



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler participates in a wordless book sharing focused on a dog taking care of a baby.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler helps a caregiver tell a story shown in a wordless book's pictures.



Cognitive

Exploring Objects

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler explores putting different basic shape items in the corresponding holes of a shape sorter.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler explores finding pegs of the same shape and stacking them on a pegboard.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers hold a block and find an outline drawing of the shape of the block on a large piece of white paper.



Self-Regulation

Focusing and Paying Attention

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers watch and help a caregiver put together items of the same color.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler puts together items of the same color with caregiver support.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler participates in pretend play with a caregiver focused on a dog and a baby.
- Option 2** (IG) A toddler participates in pretend play with a caregiver focused on a dog and a baby.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers use their hands to make marks on a stationary bag of paint.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers engage in finger painting.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers use paintbrushes to mix different colors of paints on a tray.

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



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

A toddler participates in a wordless book sharing focused on a dog taking care of a baby.



Key Concepts

Words
Pictures
Story



Materials Needed

Good Dog, Carl by
Alexandra Day



Also Promotes

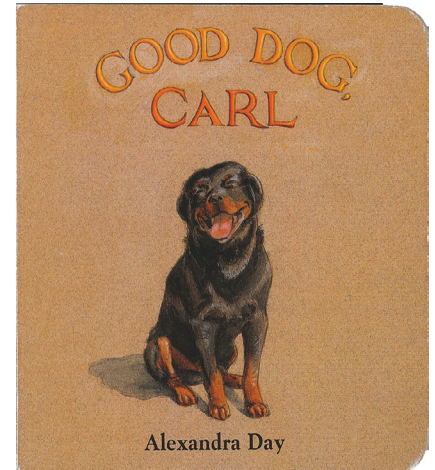
Cognitive

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to join you to read a book. Sit close to the toddler, show the cover of the book, and point to the dog on the cover.]*

Our story is about this dog. The dog's name is Carl.

[Open to the first page and point to words as you read them.]

The words on this page tell us what the book is about. I am going to read the words on this page.



EXPLAIN: I just read some words in our book. But our book is special. Our book does not have a lot of words for us to read. The pictures in our book tell the story. We will use our own words to talk about what is happening in the pictures.

ACT: *[Use a conversational style to tell the story. Describe what is shown in pictures that contributes to the story. Example: "The mom in our story is wearing her coat. She is carrying her purse. The mom is going somewhere."]*

Point to features of pictures you name or describe. Example: "Oh no, the baby is swimming in the fish tank! A fish tank is where fish live. Do you see the fish swimming with the baby?"

Pause on each page so the toddler can look closely at an illustration. Respond to the toddler's gestures or vocalizations.

Say the names of objects shown in pictures and offer brief descriptions of objects you highlight. Example: "Carl and the baby are opening the refrigerator door. A refrigerator keeps food cold." Also, see above example of describing a fish tank.


Ask questions aimed at keeping the toddler engaged in the developing story. Example: "Uh oh, look at the mess Carl and the baby made! What do you think Carl is going to do next?"

RECAP: The pictures in our book told us a story about a baby and a dog. The dog's name was Carl. Carl took care of the baby when the mom was away. The baby and Carl did a lot of different things. This was a silly story!

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

One of the challenges in telling a wordless picture book story is to make sure each picture is described in a way that contributes to the story line. The absence of text puts full responsibility on the storyteller to help the listener make sense of the plot and characters. It is appropriate and beneficial to talk about features of pictures that do not directly contribute to the story's development. This is a good way to respond to a child's interests and to promote vocabulary knowledge. At the same time, it's important to remember a toddler will appreciate your help in connecting one picture to the next, so the sequence of events can be easily followed. Look for signs that a toddler understands what is happening in a picture before moving to the next one.

A wordless book offers an opportunity to promote a toddler's awareness of the difference between pictures and print. This important literacy understanding develops over time. The current activity's opening segment suggests how to explain the source of words you offer in the book sharing.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

Extra support ■ Invite the toddler to talk about a dog he/she knows or has known. ■ Encourage the toddler to point to familiar pictured objects you name.

Enrichment ■ At the end of the story, invite the toddler to help you remember what happened first, what happened next, and how the story ended.

12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

A toddler helps a caregiver tell a story shown in a wordless book's pictures.



Key Concepts

Words
Pictures
Story



Materials Needed

Good Dog, Carl by
Alexandra Day



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Invite a toddler to help you tell the story of a dog and the things the dog does. Show the book cover to the toddler. Explain that most of the pages in the book do not have words that tell the story. But the pictures show us what happens. We can look at the pictures and talk about what we see. Show some of the book pages to demonstrate there are no words.

Read the words on the first page of the book as you point to each. Then show some of the subsequent pages of the book to demonstrate there are no words. Turn to the next page. Pause for the toddler to look closely at the illustration. Then use a relaxed, conversational style to describe what you see in the picture. Use short sentences. Avoid saying too much about the picture. Focus on the dominant images and action in the illustration. The intent is to demonstrate how you and the toddler can approach each picture.

On the next page, encourage the toddler to describe what he/she sees after a brief pause that gives the toddler time to look at the illustration. Examples: "What is happening in this picture?" "What do we see in this picture?"

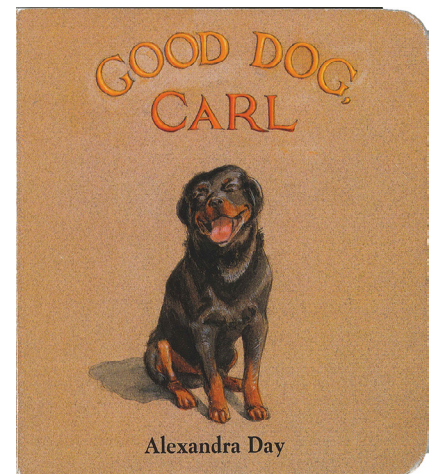
The toddler's response may be a single utterance or a pointing. Build on the response by repeating and then elaborating on the toddler's utterance or describing what the toddler pointed to.

Use the toddler's responses to a picture as a possible opening for encouraging toddler talk. Example: "You are laughing at this picture. What is making you laugh?"

Include yes-or-no questions that can help the toddler focus on a specific aspect of the story. Example: "Do you think the baby is having fun riding on the dog's back?"

In addition to asking picture-specific questions, consider asking the toddler what he/she thinks might happen next.

Pause each time you turn to a new illustration so the toddler can look at what is happening. Encourage the toddler to contribute to your shared talk about each illustration by asking an open-ended or yes-or-no question or pointing to an item you name.





Option 2 continued

Conclude the session by enthusiastically recognizing the toddler's contribution to telling the story. Example: "We looked at pictures. We talked about what was happening. It was fun to tell the story together."

What to Look For—Option 2

This book sharing is driven in part by the toddler's language skills. Anticipate one- and two-word utterances, gestures, and pointing that you can build on to support the toddler's active participation and emerging word knowledge. This activity option is intended to promote a higher level of toddler participation in the book sharing than Option 1. Toddlers who are familiar with the book through participation in Option 1 or a similar book sharing may find it easier to engage in the current approach than toddlers who do not know the basics of the story.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ If your invitations to actively participate on each page seem too challenging for a toddler, promptly transition to the Option 1 strategies and then invite the toddler to revisit the book with you several days later. Familiarity with the book's story line and illustrations may prompt a toddler to want to retell the story to you.

Enrichment ■ Invite the toddler to hold the book and turn the pages.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: Wordless picture books—such as *Good Dog, Carl* by Alexandra Day (Options 1 and 2 book), *Carl Goes Shopping* by Alexandra Day, *A Ball for Daisy* by Christopher Raschke

Encourage toddlers to look at wordless picture books, including the *Carl Goes Shopping* book about the main character of the Options 1 and 2 book. The pictures in wordless books are engaging in their own right. Toddlers can often figure out the basics of a story by looking at the pictures in a wordless book independently. Enhance toddlers' experiences with the books by asking questions and offering comments about pictures and the story line, and encouraging toddlers to tell you about pictures.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Invite a preschool-age child to participate in Option 2 and a school-age child to be the storyteller in Option 1 with a toddler. Reading two books about Carl may be of particular interest. An infant will enjoy listening to and watching peers engaged in a book sharing while holding a soft toy.



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Problem-solving

A toddler explores putting different basic shape items in the corresponding holes of a shape sorter.



Key Concepts

Sorter

Hole

Shape

In



Materials Needed

Shape sorter



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Physical/Health

Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Select four simple shapes from the shape sorter for the toddler to use. Refer to the items as shapes during the activity. The activity promotes awareness of differences in shapes but does not teach shape names. Shape names are introduced when children are 3–5 years of age.

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to join you to work with a shape sorter. Sit facing the toddler and arrange four shape pieces close to him/her. Point to the sorter and to shapes as you describe each.]*

This is called a sorter. Our sorter has different kinds of holes. Let's use our finger to go around some of the holes.

[Trace the outline of several holes with your finger. Encourage the toddler to do the same. Point to two contrasting holes to show how the holes are different. Example: "Look at this hole. It is round. Look at this hole. It is straight. It is not round."]

These are called shapes. We have different kinds of shapes. Let's use our finger to go around some of the shapes.

[Trace the outline of several shapes with your finger. Encourage the toddler to do the same. Point to two contrasting shapes to show they are different. Example: "Let's feel this shape. It is round. Now look at this other shape. It has points on it. Let's feel the points."]

EXPLAIN: Each shape goes in a different hole in our sorter.

[If the toddler has limited experience with a shape sorter, hold a simple shape above its respective hole. Put the shape in the hole if you anticipate the toddler would benefit from a demonstration.]

We want to put all of the shapes in the sorter. Each shape will go in one hole only.

ASK: What shape do you want to use first?

Do you see a hole on our sorter that you think your shape will go in?

ACT: *[Provide quiet time for the toddler to take the lead in finding a hole that matches his/her selected shape.*

Offer just enough assistance for the child to be successful, using one or more of the following strategies:

- *Turn the sorter to the hole corresponding to the toddler's chosen shape so it can be seen.*

**Option 1 continued**

- *Encourage the toddler to try out ideas, including attempts to place a shape in a hole that does not work. Acknowledge the toddler's good try!*
- *Congratulate the toddler's success when he/she puts the shape in a matching hole.*

Encourage the toddler to select and find a hole for each of the remaining three shapes, one at a time. Provide support as needed.

Repeat the task if the toddler is interested. Involve the toddler in removing shapes from the sorter.]

RECAP: You worked hard to put the shapes in the holes. Each shape fit in its own hole. You found a hole for each shape!

 What to Look For—Option 1

Shape sorters offer a reasonable challenge with prompt feedback. Either the shape fits or does not fit a hole, and there's a pleasant sound when the shape hits the bottom after going through its hole.

Toddlers differ in amount of experience with a shape sorter. Adjust your description of the sorter based on the toddler's familiarity with the toy. Keep in mind that shape sorters come in different sizes and shapes, and a sorter a toddler has used elsewhere may be unlike the sorter in your room. Offer time and encouragement for the toddler to explore the sorter if he/she has limited experience with a sorter.

Some toddlers may pursue a trial-and-error approach with each shape, attempting to put the shape in holes that already have been used or are visually quite different from the shape. This approach suggests the toddler may need your help in moving more slowly to look carefully at each hole in relation to the shape. Provide some structure for the toddler's efforts by using the approach suggested in the BEGIN section with each shape. You also might want to limit the number of shapes the toddler is asked to put in the sorter. Example: "(Toddler's name), let's try to slow down here. Here are two shapes we can try to put into the sorter. Let's move our finger around the shape and then look at some holes."

If you observe signs of frustration in the toddler, clearly communicate your confidence in the toddler's ability. Example: "I know you can figure this out. You can do this!" Also, consider using one or more of the Extra Support tips aimed at making the task less challenging.

The activity can be productively pursued without knowledge of shape names. Shape names are introduced when children are 3–5 years of age, as noted above. Avoid adapting the activity into a lesson on shape names.

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

Extra support ■ In the early exploration of the four shapes, put one shape on top of another shape (or encourage the toddler to do this) to show their differences. ■ If a toddler cannot rotate his/her hand to fit the shape through the hole after several tries, turn the sorter to align with the shape piece so the toddler can put his/her piece into the hole. ■ Take a turn with a shape to reduce some of the challenge and to provide another example of how the sorter works. ■ Point to the hole that corresponds to the toddler's chosen shape and ask "Do you think your shape can go in this hole?" ■ Draw attention to the sound of the shape hitting the bottom of the sorter. Example: "The shape went in the hole! I could hear the shape hit the bottom of the sorter!"

Enrichment ■ Offer the shape pieces you set aside. ■ Beginning with the second shape, ask the toddler to point to hole(s) he/she already has used before putting the shape in a hole. This strategy may help the toddler become more aware of his/her problem-solving approach.



12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Problem-solving

A toddler explores finding pegs of the same shape and stacking them on a pegboard.



Key Concepts

Shape
Peg
Pegboard
Same
Stack



Materials Needed

Stack up pegboard (see Be Prepared)
Container for pegs



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Secure a pegboard toy that includes chunky-size pegs in different shapes that can stack on top of one another. Select 3–4 pegs of each of three basic shapes: circle, square, triangle (total: 9–12 pegs). Put the pegs in the container and place the container near the pegboard. Similar to Option 1, the activity described below promotes awareness of differences in shapes but does not teach shape names.

Invite a toddler to join you in working with a pegboard. Put the pegboard on a low table in front of the toddler, with the pegs in an adjacent container. Point to and say the name of the pegboard and draw attention to the holes in the board.

Encourage the toddler to feel the holes. Emphasize the holes are the same. Example: “This is called a pegboard. Look at the holes in our pegboard. Let’s feel some holes. The holes are the same.”

Explain that the items in the container are called pegs. Remove one peg from the container. Show and explain how the peg has a part that goes in our pegboard. Demonstrate putting the stem of the peg in a hole in the pegboard. Remove the peg and invite the toddler to put it in a hole of his/her choosing. Invite the toddler to take the peg out of the pegboard.

Remove two pegs of different shapes from the container. Put the two pegs with the peg previously removed from the container—each representing a different shape—in front of the toddler. There are now three pegs of different shapes on the table. Explain that our pegs are different shapes. Draw attention to each shape (without saying its name), move your finger around the shape part of the peg, and encourage the toddler to do the same with each shape. Do not draw attention to the colors of shapes.

Encourage the toddler to put each of the three pegs in different holes of his/her choice in the pegboard. Remove a peg of any shape from the container, show it to the toddler, and explain that it is the same shape as a peg already in our pegboard. Hold the shape next to the same shape on the pegboard and emphasize the shapes are the same. Then put its stem in the same shape of peg on the pegboard. Explain that we can stack our shapes on the pegboard.

Take another peg of a different shape (not the shape you just stacked) from the container, give it to the toddler, and ask the toddler if he/she can find a peg just like the shape of this peg on the pegboard. Pause for the toddler to





Option 2 continued

explore this problem on his/her own. Provide verbal support as needed. Encourage the toddler to put this peg in the same-shaped peg on the board. Explain that he/she is stacking pegs on our pegboard.

Continue this process by giving the toddler (or inviting the toddler to take) one or two pegs at a time from the container. After all pegs are on the board, enthusiastically recognize that the toddler stacked pegs of the same shape on our pegboard. If time and toddler interest permit, invite the toddler to remove all pegs from the pegboard and place them in the container.

What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers generally enjoy stacking toys that easily fit together and the increases in the height of stacked pegs gives feedback on progress. Similar to Option 1, this activity can be productively done without knowledge of shape names. Yet the consistent comparison of the shapes of pegs can strengthen awareness of shape differences.

A self-regulation task in the activity is to focus on the shape and not the color of the peg. If a toddler notices color differences or says the name of a color, support his/her understanding of a color name and emphasize that we are looking for shapes that are the same. We are not paying attention to color in this game. The pegs in our stacks can be different colors.

A toddler may find it too challenging to find pegs of the same shape but enjoy putting pegs in the pegboard, perhaps in different holes or stacked. If this occurs, adapt your approach to the activity to support the toddler's focus. Positively acknowledge the toddler's interest and actions with the pegs. Example: "Look, you put a peg in every hole on our pegboard!"

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Use two rather than three different shapes of pegs and/or two rather than 3–4 pegs of the same shape. ■ Support the toddler's search for the same shape of peg by encouraging him/her to hold it next to each peg on the pegboard. Ask "Is the shape in your hand the same as the shape on the board?" Also, encourage the toddler to feel the shape of the peg in his/her hand and the shape of pegs on the board. ■ If a toddler places a peg in a differently-shaped peg, gently ask whether the two pegs are the same. Encourage the toddler to look carefully and to also feel the shapes of the two pegs. Do not correct the toddler's placement if he/she wishes to keep a peg where he/she put it. See What to Look For.

Enrichment ■ If the toddler readily finds pegs of the same shape and stacks them with ease, give the toddler the container of remaining pegs to put on the board.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Problem-solving

Toddlers hold a block and find an outline drawing of the shape of the block on a large piece of white paper.



Key Concepts

Shape

Same



Materials Needed

15 soft blocks in 3 different basic shapes (see Be Prepared)

Large sheet of white paper

Masking tape

Black marker



Also Promotes

Physical/Health

Self-Regulation

Be Prepared: Secure five blocks in each of three different basic shapes: five circles, five squares or rectangles, five triangles. Avoid using both squares and rectangles. Cover the table with white paper. Tape the corners of the paper to the table to prevent the paper slipping. Trace the block shapes with a black marker in random order around the edge of the table. Trace each block in a consistent way in its relation to the edge of the paper. There should be one traced block for each available block. Example: five traced circles, five traced squares, five traced triangles. Put the actual blocks in random order in the middle of the table so it is easy for toddlers to reach them.

Invite several toddlers to put a block on top of a drawing (traced image) of the same block shape. Open the session by pointing to and describing the drawings (traced images) and the actual blocks. Explain and show how a drawing is the same as one of the block shapes. Demonstrate by putting a block of each shape on top of its corresponding drawing (three demonstrations). Draw attention to the shapes by moving your finger around the outside of each block. Encourage toddlers to do the same. Emphasize how the actual block is the same shape as the drawing.

Invite each toddler to pick any block from the center of the table and look for a drawing that is the same as the block shape. Repeat this process until all blocks have been put on a corresponding drawing or toddlers lose interest. Provide verbal support as appropriate. Avoid teaching shape names.

What to Look For—Option 3

This activity can heighten toddlers' awareness of differences in block shapes without the use of shape names. Provide just enough support to help a toddler find a drawing that is the same shape as the block. The activity may begin slowly as toddlers figure out the task and become easier as toddlers come to realize three shapes are represented among the blocks and drawings. Similar to Option 2, a toddler may be more interested in putting a block on each drawing without regard to shape. Positively acknowledge this motor accomplishment.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ When you explain and demonstrate how to find a drawing that is the same as a block in your hand, place the block on top of a drawing that is not the same as the block shape. Ask toddlers whether the block and the drawing are the same shape. ■ Use fewer blocks per shape and/or two rather than three block shapes.

Option 3 continued

Enrichment ■ Invite toddlers to remove blocks from their drawings and create stacks of each shape of block. ■ In a follow-up round of the activity with interested toddlers, reverse the order of finding the same shape: begin with the drawing and find a block of the same shape.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: items used in Options 1, 2, and 3

Place materials used in each of the activity options in an area of the room that is free of distractions so toddlers can continue to play as a follow-up to participation in one or more of the activity options. Although each material can be used independently after guided use, remain nearby to provide verbal support as appropriate.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: see activity description

Offer any of the options with preschool-age children. In Option 3, include both squares and rectangles. Also, encourage preschool-age children to say the names of shapes. Provide shape names when a child seems uncertain. Names and characteristics of basic shapes are introduced in ELM Curriculum activities for children 3–5 years of age.



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers watch and help a caregiver put together items of the same color.



Key Concepts

Look
Same
Different



Materials Needed

Constructive Playthings®
Colorful Soft-Sorting Food
Bags (see Be Prepared)
Tray or basket



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Use two of the five available bags and their corresponding pretend food items. The activity described below assumes red and yellow colors are used. Place the food items (a total of 8 food items) in a random order on the tray.

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join you at a low table to watch and help you play a game with pretend foods. Display the tray of pretend food items.]*



There are a lot of pretend foods on our tray. Let's look closely at what we have.

ACT: *[Pick up 3–4 items, one at a time, and say (or invite toddlers to say) their name and color. Include both red and yellow items. Then invite toddlers to hold and feel any of the items on the tray. After a brief period of exploration, invite toddlers to return all pretend food items to the tray. Mix the item colors on the tray.]*

Did you notice that some foods on our tray are red and some foods are yellow?

[Hold a yellow food item and a red food item in separate hands for comparison.]

Here is a pretend banana. It is yellow. Here is a pretend strawberry. It is red. Yellow and red are different colors.

I am going to put together the foods that are red. Then I am going to put together the foods that are yellow.

[Describe your approach to putting together on the table a collection of foods of the same color, as suggested below.]

Here is a red food. Here is another red food. I am putting these foods next to each other. They go together. Their color is the same.

[Hold a yellow food next to the two red foods you put together on the table.]

Here is a yellow food. This yellow food does not go with the red foods. Yellow and red are different colors. I am putting together foods that are the same color.

**Option 1 continued**

[Continue to describe your actions in putting together a grouping of red foods and then a grouping of yellow foods. Point to each group when you are done.]

I am done putting the red foods together and the yellow foods together. Our tray is empty.

Now I want to put our foods in a bag that is the same color as the foods.

[Display the red and yellow bags, side by side.]

Which bag should I use for our red foods?

[Invite toddlers to point to or say the color of the bag you should use. If toddlers point to the yellow bag, gently remind them that we want a bag that is the same color as the foods.]

We will put our red foods in a red bag. We will put our yellow foods in a yellow bag.

[Invite toddlers to help you put food items in their corresponding bags.]

RECAP: We looked closely at the foods on our tray. We noticed there were different colors of foods. Some foods were red. Some foods were yellow. You watched me put the same colors together. I put the red foods together and the yellow foods together. Then you helped me pick a red bag for the red foods and a yellow bag for the yellow foods. Thank you for watching and helping.



12–24 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Concentration

A toddler puts together items of the same color with caregiver support.



Key Concepts

Look
Same
Different



Materials Needed

Constructive Playthings®
Colorful Soft-Sorting Food
Bags



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Cognitive
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Use two or three of the five available bags and their corresponding pretend food items, depending on your understanding of the toddler's sorting skills. If the toddler involved in the current activity participated in Option 1, use colors of materials that were not used in Option 1. The activity described below assumes two colors (green and brown) are used. Place the food items in a random order on the tray (a total of eight food items for the two colors used in the description below).



Pick up two items of different colors, one at a time, and put them on the table with some distance between each. Explain that the two foods are different colors. One is green, one is brown. Then pick up a brown food item from the tray and put it next to the brown food item on the table. Explain that the colors of these two foods are the same.

Invite the toddler to put the remaining food items on the tray with foods on the table that are the same color. Offer verbal support as needed. Describe the toddler's efforts. You might offer a midpoint progress report on how the tray is getting empty.

After all food items are in their same-color groupings on the table, present the two bags and invite the toddler to put foods that are the same color in the bag of the same color.

Conclude the activity by enthusiastically recognizing how the toddler looked carefully at all of the pretend foods on our tray and put together foods that were the same color.

👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–2

Watch toddler reactions throughout each activity to determine whether more or less challenge is appropriate. Challenge can be added to Option 1 by inviting toddlers to remove food items from the tray for the red grouping and then the yellow grouping. Using three different colors in Option 2 is significantly more challenging than using two colors.

Some toddlers will likely know some color names. It is appropriate to use color names in this activity but a toddler can readily participate without knowing color names. Avoid adapting the activity into a lesson on color names.

One of the concentration challenges in this activity is to focus on color and ignore type of food. Look for whether toddlers pay attention to types of food in sorting the pretend food items. See the Extra Support tip.

A small icon of a staircase with three steps. **More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2**

Extra support ■ Point out differences in types of foods if a toddler seems interested. Example: “Here is a strawberry. Here is a watermelon. A strawberry and a watermelon are different foods. But the colors are the same. We are putting together foods that are the same color.” ■ Use fewer food items (but keep the same number in each color).

Enrichment ■ For Option 2, organize small groupings of foods with a mix of colors in each. Example: one grouping with two red foods, one yellow, one brown. Another grouping with two yellow and two brown foods. Invite the toddler to re-sort the foods into groups of the same color.

A small red silhouette of a person's head and shoulders. **Interest Area**

Materials Needed: Constructive Playthings® Colorful Soft-Sorting Food Bags

Put food items that represent 3–4 different colors in random order on a low table. Invite 2–3 toddlers to put foods of the same color in their corresponding bag. Example: all yellow food items go in the yellow bag. This could be done by giving each toddler a bag for collecting food items of the same color as his/her bag. Or putting the bags open on the table so toddlers have an opportunity to sort items by color.

A small brown icon of a house with a chimney. **Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: see activity description

Invite preschool-age children to participate in Option 2. Some may enjoy the challenge of sorting all available food items into five different color groupings and/or the Enrichment suggestion. Emphasize the importance of looking at color, not type of food.



12–24 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler participates in pretend play with a caregiver focused on a dog and a baby.



Key Concepts

Pretend
Dog
Baby



Materials Needed

Good Dog, Carl by
Alexandra Day
Dog, baby, and adult
figures (see Be Prepared)
Dollhouse with furniture



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: This activity is a follow-up to a toddler's participation in the shared reading of *Good Dog, Carl*, which is offered in the current block (Communication/Language). Secure animal and people figures that can be used to represent a dog (Carl), a baby, and a mom.

Open the session by showing the book cover and reminding the toddler that we had fun reading about a dog taking care of a baby. Show and briefly describe selected pages of the book to refresh the toddler's memory. Invite the toddler to contribute to your review of the book. Example: "What is Carl doing in this picture?"

Explain that we can make up our own story about Carl and the baby. Introduce the toy dog, baby, and mom figures. Point to each figure and describe its pretend role in your play. Example: "We can pretend this is Carl. Remember, Carl is the dog. We can pretend this is the baby. We can pretend this is the mom." Give each figure to the toddler after you describe its role.

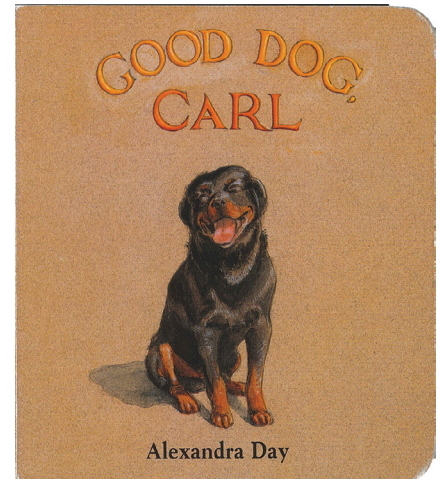
Ask the toddler what name we should call the baby. (It is not necessary to use the book's name, Madeleine.) Offer several suggestions for the toddler's choice if he/she does not offer a name.

Introduce the dollhouse. Explain that we can pretend that Carl, the baby, and mom live in this house.

Ask the toddler what he/she would like Carl, the baby, and the mom to do in our pretend story. If the toddler seems uncertain about how to respond, consider using the following scaffolding sequence:

- Use yes-or-no questions to set the stage. Examples: "Should we have the mom go away and leave Carl to watch the baby?" "Should we put Carl and the baby in the house?"
- Then move to open questions. Examples: "What room do we put Carl and the baby in?" "What will Carl do?"
- Offer specific book-related possibilities if the toddler is uncertain how to proceed with the animal and baby figures. Example: "Should we have the baby ride on Carl's back? Remember, that's what happened in our story!"

Encourage the toddler to manage the animal and people figures, such as putting them in the desired room. Offer to help, such as holding the baby on



***Option 1 continued***

Carl's back while the toddler moves Carl to take the baby for a ride. Listen and watch carefully for hints of what the toddler might like to do with the figures. Acknowledge an utterance or gesture and ask what might happen. Examples: "You said 'hide.' Is the baby going to hide somewhere?" "You pointed to a bed. Is it time for someone to sleep?"

Conclude the session when the toddler begins to lose interest. Briefly summarize what happened. Emphasize how you played together with Carl and the baby.

12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Toddlers participate together in pretend play focused on a dog and a baby.



Key Concepts

Pretend
Dog
Baby



Materials Needed

Good Dog, Carl by Alexandra Day
Dog, baby, and adult figures (see Be Prepared)
Dollhouse with furniture



Also Promotes

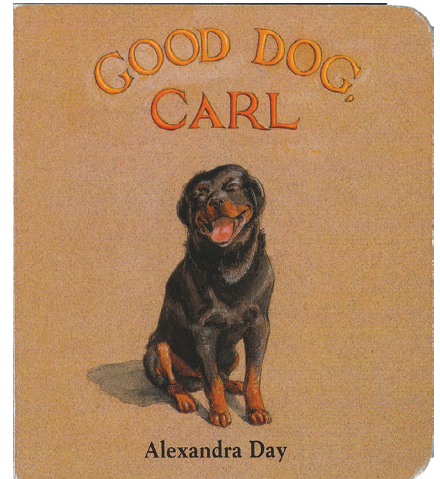
Cognitive
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: This activity is a follow-up to a toddler's participation in the shared reading of *Good Dog, Carl*, which is offered in the current block (Communication/Language). Secure for each toddler a set of animal and people figures that can be used to represent a dog (Carl), a baby, and a mom (three figures each).

Invite 2–3 toddlers to join you to play with a dog and baby figures. Show the book cover and remind toddlers our book told how a dog named Carl took care of a baby. Display selected pages of the book and invite toddlers to tell what happened. Toddlers' responses may be based on recall of the shared reading and/or what they currently see in a picture.

Explain that we can make up our own pretend story about Carl and the baby. Give each toddler a set of figures. Then display the dollhouse and explain that the dog, baby, and mom live in this house.

Use Option 1 strategies to initiate play. Talk with each toddler about his/her play and then play along briefly if you anticipate it will help a toddler pursue his/her interests. Describe what each toddler is doing. Look for opportunities to promote shared activities. Help toddlers resolve possible conflicts about using of rooms or furniture in the house. Conclude the session by describing what each toddler did, emphasizing shared experiences with you or a peer.



👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–2

The direction and complexity of the two activities will depend partly on toddlers' experiences with pretend play and language skill. Look carefully for hints of how you can build on the toddlers' interests. Yes-or-no questions can often help establish some basic elements of a pretend story. Asking a toddler to name the baby is one way to promote the toddler's investment. It is fine if a toddler wishes to enact some of the scenes from the book. What's important in the Option 1 activity is the shared experience of pretend play. One simple way to support joint activity is coordinated manipulation of the figures, as suggested in the activity description example of the baby riding on the dog's

**Option 2 continued**

back. What's important in Option 2 is noticing how peers approach the play and sharing the house space. Option 2 is set up for parallel play but there may be opportunities for toddlers to engage in a joint effort. Most likely the mom figure will not be a part of most toddlers' play, although a toddler might have fun imagining how mom reacts to some of the dog's adventures.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2**

Extra support ■ Omit use of a dollhouse if you anticipate this structure might detract from the play.

Enrichment ■ Add props that support an emerging story in the pretend play.

 **Interest Area**

Materials Needed: see activity description

The Communication/Language Interest Area suggestion in this block involves other wordless books for toddlers to pursue, including a second book about Carl. Secure simple props and people and animal figures that toddlers can use for pretend play related to one or more of the books. Engage in pretend play with a toddler or support several toddlers in playing with the items. Initiate the play by briefly reviewing some of the pictures in a book and drawing attention to materials that relate to the story.

 **Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: see activity description

Preschool-age children can readily participate in either activity option. An infant may enjoy holding a soft toy dog or baby while watching the pretend play.



12–24 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers use their hands to make marks on a stationary bag of paint.



Key Concepts

Lines

Marks



Materials Needed

Medium-size ziplock storage bags—1 per toddler

Paint (see Be Prepared)

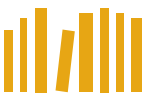
Heavy-duty tape

White paper (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive



Optional Reading

Mouse Paint by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Be Prepared: Use the same color or different colors of paint in each bag. Place approximately three tablespoons of paint inside each bag. Remove air from the bag and close. Secure the top with tape. Cover a low table with white paper and affix so it does not slide. Use strong tape to secure each bag to the white paper on the table.

Invite several toddlers to join you at the table. Explain there is paint in each of the bags. Demonstrate several ways to use your fingertips to make lines or scribbles in the paint. Draw attention to what happens to the paint in the bag.

Encourage toddlers to use their fingers and palms of each hand to draw lines and marks in the paint bags. Suggest a toddler use one hand and then his/her opposite hand for making marks.

Describe each toddler's actions with the paint. "Justin, you made a curvy mark on the paint bag." Repeat and expand on toddlers' utterances.



👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Toddlers will differ in their approach to creating marks on a bag. Some may use fingertips exclusively and others may enjoy using a flat palm to press. If you notice a toddler is making defined and clear marks, you may wish to demonstrate making a circular shape with one pointer finger (index finger). Give each toddler plenty of time to explore and use different methods for making marks on the bag. The bags may be reused later in the day or saved for the following day.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Provide a wooden spoon for a toddler who is reluctant to touch the cool bag with his/her fingers.

Enrichment ■ Provide different types of items for toddlers to use with a paint bag, such as a small toy vehicle (for its wheels), a wooden spoon, and a damp sponge. ■ Place yellow paint in the bag with a small amount of blue paint. Toddlers will observe the colors changing as they use the paint bag.



12–24 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers engage in finger painting.



Key Concepts

Color
Hand
Fingers
Marks
Scribbles



Materials Needed

Smooth trays—1 per toddler
Art smocks or paint shirts—1 per toddler
Finger paints in bottles (see Be Prepared)
Cloth for cleanup
Damp sponges—1 per toddler
Paintbrushes



Also Promotes

Cognitive



Optional Reading

Mouse Paint by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Be Prepared: Cover a low table with newsprint for easy cleanup. The surface of a tray is smooth and easier to spread with finger paint than any kind of paper. Use primary colors of finger paints. The activity description below offers three different colors. Inviting a toddler to use one color only is suggested, at least initially. Have a cup of water nearby to sprinkle on the paint trays if the finger paint does not spread easily.

BEGIN: [*Invite 3–4 toddlers to a low table for finger painting. Help each toddler with an art smock or painting shirt. Kneel at the table and place a tray before each toddler. Place 2–3 bottles of finger paint on the table.*]



EXPLAIN: [*Point to the paint bottles and tray as you tell the toddlers about finger painting.*]

Today we have finger paints to make marks and scribbles on your tray. You may choose the color you like. We have blue, red, and yellow paints. I will put some paint on your tray after you tell me what color you want to use. Everyone will get paint.

ACT: [*Ask each toddler what color of paint he/she wants to use. Point to each color and say its name. Example: “Would you like red paint or would you like yellow paint?” Pause for a word or pointing or gesture. Describe the toddler’s response and your actions. Example: “Okay, D.J. you said ‘yes’ when I pointed to the yellow paint. Now I am opening the top and putting a little yellow paint on your tray.”*]

Put about two tablespoons of paint on a tray. Invite toddlers to use their fingers or the palm of their hand to touch and spread their chosen paint on the tray. You may wish to show how to use fingertips, especially your pointer (index) finger, to create marks in the paint.

Describe each toddler’s actions with the paint. Focus more on their hand or finger actions than on the look of the paint on the tray. Example: “Your hands are moving around and around.”

At an appropriate moment during toddlers’ explorations, demonstrate moving both hands side to side and back and forth.

Wipe excess paint off a toddler’s hands with a paper towel before he/she begins washing in the sink.

**Option 2 continued**

If you wish to capture the toddler's scribbles for display or a portfolio, lightly press a sheet of sturdy paper over the finger paint design. Show it to the toddler.]

RECAP: We painted on a tray with our hands and fingers! You told me the color you wanted to use.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

The opportunity to use one or both hands in a medium that naturally lends itself to large, broad motions fosters coordination of hand and finger muscles. Finger painting also promotes use of fingers together and separately. Support each toddler's preferred level of participation. It is fine for a toddler to touch the paint with one finger and choose to stop. Repeating the activity regularly will give toddlers experiences to build upon. It is not a good idea to put a child's hands in finger paint because it may be unsettling and prompt the toddler to feel out of control.

For some toddlers, the cool and smooth paint is especially appealing and they may begin to spread it on their arms and/or face. Wipe the paint off gently and repeat, "We keep paint on the tray."

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Place a tray on the floor for a toddler who prefers to sit. Spread a bed sheet or other cloth to prevent paint from getting on the floor. ■ Give each toddler a small sponge to wipe paint off fingers. ■ Provide a short paintbrush to a toddler who is reluctant to put his/her fingers in the paint.

Enrichment ■ Support an additional fine motor skill by putting the paint in cups and encouraging toddlers to spoon paint onto the trays. ■ Draw a round shape and encourage a toddler to use his/her pointer (index) finger on one hand and then on the other hand to trace the big circle. The intent is to provide experiences in using each hand/finger for the same task.



12–24 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers use paintbrushes to mix different colors of paints on a tray.



Key Concepts

Brush
Mix
Colors



Materials Needed

Smooth trays—1 per toddler
Paintbrushes in various sizes
Liquid tempera paints (see Be Prepared)
Small nonbreakable cups (see Be Prepared)
Art smocks—1 per toddler



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language



Optional Reading

White Rabbit's Colors (Little Rabbit Books) by Alan Baker
Mouse Paint by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Be Prepared: Cover a table with newsprint. Arrange a variety of paintbrushes on the table. Provide three cups of paint plus a tray for each child. Use paints that blend into pleasing colors. Secure brushes that easily fit into a cup.

Invite several toddlers to paint at a low table covered with newsprint. Help each child get an art smock fastened. Push up shirtsleeves if necessary. Talk with the toddlers about the brush sizes available and the colors in the cups. Encourage each toddler to apply paint to the tray as he/she wishes.

Kneel beside the table to talk with toddlers about their efforts. Draw attention to the way colors mix together and change. Example: "I see lots of colors. The colors are mixing. The colors are changing!" Avoid asking a toddler what he/she painted.

Encourage toddlers to use one hand and then the opposite hand. Draw attention to areas of the tray that are void of color. Ask a toddler if he/she would like to reach or stretch to apply paint at the edges of the tray.

If you wish to save an image, take a photo or press heavy paper onto the tray to make a print.

What to Look For—Option 3

Toddlers are generally pleased to apply paint and observe the effects. The process of manipulating a paintbrush and noticing how colors mix and change colors are important aspects of the activity. Some toddlers may prefer to use the paints as finger paints. If a toddler has his/her hand covered in paint, offer paper to make a handprint.

Fine motor skills develop over time through different activities. Painting in the toddler years is one of the ways young children can develop muscle control needed for later important tasks, such as holding a pencil and cutting with scissors.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ When a toddler's tray is covered with paint, offer a clean brush to create textures. ■ Provide sponges if toddlers want to remove paint from their hands.

Enrichment ■ Provide white paint with one dark color for the toddlers to mix.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: Simple shape puzzles, container with plush toy fish, crayons and paper, cups for scooping and dumping, *White Rabbit's Colors (Little Rabbit Books)* by Alan Baker, *Mouse Paint* by Ellen Stoll Walsh

The materials suggested here promote fine motor development. Toddlers will enjoy taking toy fish out of a container placed on a low surface, and also returning the toys to the container. The opportunity to draw and make marks with crayons on paper is a good complement to the use of paints in Options 1–3. Place small cups in the sensory table with water or dry material for scooping and dumping. Engage toddlers in books focused on colors, individually or in a small gathering.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: lacing yarn, party plate, small rattles, scarves, sidewalk chalk, beads

Preschool-age children may enjoy lacing yarn through holes punched around the outer edge of a paper party plate. Reaching and holding small rattles and feeling the silky edges of scarves will be enjoyable for infants. Outdoors, toddlers and preschool-age children will enjoy sidewalk chalk. During an informal gathering, lead children in a finger-play song, such as "Itsy Bitsy Spider," that involves hand and finger movements. Also, sing and demonstrate the hand movements to the song "Where is Thumbkin?"