2
Informal Gathering

Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills
Problem-solving

Toddlers practice together in putting balls in ball-drop toys and watching them fall.



Key Concepts

Hole
Top
Bottom



Materials Needed

4 ball-drop toys
Balls—2 per toddler (see Be Prepared)
Sensory table



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with use of a ball-drop toy through participation in Option 1 or a similar activity. Place four ball-drop toys in an empty sensory table (tub) with space on all sides for balls to roll a bit, and for toddlers to have some space for moving around. The balls will be contained in the tub after they roll down the toy. Typically ball-drop toys require balls of a special size that come with the toy.

BEGIN: [*Invite four toddlers to join you to explore the ball-drop toys. Sit at eye level or kneel next to the sensory table. Help a toddler position himself/herself in front of a ball-drop toy. Do not distribute balls until you provide a reminder demonstration, described below.*]

EXPLAIN: [*Provide a brief demonstration and description of how the toy works. Use suggestions in the opening segment of Option 1, including pointing to and naming the holes, and top and bottom of the toy.*]

ACT: [*Distribute two balls to each toddler and invite toddlers to play with the toy in front of them.*

Give attention to each toddler by describing his/her actions.

Example: “Devon, I am ready to watch your blue ball! There it goes, down the hole. It rolls down to the lower hole. It keeps rolling down the toy. There it is! Your ball came out at the bottom!”

A toddler may enjoy getting a playful verbal signal to let go of his/her ball. Use the “Ready, set, go!” prompt introduced in Option 1. Kneel next to a toddler who wants this signal and use a quiet voice so other toddlers are not distracted or think a uniform approach to letting go of a ball is expected.

After about ten minutes of active exploration, announce that the game is almost over. Invite toddlers to help you put the balls into a container.]

RECAP: We played with the ball-drop toy. You made lots of balls go down, down through the holes!

 What to Look For—Option 2

Watch toddlers’ engagement of your demonstration and description of the toy in the opening segment. Even though this segment is intended as review, you may notice signs of confusion in a toddler’s facial expressions. Kneel next to a toddler who may benefit from coaching on use of the toy.

A peer gathering offers good opportunity to encourage toddlers to notice what another toddler is doing. There may be spontaneous explorations of the toy—such as letting go of two balls at one time—that you want to draw to the attention of toddlers.

Option 2 continued

The ball-drop toys you use are likely to be the same or similar, but this will not inhibit some toddlers' interest in trying each toy! Facilitate movement around the sensory table. Encourage toddlers to hold two balls and step to the next ball-drop toy to explore.

 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Reassure toddlers there are enough balls. ■ Kneel next to a toddler who needs extra support.

Enrichment ■ In repeated use of the toys, use 1–2 segments only for exploration. Help toddlers add another section(s). ■ Use a raised surface to extend the balls' descent with a tube.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: spinning top, pop-up boxes, water play, pans, boxes, and plastic plates, wooden spoon or child-size mallet, variety of toys in different sizes, large and small dramatic play props

Provide materials that foster the idea of cause and effect, such as a spinning top, pop-up boxes, and water play. Set out a variety of drum-type items, such as pans, boxes, and plastic plates that toddlers can hit with a wooden spoon or a child-size mallet and compare the sounds.

Support exploration of large and small by providing a variety of toys in different sizes in the building area with animal figures and blocks. In the dramatic play area, place props of different sizes. Possibilities include shoes, dishes, dolls, and animals that are both large and small. At playtime, encourage a toddler to compare his/her shoes to your shoes. Some toddlers will enjoy playing with a variety of boxes and experimenting to see which one they can sit in.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: balls, simple tube (such as oatmeal carton), toddler basketball hoop, cart tubes, mailing tubes, toy cars and animals, dry sensory material

Infants will enjoy dropping a ball into a simple tube, such as an oatmeal carton. Toddlers delight in putting a smaller (8") ball through a toddler-size basketball hoop. Using cardboard craft tubes or sections of mailing tubes will be enjoyable for children interested in block building. Tubes cut along the length make interesting tunnels for toy cars or animals in the building area. Children also enjoy using tubes in a sensory table with dry materials.



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Executive function

A toddler watches how a caregiver matches identical pictures.



Key Concepts

Look
Same
Different
In
Out



Materials Needed

5-piece wooden knob puzzle (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: This activity uses a five-piece wooden knob puzzle with a picture under each piece. The activity description assumes the Melissa and Doug® First Shapes Jumbo Knob puzzle is used. Use a five-piece puzzle of your choice, with knobs and pictures under each piece. If a three-piece puzzle is more appropriate for the toddler involved in this activity, adapt the plan described below and see activities with a three-piece puzzle in Block 15 (Self-Regulation).

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to join you at a table to watch you match some pictures in a puzzle. Put the fully assembled puzzle in front of the toddler. Sit next to the toddler.]*

Look at this puzzle! The puzzle shows a house. Some of the puzzle pieces are different parts of the house.



EXPLAIN: *[Point to each piece in the puzzle board as you say the name of what is shown. Use a pace that is appropriate to the toddler's engagement of the activity.]*

There is a sun, a tree, a roof, a door, and a window.

I am going to look carefully at each puzzle piece I take out of the puzzle.

ACT: *[Remove and describe pieces, moving from top to bottom or left to right. The plan described below begins at the top.]*

This puzzle piece shows the sun. The piece is round.

[Trace the shape with your finger. Invite the toddler to trace the shape. While the toddler is holding the puzzle piece, point to the picture of the sun on the puzzle board.]

Look, here is another picture of a sun! The puzzle piece and the picture on our puzzle board are the same.

[Encourage the toddler to compare the puzzle piece in his/her hand to the picture on the puzzle board. Emphasize the pictures are the same. Then invite the toddler to put the puzzle piece next to the puzzle.]

Let's move our finger around the picture on the board.

[Trace the outlines of the picture on the puzzle board with your finger. Invite the toddler to trace the picture.]

**Option 1 continued**

Continue the above procedure for each remaining piece.]

I looked carefully at all of the pieces in our puzzle. I took all of the pieces out of the puzzle. Now I am going to put the pieces back in the puzzle board.

I am going to start with the piece that shows a tree.

[Hold the puzzle piece in your hand or invite the toddler to hold the piece. Point to pictures on the puzzle board that you name.]

I want to find the picture of a tree on our puzzle board. Here is a picture of a window. A tree and a window are different things. I want to find the picture on the puzzle board that is the same as the puzzle piece in my (your) hand.

Look, here is the picture of the tree. This picture is the same as our puzzle piece that shows a tree. I am going to put the puzzle piece on top of the picture that is the same.

[Put the puzzle piece over its identical picture on the board. Continue this procedure for remaining pieces. Consistently emphasize that the pictures are the same. Examples: "Door and door go together." "Sun and sun go together."]

RECAP: You watched me work with a puzzle. I looked carefully at each of the puzzle pieces and the pictures on the puzzle board. I put together puzzle pieces and pictures that showed the same thing.



12–24 Months

Option 2
One-to-One

Skill and Goal

Executive function

A toddler identifies matching pictures with caregiver guidance.



Key Concepts

Look
Same



Materials Needed

5-piece wooden knob puzzle (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: Secure the puzzle used in Option 1 (a five-piece puzzle of your choice with knobs and pictures under each piece). The activity description assumes the Melissa and Doug® First Shapes puzzle is used. If a three-piece puzzle is more appropriate for the toddler involved in this activity, adapt the plan described below and see activities with a three-piece puzzle in Block 15 (Self-Regulation).

Invite a toddler to join you at a table to work on a puzzle. Put the puzzle fully in front of the toddler. Sit next to the toddler. Talk about what the puzzle shows. Use the following steps, beginning at the top or on the left side of the puzzle and moving down or to the right:

- Invite the toddler to remove each piece from the puzzle board, one piece at a time. Immediately after the toddler removes a piece, encourage him/her to hold the piece, look carefully at the picture and say its name. Promptly offer the name of the pictured item if the toddler does not say its name. Encourage the toddler to move his/her finger around the outside of the piece. Invite the toddler to put the piece on the table next to the puzzle.
- After all puzzle pieces have been removed, encourage the toddler to look at each picture on the puzzle board. Invite the toddler to point to each picture as you or the toddler say the name of the pictured item. Encourage the toddler to trace the outline of the picture with his/her finger.
- Invite the toddler to pick up a puzzle piece, one at a time, and look for the same picture on the puzzle board. Encourage the toddler to put the puzzle piece on top of the same picture on the puzzle board. Emphasize that the toddler is putting together the same pictures.



Conclude the session by recognizing the toddler's effort to put together pictures that are the same.



12-24 Months

Option 3
One-to-One



Skill and Goal
Executive function

A toddler practices identifying matching pictures with minimal caregiver guidance.



Key Concepts
Look



Materials Needed
5-piece wooden knob puzzle (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes
Cognitive
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: Secure the puzzle used in Options 1 and 2 (a five-piece puzzle with knobs and pictures under each piece). If a three-piece puzzle is more appropriate for the toddler involved in this activity, adapt the plan described below and see activities with a three-piece puzzle in Block 15 (Self-Regulation).

Invite a toddler to join you at a table to work on a puzzle. Explain that you will watch and help if the toddler asks you to help. Limit your contribution to occasionally describing the toddler's actions. Example: "You turned the piece that shows the door so it will fit in the puzzle board." Conclude the activity when the toddler has completed the puzzle or loses interest. Recognize the toddler's efforts. Example: "You looked at all of the puzzle pieces, Jonathan. You found where some of the pieces go on the puzzle board."



👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–3

The activity options offer more challenge than the puzzle work in Block 15 (Self-Regulation) by using a five-piece puzzle and tracing the outlines of pieces and pictures with a finger.

Monitor the toddler's engagement of each activity option and promptly make adaptations if it appears the task is too challenging or not sufficiently challenging. The three options are sequenced so it is easy to incorporate the strategies of a different option. Examples: Shift to Option 2 if Option 1 seems too basic for a toddler. Shift to Option 2 if Option 3 leads to some frustration or signs of giving up. Also pay attention to whether a toddler may benefit from your verbal guidance for the fine motor actions involved in manipulating puzzle pieces.

The activity options emphasize the process of focusing on basic characteristics of puzzle elements and remembering where puzzle pieces are located in the puzzle. Speed is not important. If a toddler wishes to rush, offer gentle requests to slow down and look carefully. Use the word "match" only if you are confident a toddler understands that match means two (or more) things are the same.

In the opening segment of Option 1, when puzzle pieces are identified while still in the puzzle board, watch the toddler's facial expressions carefully to determine what pace to use in naming and describing each piece. A toddler may have limited familiarity with a pictured item and no awareness of what the item is called. Always repeat the name of what is shown.



The activity options suggest tracing the outlines of a piece and picture, as noted above, and the puzzle used in the activity description has pieces in different identified shapes. It is helpful for toddlers to be aware of shape differences, but not necessary or appropriate to teach shape names. Shape names are typically introduced when children are 3–5 years of age. Also, avoid saying or emphasizing there are five puzzle pieces. This information is not important to the activity and may distract or confuse. It is not necessary or appropriate to teach counting to toddlers.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

Extra support ■ Point to your eyes when you describe looking carefully at puzzle pieces and pictures. ■ In the opening segment of Option 2, when you talk about what the puzzle shows, help the toddler focus by asking a close-ended question. Example: “Does our puzzle show a house or a car?” ■ In Options 2 and 3, provide verbal support for turning a puzzle piece so it fits in the puzzle board. Use a turning gesture with your hand/fingers when you suggest turning a piece. ■ In Options 2 and 3, offer a positive progress report if it appears the toddler would benefit from encouragement. Example: “Look at the pieces you have put in the puzzle board!”

Enrichment ■ You may wish to introduce a second way to match puzzle pieces to pictures shown on the puzzle board. Look carefully at a picture on the puzzle board and search for the corresponding puzzle piece. This is in contrast with the activity description’s organization of the task by puzzle pieces. ■ Explain that pictures that are the same are a match.

Interest Area

Materials Needed: several 3- and 5-piece puzzles with knobs and pictures under each piece

Place the puzzles on a low table and invite two toddlers to work together on a puzzle of their choice, taking pieces out of the puzzle board and then putting them back in. Include the puzzle used in Options 1–3. Encourage toddlers to take their time and to look at each piece and corresponding picture. Emphasize that the activity involves finding puzzle pictures that are the same.

Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

In addition to offering Options 1–3 to toddlers, provide slightly more challenging puzzles to preschool-age and older children. Keep in mind that the absence of knobs on puzzle pieces significantly increases the fine motor challenge of removing and manipulating pieces. Some preschool-age children may enjoy Option 3 or benefit from Option 2.



12–24 Months

Option 1
One-to-One

Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler participates with a caregiver in open-ended play that includes informal demonstrations of positive social interactions.



Key Concepts

Sharing
Play



Materials Needed

Blocks or housekeeping items (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Situate this play interaction in blocks, housekeeping, or an area that is of interest to the toddler who participates. Make sure items the toddler likes to play with are fully available. The activity description assumes play occurs in blocks. This is for illustration purposes only.

BEGIN: Would you like to play together in blocks? It is fun to play with blocks. There are neat things we can do with blocks!

[If the toddler declines, extend your invitation on another day.]

ACT: *[If the toddler shows interest in playing, ask if there is something he/she would like to build with you. Or suggest a joint activity with blocks that you anticipate would be of interest to the toddler. Example: building a road that each of you drives a separate car on. Engage the toddler in the joint activity only if the toddler shows interest. Follow the toddler's lead.]*

If a joint activity is not pursued, play with several blocks in ways that are of interest to you. Encourage the toddler to use the blocks in ways he/she wishes. Use the following strategies at appropriate times during the play activity:

- Describe what the toddler is doing. Describe what you are doing.
- Ask the toddler for help or suggestions in your activity. Example: "I want to build a tower. What blocks should I use? Where should I put my tower?"
- Acknowledge the toddler's efforts to interact during the activity. Example: "You gave me two blocks. Thank you. Do you want me to use these blocks for my tower? Do you want me to help you build your tower?"
- Demonstrate sharing or turn-taking with a play material or action. Example: "I am going to drive this car around my tower. Do you want to drive this car around your tower, too?"
- Provide words for the toddler to use. Example: "You can say, 'I drive car.' This tells me you want to drive the car, too."

Play alongside or with the toddler as long as time and toddler interest permit.]

RECAP: We had fun playing together in blocks.

[Briefly describe highlights of the session, especially instances of sharing or joint activity. Thank the toddler for playing with you.]



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Toddlers engage in open-ended play with novel materials, with guided opportunities to notice positive social interactions.



Key Concepts

Sharing



Materials Needed

Dramatic play or housekeeping area
New materials (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Add materials that are not typically available in your room and that you anticipate will be of interest to toddlers who participate in this activity. Examples: real food boxes and containers, dress-up clothes such as scarves and hats, or real baby items such as small diapers and bottles.

Invite several toddlers to join you to play in the housekeeping area. Point to or display the additional new items as you describe each with enthusiasm. Suggest some ways toddlers may want to play with new items.

Encourage toddlers to use materials as they wish. The toddlers may engage in a joint activity or, more likely, pursue parallel play. Engage in your own play with several items as a way of informally demonstrating their possible use. Describe what you are doing and what others are doing.

Use the following strategies, as appropriate, to promote positive social interactions:

- Demonstrate sharing an item with a toddler by offering to pass on an item you are using. Example: “Xander, you are watching me use this baby bottle. Would you like to use the baby bottle now?”
- Point out instances of a toddler sharing a play item, especially an item related to another toddler’s play. Example: “Hilary gave a doll to Sammy. Sammy is taking some dolls for a ride in a cart. Hilary is sharing her doll with Sammy.”
- Encourage toddlers to notice what each other is doing by offering brief descriptions at periodic intervals during the activity. Examples: “Our friend Tenisha is cooking something.” “Our friend Samantha is putting on a big hat.” “Our friend Hudson is putting a diaper on a baby doll.”
- Suggest words for a toddler to use in describing his/her interests. Example: “Hilary, you can say to Sammy, ‘I want the doll back after the ride.’”
- Suggest toddlers engage in a shared activity and/or take turns. Examples: “Maybe both of you can put things in the cart. Then you can take turns pushing the cart. I can help you take turns.” “Samantha and Xander, you are both playing with an animal figure. Maybe the dog and the cat would like to play together.”

What to Look For—Options 1–2

Both activity options involve your careful involvement as a commentator and demonstrator of appropriate social interactions without directing the activity. Build on naturally occurring events or toddler communications during the play rather than impose an example that may disrupt the flow of interactions or activities. The word “informal” in the Option 1 goal statement is important



to remember as you interact with a toddler. There may be opportunities to use only several of the five comment and demonstration suggestions offered in each activity plan.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

Extra support ■ Limit the number of play materials in both options. Offering too many items may make it difficult for toddlers to make choices and move forward with play. ■ Acknowledge a toddler’s efforts to communicate displeasure with something, or a wish to stop doing something, or not do something. Example: “You are shaking your head ‘no.’ You don’t want to play with the car I put near your blocks. You can say ‘no’ and give me the car.”

Enrichment ■ Invite a toddler to secure (or you help secure) an available material in your room that the toddler mentions during play.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: see activity description

Provide opportunities for toddlers to continue play actions from Option 1 or 2. Arrange materials in an inviting manner. Toddlers may wish to involve other peers in the activity or pursue an interest triggered during the activity with you. In contrast with your direct involvement in Options 1 and 2, stay nearby as an observer of play and offer comments about positive social interactions as appropriate.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Options 1 and 2 are highly appropriate for older toddlers and preschool-age children. You may wish to emphasize use of language with older children, including examples of complete sentences and words that can help children interact well with others.



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

Fine motor development

Toddlers practice walking, bending, and carrying a small item as part of open-ended play with animal figures in a sensory table.



Key Concepts

Bend

Carry

Walk



Materials Needed

Animal figures—2–3 per toddler

Containers

Shredded gift bag paper

Sensory table



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who are new to walking. Place in the sensory table shredded paper and containers to serve as pretend animal homes. Arrange animal figures on the floor, about 3–4 toddler steps from the sensory table.

Invite several toddlers who are new to walking skills to play at the sensory table with the paper and containers. Kneel next to the sensory table. Toddlers may enjoy filling a container with the shredded paper. Promote back-and-forth interactions with each toddler.

Draw attention to the animal figures on the floor. Encourage toddlers to walk to the collection of animal figures, bend at the waist to pick up a toy animal, and carry it to the sensory table. Encourage toddlers to repeat this task so each has another gross motor practice opportunity. Encourage toddlers to show and/or tell you about animal figures they carry to the sensory table. Say the name of each animal. Example: “Latisha, you put a cow in the paper.”

Point to a container and ask if it could be a home for the animal or a food dish. Follow a toddler’s lead as you interact. Describe toddlers’ actions with the play materials, including uses of their hands and fingers to hold and manipulate materials. Example: “Sam, your fingers are working hard to make a bed for your toy lamb.”

What to Look For—Option 1

Balance and coordination are required for walking, bending, carrying, and standing while working with small items at the sensory table. Experienced walkers take these skills for granted, but toddlers who are new to walking benefit from practice opportunities that can strengthen balance, coordination, and confidence. Standing while moving hands and arms is more challenging than standing still. The activity option combines gross and fine motor skills practice as toddlers hold and manipulate small items while standing and moving.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Walk with toddlers to the collection of animal figures to provide verbal support for bending, picking up, and carrying an animal figure to the sensory table. ■ Kneel next to a toddler to offer quiet coaching on what he/she might do with items in the sensory table.

Enrichment ■ Support play themes that might emerge among toddlers as they create homes for the animal figures.



12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

A toddler practices walking with, and putting items in, a push cart.



Key Concepts

Cart
Push
In
Out



Materials Needed

Cart or similar toy (see Be Prepared)
Weight item for cart (see Be Prepared)
Doll or similar toy



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: This activity is for a toddler who is new to walking. Use a toddler-size cart or other wheeled toy that can be pushed from behind. The activity description assumes a cart is used. Add weight to the cart to prevent it from slipping away from a toddler. One gallon of water in a sealed jug is about the right size and weight for a toddler-size cart. You may wish to fashion a weighted bag for the bottom of the cart using sand or other material.

BEGIN: [*Identify a toddler who will benefit from support in walking. Invite the toddler to join you in looking at a cart. Point to the cart's handle bar when you describe it. Align the cart in front of the toddler so he/she does not need to step backwards or turn around.*]

EXPLAIN: This is a cart you may push in our room. We put our hands here to push the cart. This is called a handle. The cart will move when you walk.

We use a cart to carry something. We put things in this part of the cart to carry.

[*Point to the cart's basket. Then put a doll or similar toy in the cart.*]

The baby doll is in the cart. You can push the cart now. Then you can find something else to carry in the cart.

ACT: [*Guide the toddler to push the cart in an open area where he/she can move the cart without barriers.*]

Walk next to the toddler if you anticipate support is needed. Describe the toddler's actions. Example: "You are pushing the cart."

After a brief period, ask the toddler to stop pushing the cart so he/she can put something different in the cart.]

I am taking the doll out of the cart.

Now our cart is empty. What would you like to put in the cart?

[*Wait for the toddler's response. After the desired item has been determined, encourage the toddler to push the empty cart to the location of the item. Recognize the toddler's action of putting the item in the cart. Example: "You picked up a toy bear and put it in the cart."*]

Encourage the toddler to push the cart to a destination of his/her choice. If the toddler seems confident, remain seated and offer supportive comments. Examples: "You are giving the bear a ride!" "You are pushing the cart all by yourself!"

**Option 2 continued**

RECAP: [Describe the toddler's experience with the cart. Emphasize his/her actions, including pushing the cart and putting an item in the cart.]

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Using a push toy helps a toddler develop strength and balance that support walking skills. Holding onto a cart may enable a toddler to walk farther than he/she could unsupported. Perception skills are strengthened as a toddler walks from place to place in the room or outdoors.

Pay attention to a toddler's maneuvering of the cart. He/she may need help in understanding how to adjust the direction of the cart to avoid bumping another child or barrier.

Once a toddler figures out how to manage a cart, he/she will enjoy independently adding items to a cart and pushing it around a play area. You may see the beginning of early pretend play.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Place your hand on the cart for added support in the opening segment of the activity when the toddler is first exploring how to push the cart. ■ Encourage the toddler to push the cart on carpeting or grass if the toddler has difficulty controlling the cart on a hard surface.

Enrichment ■ Point to and name the wheels of the cart. Explain that the wheels help the cart move. ■ Encourage the toddler to repeat the activity daily to increase strength and balance. ■ Provide a variety of play materials for toddlers to place in the cart. ■ Provide several carts for toddlers to use in pretend play. ■ Provide other push toys, such as a car with handholds in the rear.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

Toddlers practice running as part of guided pretend play.



Key Concepts

Run
Stop



Materials Needed

Blanket or soft mat large enough for several toddlers



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Cognitive
Communication/Language



Optional Reading

When the Elephant Walks by Keiko Kasza
Let's Play by Gyo Fujikawa
Where is Peter Rabbit? by Beatrix Potter

Be Prepared: This activity is designed to provide support for running and practice for toddlers who can run independently. Running skills generally develop between 18–24 months of age. Invite a toddler who has not been observed running to carry objects in a pushcart (Option 2) or participate in an achievable gross motor task of interest.

In this activity, toddlers pretend they are little bunnies or mice as part of a story you help them enact. Choose one of the two story options offered in the plan below or create a simple story of your own.

Invite several toddlers who have begun running to join you for a game outdoors or in an indoor space intended for gross motor play. Ask the toddlers to help you place the blanket or mat on the floor or ground. Explain that our blanket is the home of little bunnies (or mice).

The activity has three distinct parts:

Part One: Sit on the blanket with the toddlers. Tell a brief, simple story in your own words that the toddlers can easily understand. Use your voice to create interest in the actions.

Story Option 1: Little Bunnies

Peter and other bunny friends leave their home to find tasty carrots in a garden. The rabbits enter the garden and find delicious carrots. The bunnies begin eating carrots. All of a sudden they hear the gardener shouting! The gardener shouts at the bunnies, “Do not eat my carrots! Go away rabbits.” The bunnies all run back to their home. The bunnies stop. (This is a modification of the story of *Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter.)

Story Option 2: Little Mice

Little mice lived in a red barn. At night the mice quietly crept out of their home to find tasty treats. They looked all around and found bits of food. The mice heard a “meow” sound! The little mice see a big cat! They ran away from the cat, back to the safety of their home. Once inside their home, the mice stop.

Part Two: Invite the toddlers to go with you to find tasty treats. Leave the blanket. Describe this part of the story again. Example: “Here we go out into the field to look for food. We are little mice looking and looking. We are little mice eating some food.”



Option 3 continued

Part Three: Announce we must run back to the blanket and stop. Example: “Oh dear, there is a big cat. The cat wants to chase us. Let’s run to our home on the blanket.” Run with the toddlers. Announce the stop. “Now we are home. We stop running.” Emphasize the word stop.

Run with the toddlers. Avoid creating competition, such as telling which child got home first. Repeat the activity if time and toddler interest permit.

Give a clear signal the running game is finished. Engage toddlers in a calming-down activity by suggesting the little bunnies (or mice) rest on the blanket. In a quiet voice, encourage toddlers to relax their arms and legs, take several slow, deep breaths, and close eyes briefly. You also may wish to help toddlers look at books while sitting on the blanket. See Optional Reading possibilities.

What to Look For—Option 3

Children at this age enjoy simple games of pretend guided by a familiar adult. Games with a little drama that incorporate running are fun and can satisfy toddler’s need to extend gross motor skills.

Your role is to tell a brief story and facilitate safe movements while adhering to the structure of the activity: (1) we sit on the blanket and listen to a story, (2) we leave our house (blanket) and pretend to go looking for tasty treats, (3) we run back to our house, and (4) we stop.

Remember you are one of the little bunnies (or mice). Avoid becoming (or allowing another child to become) the farmer or big cat that chases the toddlers. It takes time and unpressured practice for toddlers to develop steady, balanced running.

There may be a few falls as toddlers run. Offer support for a toddler who falls. Stay close as the toddler gets up. Acknowledge the fall with kind and simple words, such as “You fell down.” Encourage the toddler to try again. Avoid dramatic reactions to toddlers’ falls.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Stay near a toddler who may benefit from your quiet coaching. ■ Give little reminders about where to stop. ■ Limit or reduce the play area where the game is played.

Enrichment ■ Add props to represent the carrots or food the bunnies (or mice) find.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: small balls, blocks, push toys, markers and large paper, items to manipulate in the sensory table, *When the Elephant Walks* by Keiko Kasza, *Let's Play* by Gyo Fujikawa, *Where is Peter Rabbit?* by Beatrix Potter

Throughout the week foster gross motor skills and emphasize words associated with actions, such as stand, walk, run, push, and carry. Provide several small balls or blocks that you encourage toddlers to walk to and then bend to pick them up. Encourage toddlers to carry the items to a destination you name. Encourage use of push toys to transfer blocks and other play materials to the building area. Demonstrate placing blocks into the cart and moving them to a building site. Encourage practice in standing by offering an activity, such as making marks on paper or cardboard boxes or manipulating items in the sensory table. Place a basket of books on the floor next to a comfortable sitting area.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: push toys, grocery cartons, paper bags, cones, *Gingerbread Man* by Jim Aylesworth, *I Went Walking* by Sue Williams, *Autumn Walk* by Ann Burg

Enhance the dramatic play area with grocery store cartons, boxes, and several paper bags. Toddlers and preschool-age children can use the pushcart and practice walking while carrying objects from a pretend store.

Outdoors, arrange colored cones in an open area. Lead preschool-age children on a walking or running course. Some of the children may enjoy a game of *Walk and Stop*. Designate a circle for children to walk around. Create a tune for singing the following action words:

Walk and walk and walk and walk.

Walk and walk and walk and stop!

Share the suggested books with toddlers and preschool-age children in one-to-one or small gatherings.