



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a shared book reading that emphasizes words and pictures related to a baby bird trying to find its mother.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in a shared book reading that involves clues for guessing types of animals.
- Option 3** (OO) A toddler participates in an animal-focused shared book reading followed by a matching game related to the story.



Cognitive

Sorting and Matching

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler sorts animal counters by color.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers match counters to a section of paper of the same color.
- Option 3** (OO) A toddler sorts animal counters by type of animal.



Self-Regulation

Paying Attention

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler looks at and puts together animal picture cards that are the same.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers look at sets of two randomly selected animal picture cards to determine whether the cards are the same or different.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers independently take turns looking at sets of two randomly selected animal picture cards to determine whether the cards are the same or different.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler engages with a caregiver in open-ended play involving a doll house and furnishings, and people figures.
- Option 2** (OO) A toddler engages with a caregiver in open-ended play involving a doll house and furnishings, people figures, and additional related materials.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers participate in open-ended play with a caregiver that emphasizes noticing another toddler's actions, playing together, and give-and-take peer conversations.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers explore making different types of marks and using different colors as part of open-ended coloring.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers explore coloring on a paper plate, including making circles and applying different amounts of pressure to a crayon.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers use different colors of markers to make circles on paper while walking around a small table together.

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



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Awareness of print and pictures

Toddlers participate in a shared book reading that emphasizes words and pictures related to a baby bird trying to find its mother.



Key Concepts

Pictures

Words

Mother

Baby



Materials Needed

Are You My Mother? by P.D. Eastman



Also Promotes

Social-Emotional

BEGIN: [*Invite several toddlers to read a book about a mother bird and her baby.*]

Our book is about a baby bird. The baby bird hatches from his egg, and he wants to find his mother. He goes walking to look for his mother. Our book is about the animals and things the baby bird meets while looking for his mother. I think you will like this book!

EXPLAIN: [*Display book cover. Point to the baby bird and the dog.*]

Here is the baby bird. He is standing on a dog.

ASK: Do you think the dog is his mother?

[*Engage toddlers in a brief conversation about why the dog could not be the baby bird's mother.*]

EXPLAIN: The baby bird wants to find his mother.

Our book is called *Are You My Mother?* Let's find out if the baby bird finds his mother in our story!

ACT: [*Open the book. Hold the book close to toddlers. Ask them what they see. Respond positively to all toddlers' reactions to the pictures. Repeat and expand toddlers' words.*]

Our book has pictures and words.

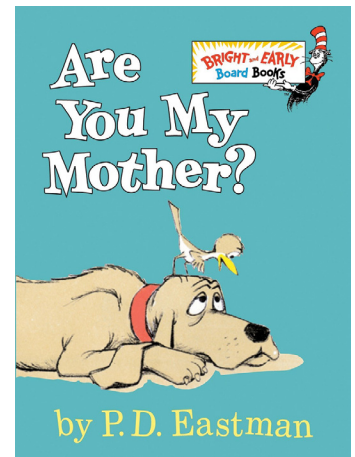
[*Point to the words.*]

These words say ____.

[*Read the first page aloud.*]

Continue to read and talk about the book using the following strategies to engage toddlers and help them understand how books work:

- *Point to and describe pictures. Example: "The baby bird doesn't know what his mother looks like. He keeps walking. What do you see in this picture? Do you see the mother bird getting a worm for the baby bird? She doesn't see her baby bird!"*
- *Use physical gestures while reading to emphasize the concepts of up (lift arm high) and down (move hand to the floor). You*



**Option 1 continued**

may also want to emphasize the mother bird going away at the beginning of the story and coming back at the end of the story.

- *Expand upon the book text and ask specific questions to help toddlers understand the story and support toddlers' interest. Examples:*
 - *"The baby bird thinks the cow may be his mother. Do you think the cow is his mother? Why do you think the cow is not his mother?"*
 - *"The baby bird called the 'big thing' a 'snort' because it made a snorting sound. Do you know the real name for this 'big thing'? It's a construction truck called an excavator! An excavator digs and scoops and lifts dirt. What is the excavator doing with the baby bird?"*
 - *"The little bird cannot find his mother. He wants his mother. How do you think the baby bird is feeling?"*
 - *"The baby bird is back in his nest! His mother is back in the nest! What do you think the baby bird feels?"*
- *Invite toddlers to recite the repetitive sentence on each page with you—"Are you my mother?"*
- *Respond to toddlers' pointing and comments.*
- *Vary your voice to add a dynamic quality.]*

RECAP: The words in our book told us about a baby bird who was looking for his mother. The pictures helped us understand the story. The baby bird looked and looked for his mother. He met different animals and things that were not his mother. What happened when the baby bird was back in his nest?

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

This book provides multiple opportunities for conversations with toddlers. It combines silly pictures and words with a story line that toddlers can connect with. All toddlers experience a mother/father/caregiver going away and coming back. Toddlers may have different feelings and thoughts to share regarding the baby bird's mother going away and coming back. The repetitive text in the book provides opportunities for toddlers to recite the text with you. The book also provides opportunities to emphasize concepts, including up and down, away and back. Some toddlers will enjoy the silly nature of the story as the baby bird asks different animals and things if they are his mother. Other toddlers may want to talk about the mother bird going away and coming back. Follow the lead of each toddler, acknowledging and expanding upon their interests and comments. Example: "Felicia pointed to 'snort' and said 'oh no!' What do you think is going to happen to the baby bird next, Felicia?"

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

Extra support ■ The ending of this story, when both the baby and mother bird make it back to the nest, is significant for toddlers to experience. If toddlers begin to lose interest in the middle of the book, skip to the last several pages to complete the end of the story. ■ Toddlers may enjoy revisiting this book with you. A one-to-one setting provides greater opportunities to talk with toddlers about their thoughts and feelings regarding the story.

Enrichment ■ Connect aspects of the story to toddlers' lives. Mothers and/or fathers go away at the beginning of the day (while toddler is in care) and come back at the end of the day. Sometimes mothers and fathers go away for longer periods. Ask toddlers about their feelings when their parent or caregiver goes away and comes back. Example: "You were sad when your daddy dropped you off today. He is going to come back to pick you up! How will you feel when he comes back?" ■ Talk with toddlers about the characteristics of each of the animals and things the baby bird thinks may be his mother. Example: "The dog has fur and ears and a long pink tongue. What does the baby bird have? You are right, the dog can't be the baby bird's mother!"

24–36 Months

Option 2
Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Awareness of print and pictures

Toddlers participate in a shared book reading that involves clues for guessing types of animals.



Key Concepts

Mama

Llama



Materials Needed

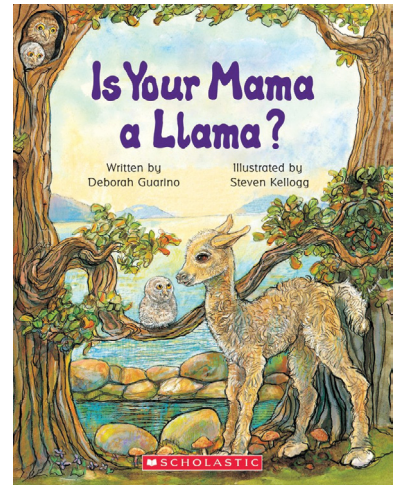
Is Your Mama a Llama? by Deborah Guarino



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Invite several toddlers to read a book about a llama who is curious about different animal mamas. Introduce the book and invite toddlers to tell the story with you. Explain that the llama asks different animals about their mama, and toddlers can help you say the words—“Is your mama a llama?”



Explain that the book is also a guessing game! Example: “Each animal is going to give us clues, or hints, to help us guess what kind of animal their mama is. We can all say what animal we think she might be! Let’s read the story and see what animal mamas we can guess!” Prompt toddlers to recite the familiar phrase with you.

Review and summarize the clues for each animal and encourage toddlers to share their ideas. Examples: “She eats grass and says ‘moo.’ What animal do you think she is? Let’s turn the page and see!” “Desmond said ‘roo.’ Desmond thinks the mama is a kangaroo!”

Recognize and acknowledge each type of participation. Examples: “Jordan guessed the animal mama is a duck. The animal mama is called a swan. A swan is like a duck because they both have feathers and wings and live on the water. You used the clues to guess an animal that is similar!” “Juan pointed to the turtle in this picture and said ‘mama.’ You are right, Juan, the turtle is a mama because she has her baby turtles next to her!”

 What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers will interact with the story in different ways. Some will enjoy reciting the words and sharing their guesses about the animal. Others may share their ideas by pointing to or acting like an animal. The intent of this activity option is to support toddlers’ interactions with the story, and not to guess the right animal. The book provides rich picture and word clues that can be reviewed and explored. Recognize the ideas of each toddler without emphasizing whether they are right or wrong. Example: “You said ‘cat.’ Let’s turn the page and see!” Acknowledge toddlers who prefer to watch and listen. Example: “Maria is looking closely at all the pictures. I think you like this book, Maria!”

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

Extra support ■ Toddlers may need some extra clues to help them guess the animals. Point out picture clues they may not notice and provide additional hints. Example: “This mama hops on two legs and has a long tail. We have a book about this animal in the book corner!” ■ Provide opportunities for interested toddlers to revisit the book in a one-to-one setting, where a toddler may feel more comfortable sharing his/her ideas.

Enrichment ■ Play *I Spy* with the smaller mama and baby pictures on the pages. Example: “I spy a mama with a shell and her babies. Can you find the mama with the shell in this picture?” ■ Invite toddlers to explore additional details in the pictures. This may include characteristics of animals, such as size, fur/feathers, colors, or sounds they make. You may also wish to explore details about where the animals live, such as water, rocks, cave, grass, trees, or flowers.

24–36 Months

Option 3 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Awareness of print and pictures

A toddler participates in an animal-focused shared book reading followed by a matching game related to the story.



Key Concepts

Mama

Baby

Big

Small



Materials Needed

Is Your Mama a Llama? by Deborah Guarino

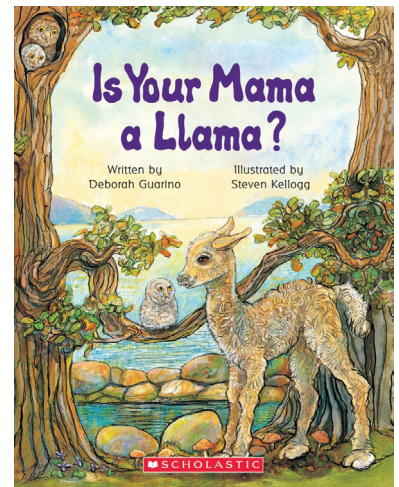
Melissa & Doug Mother and Baby Farm Animal Families Wooden Peg Puzzle



Also Promotes

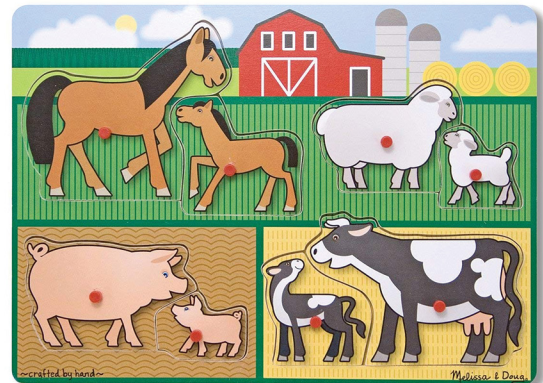
Cognitive

Invite a toddler to share a book and work on a matching puzzle. Read the book and encourage the toddler to guess the animal mama on the next page. Review and summarize the clues when needed. Example: “The words tell us she eats grass and says ‘moo.’ What animal do you think she might be?” Talk with the toddler about the different animal babies and their mamas. Point out the smaller picture of hidden mamas and babies on each page. Example: “I see another mama with her babies on this page. Can you find her?”



At the conclusion of the story, introduce the animal matching puzzle. Place the puzzle pieces in front of the toddler. Explain that each piece is an animal mama or an animal baby, just like the mamas and babies in the story. Point out that in the book, the babies were small and the mamas were big. Look at the puzzle pieces with the toddler

and talk with him/her about the mamas that are big and the babies that are small. Invite the toddler to look at each piece and pick out a baby and mama that match. Talk with the toddler about what he/she is seeing and thinking. Example: “You are looking at the puzzle piece with a picture of a small pig. What does the pig look like? Do you see another puzzle piece with a picture of a pig?” Continue to talk with the toddler about the puzzle pieces and acknowledge his/her efforts to match a mama and baby. When the toddler finds a match, help him/her place the two pieces into the puzzle frame and celebrate the achievement. Example: “You found a baby cow and a mama cow! The two pieces fit together in the puzzle!”



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

- The words tell us the mama has flippers and eats fish all day. The picture shows us she lives in the water. What animal do you think she might be?
- You are holding the puzzle piece with the small brown horse. What do you see on the other puzzle pieces?

**Option 3 continued**

Repeat and extend each response. Examples:

- Child: Points to the picture of a bunny and says “bunny”
- Caregiver: Yes, you are pointing to the mama bunny. Do you see the bunny’s babies? Her babies are small.
- Child: Points to a puzzle piece with a cow and says “moo”
- Caregiver: You made the sound of a cow! You remember what a cow looks like. Can you find another puzzle piece with a picture of a cow?

Continue to extend the conversation with the toddler, following their direction. Examples:

- Child: Picks up puzzle piece with picture of a cow, looks for a picture of a cow in the book and says “cow”
- Caregiver: You found the puzzle piece with the picture of a cow, and you found the picture of a cow in our book! You found two cows! Can you find the mama and the baby cow in this picture?
- Child: Points to mama cow in the book and says “mama”
- Caregiver: You found the mama cow! You know the mama cow is big and her baby is small. What picture would you like to look at next?

👁️ What to Look For—Option 3

This option provides many opportunities for having conversations with a toddler. Talking with a toddler in a back-and-forth exchange is an important building block for communication and language development. Extend the toddler’s language by adding descriptive words and complete sentences. Some toddlers will enjoy guessing the animals and matching the puzzle pieces. Others may prefer to look at and talk about the pictures in the book and on the puzzle pieces.

This option is about matching an animal mama with an animal baby; and not about completing the puzzle independently. Provide support to help toddlers successfully complete the puzzle once they find the matching puzzle pieces. Focus on talking with the toddler about what he/she is seeing and thinking as part of the search for a match.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ If a toddler has difficulty matching eight puzzle pieces, offer a smaller number of options, such as 1–2 matching pieces (total of 2–4 puzzle pieces). ■ If matching the puzzle pieces is not of interest to a toddler, talk with toddler about pictures in the book and on the puzzle pieces. Encourage the toddler to compare and contrast the different animals. Offer descriptive language about each image.

Enrichment ■ Set the puzzle frame aside and place the puzzle pieces in front of toddler. Invite toddler to explore the puzzle pieces and talk with him/her about what he/she sees. Encourage the toddler to describe the pictures, including color, size, body parts, and fur/feathers.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: *Is Your Mama a Llama?* by Deborah Guarino, animal figures including animal families (one or two larger animals with a smaller animal baby), barn for farm animals or blocks for a wild animal habitat

Place the book and materials on a low table. Review the book and invite toddlers to find the animal families. Toddlers may choose to interact with the materials in different ways. Some may be interested in moving the animals in and out of the barn, or may want to build a pen for the animals. Others may have the parent and baby animals interact. Describe toddlers' actions and talk with them about their plans.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: *Is Your Mama a Llama?* by Deborah Guarino, animal figures including animal families (one or two larger animals with a smaller animal baby), large chunky animal figures for babies

This book may be shared with all young children in your setting. Older children will enjoy using the clues to guess the animal mama on the next page. Babies will enjoy holding and exploring a large chunky animal figure while listening to the rhyming text. Place the animal figures in the block area for toddlers and older children to interact with. Younger children may enjoy watching the different ways the older children interact with the materials. Talk with children about their ideas and actions.

24–36 Months

Option 1
One-to-One

Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

A toddler sorts animal counters by color.



Key Concepts

Same
Different
Sort



Materials Needed

Jumbo Farm Counter set
(see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: For each toddler, select 2–6 different colors and 2–5 different animals per color from a set of the counters specified in the Materials Needed list. One bucket of 30 counters contains five different animals (cow, horse, rooster, pig, sheep) in each of six different colors (blue, yellow, red, orange, green, purple).

Use two colors and 2–3 animals per color if sorting is relatively new to and/or likely to be challenging for a child (total: 4–6 counters). Example: red cow, red horse, blue rooster, blue pig. Use 4–5 colors and up to five animals per color with a child who can readily sort items. Have more pre-selected counters ready at hand so you can seamlessly introduce additional counters if a toddler is ready to do more sorting. The extra counters may represent an additional color and/or several more animals of the colors already placed on the table.

Invite a toddler to play with farm animal counters at a low table with you. Sit facing the toddler and place the pre-selected counters on the table one or two at a time.

Name the color of each counter as you put it on the table. Emphasize how the colors are the same or different but do not put the counters together by color. It is not necessary to teach or expect a toddler to remember specific color names for this activity. Simply point out the colors are different or the same. Examples: While pointing to each counter, say “the color of this counter is different from the color of this counter.” “Here is another counter. The color of this counter is the same as the color of the counter I just put on the table.”

If the toddler shows interest in the shape of the counter (example: “What’s this?”) or says the name of a type of animal, explain that the counters show different types of animals. Point to and say (or invite the toddler to say) the animal name of several counters. Then draw the toddler’s attention to same or different counter colors, which is the focus of sorting in this activity option. (Sorting by type of animal is Option 3.)

After a set of pre-selected counters is on the table, invite the toddler to put together counters that are the same color. Pause while the toddler figures out how to sort the counters by color. Offer support only after the toddler has been given some time to think about this on his/her own. (See Extra Support tips.)

Describe how the toddler sorted the counters. Example (while pointing): “You put two red counters here. You put two blue counters here. Blue and red are different colors. You sorted the counters by putting together the counters that are the same color.”



Option 1 continued

Invite the toddler to do more sorting. If the toddler indicates he/she is interested, shuffle the existing counters on the table and add two more counters from your pre-selected collection. You may wish to add a third color (two counters of same color) or two different animals that represent existing colors on the table for the child to sort.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Pay close attention to the ease with which a toddler sorts the counters. See the Scaffolding Tips for possible ways to respond to what you observe. Keep in mind that the number of counters and colors you offer to a toddler represents different levels of challenge. Example: Sorting six counters into three colors is generally more challenging than sorting six counters into two colors. Use the child's responses to add challenge incrementally and appropriately.

Look for and positively respond to signs of toddler interest in the different types of animals represented among the counters. Talk about a toddler's interests in the animals, as indicated in the activity description. At the same time, keep in mind that the current option uses color to introduce or provide practice in sorting items. A cognitive challenge of this activity is for the toddler to focus on the color of the counter, not the type of animal it represents. This is a self-regulation skill. The one-to-one setting of this activity offers strong opportunity for you to support a toddler's efforts to focus on a particular aspect of the counters.

With the counters used for this activity, sorting by type of animal (Option 3) is significantly more challenging than paying attention to color (this option and Option 2) because some types of animals are the same height and look similar upon first glance.

A toddler does not need to recall color names to be successful in sorting. More important is awareness of how the counters represent different and same colors. Avoid reworking the activity as a lesson in color identification that reduces the attention to sorting skills.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ If a toddler seems unclear about how to proceed in putting together counters of the same color, point to a counter and ask the toddler if he/she sees another counter on the table that is the same color. Invite the toddler to move the counter next to the counter you pointed to. If the toddler does not identify a second counter of the same color, point to a second counter of the same color, move it next to the first counter you pointed to, and explain that the counters are the same color. Then move a counter of a different color next to the two same-colored counters and ask whether this third counter is the same color as the other two same-colored counters. ■ If a toddler does not engage the sorting activity, spend time exploring and talking about the characteristics of the counters (colors, type of animal) and attempt the sorting activity at a later point. One of a toddler's discoveries may be that the counters can also serve as small finger puppets. ■ Remind the toddler that we are putting together counters that are the same color, not the same type of animal. Explain that two counters can be the

**Option 1 continued**

same color but different types of animals. ■ Encourage the toddler to use different parts of the table for placing groupings of same-colored counters.

Enrichment ■ Change the rule for sorting by color. Instead of putting the same color of counters together, invite the toddler to put together counters that are different colors. This effort can strengthen understanding of different and same.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Problem-solving

Toddlers match counters to a section of paper of the same color.



Key Concepts

Color
Match
Same
Different
Take turns



Materials Needed

Jumbo Farm Counter set
*Paper with 6 color sections
Basket or container



Also Promotes

Social-Emotional
Self-Regulation

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Place in the basket 2–3 counters for each child you expect to participate in the activity. Include in your selection several counters for each of the six colors. Type of animal is not a consideration in this option's sorting activity. (See Be Prepared in Option 1 for a brief description of the Jumbo Farm Counter set.)

BEGIN: *[Invite 3–4 toddlers to play a game with animal counters. Arrange toddlers in a circle with the provided paper (with color sections) in the middle of the circle.]*



EXPLAIN: Today we are going to take turns pulling one counter from a basket and putting the counter on the paper that is in front of us. Our paper has six different colors on it. We can put our counter on the paper color that is the same as the color of the counter. We call this matching. We will match the color of our counter to the color on the paper.



Let's look at the colors on the paper in front of us. What colors do we see?

[Lead children in saying the color of the paper sections as you point to each.]

Now let's look at the color of some of the counters in our basket.

[Pull one of each of the six colors of counters from the basket, one at a time, and lead children in saying the color of the counter. Display and name six different colors only, not all counters.]

ACT: Now let's do some matching of colors. I will go first so we can see how to do the matching.

[Take a counter from the basket, express excitement about the color you pulled, and place the counter on the paper section of the same color. Describe what you are doing. Example: "My counter is yellow. I will put my counter on the same color on our paper. I will put my counter on the yellow part of our paper. Yellow and yellow match."]

Would we have a match if I put my yellow counter on a different color on our paper?

[Put your counter on a highly contrasting color, such as a yellow counter on the blue section of the paper.]

Is this a match?

**Option 2 continued**

[Explain why this is not a match. The color of the counter and the color of the paper section are different. Yellow and blue are different colors. They are not the same. A match means the colors are the same.]

We can take turns by going around the circle we are sitting in. We will pass the basket to the person sitting next to us after we take our turn.

[Pass the basket to a toddler sitting next to you and provide verbal guidance for the activity. See Scaffolding Tips.]

Engage toddlers in 2–3 rounds of pulling a counter and putting it on the matching color section of the paper. Consider reversing the order of a round (example: move around the circle beginning on your left instead of your right) unless you anticipate this might create too much confusion.

Tell toddlers when the activity is over. Encourage toddlers to help put the animals back in the basket.]

RECAP: We did some matching today. We matched the color of a counter to the color of a section of our paper. Our counter and paper matched when they were the same color.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

This activity is more challenging than Option 1 because it involves matching the color of two different types of objects (counter and paper section) and occurs in a small group setting, which promotes taking turns and consideration of others.

Pay attention to the ease with which toddlers identify the appropriate color section on the paper. One of the activity's challenges is to consider six different colors, two of which are similar (purple, blue). You may wish to offer fewer colors or separate the colors on the paper. See suggestions in Scaffolding Tips.

As with Option 1, toddlers are likely to differ in their skill in focusing on one aspect (color) of a counter that has other appealing features. Supporting toddler's focus on color can be beneficial to self-regulation skill development. Toddlers who find it particularly challenging to focus on one characteristic of a counter may be more appropriately supported with an opportunity to explore the counter characteristics in a playful manner. See the second Extra Support tip in Option 1.

Although color names are part of this activity, color recall is not necessary for a positive experience in matching. Support a toddler's attention to whether colors are the same or different. Same and different are important concepts to promote in discussions with toddlers.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Reinforce a toddler's color match. Examples: "It is a match! The colors are the same. Green and green." "You found a color on our paper that is the same as the color of your animal counter!"
■ Cut the color squares into separate sections, placed 1–2 inches apart on the table or floor, if you anticipate toddlers will find it too challenging to consider six different colors on the same piece of paper.

**Option 2 continued**

■ Use a 3–4 colors instead of six by cutting color sections from the paper and selecting counters for the colors that remain. ■ If a toddler seems unclear about how to match colors, invite him/her to put his/her counter on any color and then decide whether the colors are the same. If the colors do not match, ask if he/she sees a color that is the same. If the toddler does not see one, move his/her counter to the appropriate color and explain the colors are the same. They match. ■ Encourage toddlers to pull any color of counter if there is interest in looking at counters in the basket to find a favorite. (see Enrichment tip)

Enrichment ■ Encourage toddlers to close their eyes when pulling a counter from the basket. This can add an element of uncertainty and surprise to the activity. Using a cloth or paper bag instead of a basket can also add some uncertainty about the color.

24–36 Months

Option 3 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Problem-solving Object inquiry skills

A toddler sorts animal counters by type of animal.



Key Concepts

Same
Different
Sort



Materials Needed

Jumbo Farm Counter set
(see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: For each toddler, select 2–5 different types of animals and 2–6 different colors per animal type from a set of the counters specified in the Materials Needed list. One bucket of 30 counters contains five different animals (cow, horse, rooster, pig, sheep) in each of six different colors (blue, yellow, red, orange, green, purple).

Use two types of animals and 2–3 colors per animal if sorting is relatively new to and/or likely to be challenging for a child (total: 4–6 counters). Example: red cow, blue cow, green rooster, yellow rooster. For a toddler’s initial sorting experience, select animal types that are different in shape, such as a cow and a rooster. Some animal types look similar upon first glance, such as the cow and horse. Use more animal types and colors of the selected animal types with a child who can readily sort items.

Have more pre-selected counters ready at hand so you can seamlessly introduce additional counters if a toddler is ready to do more sorting. The extra counters may represent an additional animal type and/or several more colors of the animal types already placed on the table.

Invite a toddler to play with farm animal counters at a low table with you. Sit facing the toddler and place the pre-selected counters on the table one or two at a time.



Name the type of animal each counter represents as you put counters on the table. Draw attention to animal features, such as the ears of the cow or the tail of the rooster. Emphasize how animal types are the same or different but do not put the counters together by type of animal. Acknowledge that there are different colors of the same type of animal.

Explain that today we will pay attention to the type of animal. We will not pay attention to the color of the animal.

After a set of pre-selected counters is on the table, invite the toddler to put together counters that show the same type of animal. Explain that we will sort the counters by type of animal. Pause while the toddler figures out how to sort the counters by type of animal. Offer support only after the toddler has been given some time to think about this on his/her own. (See Extra Support tips.)

Describe how the toddler sorted the counters. Example (while pointing): “You put two roosters here. You put two cows here. Roosters and cows are different types of animals. You sorted the counters by putting together the counters that are the same type of animal.”

Point out how the toddler did not pay attention to color in putting together the same types of animals. Example: “One of the roosters is yellow. One of the roosters is green. The colors are different. But the type of animal is the same. You put together counters that show the same type of animal.”



Option 3 continued

Invite the toddler to do more sorting. If the toddler indicates he/she is interested, shuffle the existing counters on the table and add two more counters from your pre-selected collection. You may wish to add an additional animal (two counters of the same animal) or two different colors of an animal type already on the table.

What to Look For—Option 3

This activity is more challenging than individualized sorting by color in Option 1 because the animal features require more careful attention (visual discrimination) than color. Providing types of animals that are high in feature contrast, such as a cow and a rooster as suggested in *Be Prepared*, is important for a toddler's initial attempt to sort by type of animal.

Pay close attention to the ease with which a toddler sorts the counters. See the Scaffolding Tips for possible ways to respond to what you observe. Keep in mind that the number of counters and types of animals you offer to a toddler represents different levels of challenge. It is generally best to begin with a smaller number of counters, as suggested in *Be Prepared*, and gradually increase the number of counters a toddler is given to sort.

To help a toddler notice differences in the features of the animals, provide more than a label (“this is a pig, this is a horse”). Point to and describe key characteristics of each type of animal. In addition to helping the toddler attend to animal features, a brief description of each animal helps the toddler look beyond color. Remind the toddler that today we are sorting by type of animal, not by color.

Some toddlers may want to talk about the animal. They may want to hear or make the noise the animal makes, such as the mooing of a cow. This can be a helpful way for a toddler to focus on type of animal.

With the counters used for this activity, sorting by type of animal (Option 3) is significantly more challenging than paying attention to color (this option and Option 2) because some types of animals are the same height and look similar upon first glance.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ If a toddler seems unclear about how to proceed in putting together counters of the same type of animal, point to a counter and ask the toddler if he/she sees another counter on the table that is the same type of animal. Invite the toddler to move the counter next to the counter you pointed to. If the toddler does not identify a second counter of the same type of animal, point to a second counter of the same animal, move it next to the first counter you pointed to, and explain that the counters are the same animal. Then move a counter of a different animal next to the two same-animal counters and ask whether this third counter is the same animal as the other two same-animal counters. ■ If a toddler does not engage the sorting activity, spend time exploring and talking about the characteristics of the counters (colors, type of animal) and attempt the sorting activity at a later point. One of a toddler's discoveries may be that the counters can also serve as small finger puppets. ■ Remind

Option 3 continued

the toddler that we are putting together counters that show the same animal, not the same color. Explain that two counters can be the same type of animal but a different color. ■ Encourage the toddler to use different parts of the table for placing groupings of same-animal counters.

Enrichment ■ Increase the challenge of sorting by offering two types of animals that can look similar, such as the pig and sheep, or the horse and cow.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: chunky vehicles, boxes, construction paper, packing tape, solid color toy dishes

In different areas of the room, promote the idea of matching objects. Arrange the toy vehicles in rows by color. Cut the end from several boxes and wrap them in solid color papers. The boxes can serve as garages for the colored cars and trucks. Cover the garages with packing tape.

Arrange animal figures that are the same where toddlers may reach them. Another day, sort the animal counters by color and place each color group in a clear cup. Put the cups of sorted animals on a table with felt squares. Provide an assortment of items in a basket for toddlers to match. In dramatic play, emphasize matching by providing sets of dishes children can sort and match.

Cut paper circles of two colors that are favorites among toddlers in your room. Give each toddler a sheet of sturdy paper and glue to fasten the circles. Some toddlers will create a design with one color, and other children may glue circles of both colors.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: large and small paper circles in two colors, glue stick, matching card games, variety of red and blue toys, felt squares of different colors, wooden beads and string

Preschool-age children may be ready to match color and size. Provide paper circles, large and small sizes, in two colors. Give each child sturdy paper and their own glue stick. Preschool and older children will enjoy simple cards to match, such as "Go Fish."

Put a variety of red toys in a red bin for mobile infants to explore. Another day, provide two bins of mixed play materials, both red and blue. Create groupings of toys the same color on a low table. Children of all ages will enjoy playing with eight-inch felt squares of different colors.

Sit with toddlers to string wooden beads. Talk with toddlers about finding two beads that are the same. Emphasize characteristics that are the same.



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Concentration

A toddler looks at and puts together animal picture cards that are the same.



Key Concepts

Match
Same



Materials Needed

*Matching picture cards
(see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Collect two picture cards of each of the following animals: cat, dog, cow, duck, sheep, and rabbit (total: 12 cards). Select 2–3 animals (two cards each, for a total of 4–6 cards) to feature in the first round, with remaining animals (two cards each) featured in a second round.

Invite one toddler to sit at a low table with you to look at and put together animal picture cards that are the same. Display 2–3 sets of picture cards, face up, on the table with identical cards in different locations (none together).

Encourage the toddler to look at each card and then put together cards that are the same. Help the toddler put the matching cards next to each other. Explain that cards match when they are the same. Two cards that each show a cat are a match because they are the same. Put two different cards next to each other and ask the toddler if the cards match. Explain they are not a match because they show different animals.



Offer a second round of finding cards that are the same. Put the remaining cards (6–8 cards total) on the table, face up and in random placement. Again, encourage the toddler to look at each card and then put together cards that are the same.

If the toddler seems interested in a third round, place all 12 cards on the table, face up, for the toddler to look at and put together.

Conclude the session reminding the toddler that he/she looked closely at pictures of animals and put together pictures that were the same. Cards that match are the same.





24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers look at sets of two randomly selected animal picture cards to determine whether the cards are the same or different.



Key Concepts

Match
Same
Different



Materials Needed

*Matching picture cards
(see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Secure a set of matching cards for the following four types of animals (two cards each): cat, dog, cow, and duck.

BEGIN: *[Invite 2–3 toddlers to help you match some picture cards. Sit at a table facing toddlers. Display four cards: two that show a cat, one that shows a cow, and one that shows a dog.]*



EXPLAIN: Our cards show animals. Some of our cards show the same animal.

[Point to the two cards that show a cat.]

These two cards show a picture of a cat. The picture of the cat is the same on each card. These two cards match because they are the same. Both cards show a cat.

ASK: *[Point to the card that shows a dog.]*

Please look at the animal on this card. What type of animal is shown on this card?

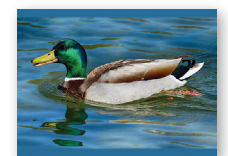


[Invite toddlers to name the animal pictured on the card. Recognize each response. Example: "Lilly said 'bow-wow.' Lilly knows that this animal can say 'bow-wow.'"]

EXPLAIN: This card shows a dog. Here is another card.

ASK: *[Point to the card that shows a duck.]*

- Is this card the same as our card that shows a dog? (no)
- What animal is shown on this card?



[Pause for toddlers to respond and acknowledge each response.]

EXPLAIN: These two cards are different. They do not show the same animal. One card shows a duck. The other card shows a dog. These two cards do not match.

We are going to play a matching game with our animal cards!

ACT: *[Put the following matching cards into two piles, with cards organized in a different order in each pile: cat, dog, cow, and duck.] Place the piles face down in front of toddlers.]*

**Option 2 continued**

I am going to pick a card from each pile. I wonder if the two animals will be the same or different.

[Pick up and display one card from each pile.]

- ASK:**
- Are the two animals the same or are they different?
 - What animals do we see on our two cards?
 - Do our two cards match?

EXPLAIN: *[Remind toddlers: cards that match are the same. Describe briefly how we determine whether the cards match, emphasizing the concepts of same and different. Example: "We look at both cards. We figure out whether the cards are the same or different. The cards match if they are the same."]*

Place the two cards face up next to each other on a separate part of the table.]

ACT: Let's find out what animals are shown on our next two cards.

[Continue the process of selecting one card from each pile and asking toddlers the questions suggested above. Continue to emphasize the importance of looking at the two cards to find out whether they are the same or different. At the end of each comparison discussion, place the two cards next to each other on another part of the table.]

After the four sets of cards have been compared, draw toddlers' attention to the sets of cards. Point to each set of two cards and, for each set, ask whether the two cards are the same or different. Then ask toddlers to point to the sets of cards that match.]

RECAP: We looked at pictures of animals on cards. We figured out whether the pictures were the same or different. What do we call cards that show the same animal? (a match)



24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers independently take turns looking at sets of two randomly selected animal picture cards to determine whether the cards are the same or different.



Key Concepts

Same
Different
Match
Take turns



Materials Needed

*Matching picture cards
(see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Social-Emotional
Cognitive

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Secure a set of matching cards for the following six types of animals (two cards each): cat, dog, cow, duck, rabbit, and sheep.



Invite two toddlers to join you at a table to play a matching game. Show toddlers two sets of cards: two that match and two that do not match. Describe how the matching cards are the same. Example: “This card has a picture of a cow on it. This card also shows a picture of a cow. These two cards show the same animal. These two cards match because they show the same animal.” Ask toddlers whether the other set of two cards is the same or different. Example: “These cards do not match. Why don’t they match? (cards show different animals; animals are not the same)

Organize the cards into two piles of six cards each, with cards randomly organized in each pile. Each pile should have one of each of the six animals. Place the cards face down in front of toddlers.

Invite the two toddlers to take turns in (1) pulling one card from the top of each pile, (2) putting the cards face up on the table, and (3) telling whether the cards match. Remind toddlers what it means to take turns: only one person touches and talks about the cards when it is his/her turn.

As a follow-up to each child’s decision on whether cards match, ask why the cards match (or do not match). The intent is to encourage the toddler to explain that cards are match because they are the same or cards do not match because they are different.

To emphasize the importance of looking closely at each picture, elaborate on each toddler’s comment about why cards match or do not match. Example: “Sam’s cards show a picture of a dog and cat. The cards do not match because the animals are different.” It may be sufficient to elaborate on the first card comparisons of each toddler.

Toddlers may be interested in a second round, using reshuffled cards in each pile. Conclude the activity by reminding (or asking) toddlers that we determined whether two cards matched by looking at the animal pictures and figuring out whether the animals were the same or different.



What to Look For—Options 1–3

The activity offers opportunities for toddlers to look at and compare pictures of animals. Each option promotes the concepts of same and different plus the idea that cards match when they are the same. Options 1 and 2 intentionally help children focus on the same and different comparison before encouraging a toddler to say whether the cards match. In contrast, the more challenging Option 3 promotes a toddler's comparison of same and different after the toddler determines whether cards are a match.

The activity is not intended to be an animal identification task. Knowing the names of animals is not a requirement for determining whether the pictures are the same or different. Some toddlers may recognize but not promptly recall the name of an animal.

Option 3 offers the additional challenge of waiting patiently while a peer takes a turn. Some toddlers may show impatience by offering a decision about the other toddler's match. Offer a reminder of what it means to take turns and give a "warning" in advance of a child taking a turn if a child has shown impatience previously. Example: "Now it is Jake's turn to pull and look at the cards. Remember, Simon, you need to be quiet and watch Jake work with the cards he pulls. You will get a turn after Simon takes his turn."

If it appears toddlers participating in Option 3 would like a stronger peer relationship focus, the option can be modified into a more collaborative activity by inviting each child to pull one card from a pile and then (a) jointly determine or (b) take turns determining whether the cards match. The challenge here is to avoid having one toddler dominate decisions about a match.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

Extra support ■ Describe key physical characteristics of an animal if it appears a toddler needs help in concentrating on the animal shown on a card. The pictures of the cat and dog may be challenging to some toddlers. Both animals are lying in similar positions with no background images. Also, some backgrounds in the pictures (such as the water in which the duck is swimming) may attract more attention than the animal. A toddler may benefit from your pointing to and saying "Let's look at this animal." ■ In Options 1 and 2, put (or ask a toddler to put) two cards next to each other to make it easier to compare. ■ In Option 3, assume more involvement in the process if one or both toddlers seem unclear about how to independently decide whether cards are the same or different. The staff guidance suggested in Option 2 may be appropriate for Option 3 if a toddler(s) seems confused. It is important for each child to experience success in concentrating as part of the activity.

Enrichment ■ In Option 1, put cards on the table facing different directions (example: some upside down, some sideways) so the toddler has an initial task of putting each card in its correct position. ■ Invite toddlers to point to and identify some parts of the animals. Examples: head, tail, ears.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: *four unmatched animal cards, four toy animals that match the picture cards

Display the four animal cards on a low table and invite 2–3 toddlers to look at and name the animals on the cards. Encourage the toddler(s) to find the toy animal that matches each picture card.

*Printables provided



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: *picture cards (one each) that show the following animals: cat, dog, sheep, cow; *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown; farm animal figures (optional)

Read the book with children, emphasizing animals illustrated in the book. At the conclusion of the book, lay the farm animal picture cards face up on a low table. Revisit each of the illustrations of animals in the book and invite toddlers and older children to find a displayed card that shows the same type of animal. Babies may enjoy holding toy animal figures that represent some of the animals in the book.

*Printables provided



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler engages with a caregiver in open-ended play involving a dollhouse and furnishings, and people figures.



Key Concepts

Tell



Materials Needed

Dollhouse
Dollhouse furnishings
People figures
Pet figures (for Enrichment Tip)



Also Promotes

Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Llama, Llama, Red Pajama
by Anna Dewdney

Be Prepared: Provide the dollhouse, furnishings, and people figures for toddlers' open-ended exploration each day for one week prior to implementing this option. Children's familiarity with the materials will enhance their engagement of the activity and reduce the likelihood of several or more toddlers wanting to join an activity designed for one-to-one use. Place the dollhouse and its furnishings on a low table or the floor.

BEGIN: *[Invite one toddler to play with the dollhouse, furnishings, and people figures. Position yourself on the floor next to the toddler.]*

EXPLAIN: Look at all of the things you can play with.

[Name and point to some of the items available, especially parts of the dollhouse you think would be of interest to the toddler.]



I would like to sit next to you while you play.

ASK: What would you like to play with?

[Pause for, and then acknowledge, the toddler's response. Example: "You pointed to the baby. I think you want to play with the baby."]

ACT: *[Describe the toddler's actions. Examples: "You are holding a baby and a man." "You put a lot of people in the house." "You moved the daddy and baby to the dollhouse kitchen."]*

Invite the toddler to tell what he/she is doing. Example: "Would you like to tell me what you are doing?"

Repeat and extend the toddler's words. Example: "Yes, you are holding Daddy and Baby Tina."

Briefly and periodically describe the toddler's communications with you. Examples: "You are telling me about the baby." "You are talking with me about the dollhouse."

If the toddler invites you to hold a figure, imitate his/her actions or become a part of the play theme. Example: The toddler may be putting all people figures to bed. If you are unclear about the toddler's play theme, ask the toddler if there's something he/she would like you to do with the figure given to you.

If the toddler does not directly invite you to be part of the play after several minutes, ask the toddler if you may use one of the figures.

**Option 1 continued**

Pause for the toddler's response. If the toddler gives you a figure, ask how you should use it. Example: "What do you think I should do with this person?" If the toddler does not respond to your request to use one of the figures, continue to describe the toddler's actions.]

RECAP: *[Let the toddler know when you need to move to another area. Describe several highlights of the play and let the toddler know his/her play can continue without you. Example: "We talked about some of the people figures in the dollhouse. You are playing with the daddy and baby today. Daddy is feeding the baby in the kitchen. I enjoyed being with you. Maybe later you can tell me what else you do with the dollhouse today."]*

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Some toddlers may talk while they move the figures. Some toddlers will intentionally move the figures around without speaking much. Your occasional descriptions and questions will let the toddler know you are engaged and may enrich his/her understandings or intentions of the play. Be careful to not talk the entire time. Pause frequently so the toddler has clear opportunities to talk or act in silence. Acknowledge that a toddler is telling you something or talking with you, as indicated in option 1. Maintain your focus on the toddler's play regardless of whether there is much child verbalization.

At this age, toddlers' play often represents a theme that you can comment on. Toddlers often act out familiar routines from home with people figures. Toddlers may engage in pretend play about mealtime, playing a game with a child or adult, or going to bed. Some toddlers may create fantasy scenarios for the figures.

If it is necessary for you to leave the toddler's play area to attend to other toddlers, be sure to tell the toddler you need to go somewhere (and plan to return, if this commitment is possible). Remember that the goal of this option is to facilitate interaction with a toddler, not to set up the toddler for independent play. Attempt to provide responsive attention to the toddler for up to five minutes if the toddler remains engaged with the items and dollhouse.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Explain, "This is a house where the people figures live. You can move them around and make them talk if you like." ■ If a toddler is not familiar with figure play, it is appropriate to take a more active role by asking a few questions or making an initial suggestion of how the figures might be used. ■ Use the toddler's name throughout the play activity.

Enrichment ■ Gently ask questions that might extend the toddler's play. Examples: "Is there a sister or brother for the baby?" "Does the family have a dog or a cat?" ■ If a toddler is interested in pets, provide one or several pet figures. If a pet figure is not available, suggest the toddler pretend there is a pet in the house. Add several small dishes for pet care. ■ Use a play camera, if available, to take a picture of the figures the toddler chooses for play or the child's placement of figures in the dollhouse. The toddler will enjoy telling you and/or family members about what he/she did with the figures and house shown in the picture.



24–36 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler engages with a caregiver in open-ended play involving a dollhouse and furnishings, people figures, and additional related materials.



Key Concepts

Tell
Doing



Materials Needed

Dollhouse
Dollhouse furnishings
People figures
Pet and other small animal figures
Toy car
4-inch felt squares
Loose items, such as jar lids, stacking cups, star builders, tissue paper



Also Promotes

Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Llama, Llama, Red Pajama
by Anna Dewdney

Be Prepared: Provide a second dollhouse or a barn plus people and animal figures as a play option for toddlers who want to join your one-to-one activity with a dollhouse.

This option expands on the first option by providing additional materials and focused opportunity for theme-based play tailored to a toddler's interests and abilities. Offer this option to toddlers who seem ready to play with additional items and maybe to develop a stronger theme for their play.

Use your understanding of the child's readiness to engage in creative uses of items to determine what and how many items you present for play. Limit the offer of additional items to the car and/or animal figures if you anticipate it may be overwhelming to offer the full range of additional items listed in Materials Needed.

Some of the items may be easily incorporated into a play theme related to a family living in a house. Examples: A toddler may drive the car to/from work, a store, or child care center and have fun figuring out where to park it near the dollhouse. Other items, such as lids, offer the toddler a chance to engage in creative thinking about their uses.

Use multiple strategies, such as the following, to initiate and sustain interaction with the toddler without directing the play:

- describe the toddler's actions,
- invite the toddler to tell about his/her ideas or what he/she is doing,
- repeat and extend the toddler's words, and
- join the play with an item the toddler offers to you and/or in ways that the toddler suggests.

Be sure to pause frequently so the child has clear chances to talk. Give your attention to the toddler for about five minutes to foster his/her interaction skills. End your one-to-one time with a clear explanation the toddler can understand.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Each toddler may pursue dollhouse play in a particular way. A major advantage of the one-to-one setting is the opportunity to promote use of materials or themes of special interest to a toddler. Some toddlers may be interested mostly in playing with one child figure and one adult figure. Some toddlers may represent family routines, such as eating, traveling from place to place, or going to bed. Some toddlers may focus on creating spaces for the people or animal figures. Encourage creative use of the open-ended materials.

**Option 2 continued**

Example: The star builders can be stacked or connected. Some toddlers may view the star builders as part of a playground for the people and/or pet figures.

The most important part of your role is to look for opportunities to responsively promote the toddler's communication of ideas and perhaps turn-taking in play that is based on a theme developed by the child.

Play-based interactions may be new to some toddlers. You may find, for example, that describing a toddler's actions does not promote a verbal response from the toddler. Stay close and continue to offer elements of a play narrative the toddler may wish to further develop. Example: "I see you put a baby on a bed. Maybe it is nighttime." Pause for the toddler to react. Watch the toddler's facial expressions as you speak. You may notice a head shake or a smile that indicates the toddler is engaged in listening.

Toddlers' comfort in interacting with you in a play-based setting may take time to develop. Be patient and continue to offer repeated opportunities that build on prior exchanges or toddler interests you notice in the here-and-now.

If another toddler(s) wishes to join your one-to-one activity, offer play items (see Be Prepared) that can be explored next to the child who is the focus of your one-to-one exchange. After a few minutes, shift your attention to the other child(ren).

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

Extra support ■ Offer general descriptions of the activity, such as "We are playing together"; "We are making the people (figures) talk"; and "I am pretending this figure is a dad." ■ Help keep the activity space in order to help a toddler focus on choices. Examples: "I will line up the cars." Put unused play materials to the side. "You are interested in the people. I will put the blankets (felt squares) to the side for now." ■ Emphasize words and phrases common in family interactions, such as "Thank you"; "Good night Baby"; or "Great job setting the table!"

Enrichment ■ Demonstrate how to wrap tissue around play materials. ■ Suggest some of the open-ended materials might be food for people or animals. ■ Draw attention to words that describe location, such as under, in, and on. Examples: "Under a blanket"; "In the house"; "On the table."



24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Toddlers participate in open-ended play with a caregiver that emphasizes noticing another toddler's actions, playing together, and give-and-take peer conversations.



Key Concepts

Playing together
Tell
Watching
Doing



Materials Needed

Small blocks
People figures
Pet figures
8-inch felt squares



Also Promotes

Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Llama, Llama, Red Pajama
by Anna Dewdney

Sit on the floor with several toddlers in the block area. Talk about the items available and invite toddlers to play. Encourage toddlers to use the materials as they wish, individually or together. If appropriate, suggest or model appropriate use of the toys without directing the play.

Encourage toddlers to notice one another's actions. Example: "Jasmine made a tiny house and covered it with the felt." Describe toddlers' play actions and talk about the activity as it is happening. While it may feel peculiar at first, describe the obvious interactions. Examples: "We are playing together." "Cameron, you listened to Daniel's words." "You are getting along together." Point out actions that might lead to peer social interaction. Example: "Cameron, I see that Alexander is watching you put the blocks in a line. Would you like to tell Alexander what you're doing?"

Encourage toddlers to play with peers when there is a natural opportunity to do so. Example: "Angel and Dimitri, you are both using blocks to create animal homes. Would you like to make another animal home by playing together?" Stay close to play pairs to facilitate communication. Example: "Angel is saying she wants a little block. Will you please give her one from our pile?"

Your primary role is to periodically comment on and facilitate peer social interactions. It is appropriate to model interactions with one toddler, especially give-and-take exchanges. Avoid a sustained one-to-one exchange with a toddler that could exclude others from interacting. Demonstrate the use of positive words and phrases. Example: "Thank you for showing us the animal bed."

👁️ What to Look For—Option 3

The play materials provide a focus for interactions. Some toddlers may be most interested in the people figures or in using the blocks. Toddlers may line the blocks end to end or stack them before they begin to create enclosures or involve people figures in their play. Some toddlers may use the figures in their play, whereas other toddlers may focus entirely on an aspect of building with blocks. Toddlers may use the felt squares in a variety of ways. Examples: The squares may be "a blanket for the grandma" or an item for hiding a figure ("You can't see him now") or a place where people sleep ("the kids go to sleep").

Notice the impact of your comments on toddlers. Be careful to not describe or ask too much (toddlers are unlikely to talk when you are talking) while remembering that your main task is to model and facilitate positive social interactions. Your interactions with one toddler are likely to be noticed by others.

**Option 3 continued**

Respond immediately to any aggressive play or actions that may frighten or hurt a toddler. If it is necessary to redirect a toddler's behavior, remember that other toddlers are listening and observing. Provide clear explanations with words toddlers understand. Focus a redirection on language that explains what to do, rather than what not to do. Example: "Devin, we are gentle with our toys. We move our animal figures so they do not crash blocks." An immediate reminder may be appropriate: "No crashing. Gentle play."

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3**

Extra support ■ Model language for initiating play with a peer. ■ Offer frequent positive remarks to each toddler. ■ Sit next to a toddler who needs extra support.

Enrichment ■ Provide alternative or additional figures and props to enrich play themes without offering too many objects for play. ■ Help toddlers increase their vocabulary. Example: Use synonyms for big and little, such as tall, huge, large, small, tiny, and short.

**Interest Area**

Materials needed: dollhouse, people and pet figures, sensory table, water, white paper, tape, chubby crayons, and books

There are several options for center activities, depending on toddlers' interests. One possibility is to continue to make the figures and dollhouse available for exploration. Another option is to place the people figures and pet figures in the sensory table with a small amount of water. You may wish to add two drops of baby shampoo for bubbles. A third option is to cover a low table with white paper and tape at the corners. Provide chubby crayons for scribbles. Sit with toddlers and scribble. Encourage toddlers to tell what they are doing with their crayons.

In addition to a center activity, place richly-illustrated books about families in baskets in at least two places in the room.

**Family Child Care**

Materials needed: dollhouse

The first option in this activity plan may also be used with preschool-age children who show interest in playing with the items and dollhouse. Adjust your interaction and play style to the age and interests of the child. Infants may be interested in watching your one-to-one interactions with other children, perhaps while holding an object similar to an item involved in the play.

Option 3 is informed by the following source: Repacholi, B.M., & Meltzoff, A.N. (2007). Emotional eavesdropping: Infants selectively respond to indirect emotional signals. *Child Development* 78, 503-21.



24–36 Months

Option 1
Informal Gathering

Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers explore making different types of marks and using different colors as part of open-ended coloring.



Key Concepts

Color
Line
Circle



Materials Needed

Roll of white paper
Masking tape
Chubby crayons of many colors



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Social-Emotional
Cognitive

Be Prepared: Secure paper to a table and place crayons on the table.

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join you at the table for coloring. You may wish to encourage toddlers to wear a craft apron or smock. Invite each toddler to pick one crayon to begin coloring.]*

EXPLAIN: We can make marks on our big paper. You can draw anything you want to draw. We have many different colors of crayons. If you want a crayon that a friend is using, ask our friend to share the crayon with you when he/she is done using it.

ACT: *[Use the following strategies to encourage toddlers' use of crayons:*

At the beginning of the activity, make your own marks on the paper without drawing recognizable objects. Draw a line and a circle and describe for toddlers what you have drawn.

Describe toddlers' marks, especially lines and circular shapes. Examples: "Jenna, you made some big blue scribble lines." "Mateo, you are making your green crayon go back and forth on our paper. I see lots of your green marks." "Anthony, you are making a big brown circle." Listen to toddlers' comments and reply to comments directed to you.

Model sharing and passing crayons. Example: "Joshua, please pass me the blue crayon when you are done using it. Thank you." If you would like a new color, ask a friend to pass a crayon."

Facilitate sharing interactions between two toddlers when it is appropriate. Example: "Jenna, Joshua's crayon fell by your foot. He said 'Mine.' Will you please give it to him?" Wait for toddlers to respond. "Joshua, you can say 'thank you.' Thank you, Jenna. You helped Joshua."

Use color names when referring to crayons and marks on the paper. Examples: "There is a lot of green on our paper!" "Jeremy, you put a blue mark over a yellow mark."

Anticipate that some toddlers may leave (and maybe return to) the activity and others may join.]

RECAP: We made lines and other marks on our big paper. Each of us drew something we wanted to draw. There are many colors on our paper.

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

This option is an opportunity for toddlers to practice making marks and to become more familiar with making lines, and maybe circles, without formal instruction. It is beneficial to point out lines and circular shapes (and other markings) made by toddlers without offering a model that toddlers are expected to follow. Toddlers are not expected to draw identifiable objects. If a toddler wants to draw a particular image, point out lines and circles that may be in the image. Examples: “Mommy’s head is a circle.” “The dog’s leg is a line.”

Some toddlers may use both hands for coloring. It is not necessary to guide a toddler to use one hand only.

The activity’s side-by-side work with other toddlers is an opportunity for children to learn and practice social skills. Provide strong modeling as suggested in the activity description. Watch for opportunities to acknowledge toddlers’ positive social interactions, such as moving over if another toddler joins the activity.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Attempt to individualize your involvement so you focus on each toddler’s efforts for a short but focused period of time. If necessary, move around the table so you can sit next to a toddler and talk about markings. ■ Maintain an informal, easy demeanor so toddlers feel free to color as they wish. ■ Encourage toddlers to try a new color. ■ Re-position yourself next to a toddler who may need extra support.

Enrichment ■ Point out differences in the length of lines (long, short) and contrasting sizes of circular shapes. ■ Demonstrate how to lightly push down with the crayon to make a brighter color. Explain that “how hard we push” on the crayon makes a difference in what our mark looks like. Toddlers may wish to experiment with amounts of pressure they put on their crayon.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers explore coloring on a paper plate, including making circles and applying different amounts of pressure to a crayon.



Key Concepts

Color
Line
Circle



Materials Needed

White paper plate—1–2 per toddler and staff
Chubby crayons



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Social-Emotional
Cognitive

Invite toddlers to use chubby crayons to make marks on a paper plate. Point out there are different colors of crayons to use.

As part of your informal involvement in the activity (not as formal instruction), describe and demonstrate how to push down on the crayon to get a deeper color. Drawing a line in which you push down on part of the line and not push down on another part is one way to show the contrast.

Also, demonstrate and describe how to draw a circle(s) by moving their crayon around and around the plate. Toddlers may or may not want to draw a circle(s).

Describe what you see toddlers doing with their crayons. Point out instances of a toddler exploring different types of lines (long, short) or circles (larger, smaller), and applying different amounts of pressure to the crayon. Example: “Tanya made a really bright color by pressing down on her yellow crayon.”

At several points during the session, explain that we are using our fingers to hold a crayon and our hands to move a crayon on the paper. We are using our own ideas about the marks we want to make on our plate.

What to Look For—Option 2

The shape of the plate offers an opportunity for toddlers to explore making circular motions with their crayon. Demonstrating and describing how to move a crayon around and around a plate will likely provide sufficient guidance for toddlers’ creative uses of crayons.

Coloring on a firm surface, such as a paper plate, is a good time to show and describe what happens when pressure is applied to a crayon. Crayons (compared to markers) can foster hand control and give toddlers opportunities to apply different amounts of pressure to the crayon. Example: press down, use a crayon lightly. This experience can heighten toddlers’ awareness of how control of their fingers and hands contributes to use of a drawing or coloring tool. More generally, pointing out that we use our fingers and hands to hold, move, and apply pressure to the crayon can support toddlers’ emerging understanding of finger and hand control.

Paper plates that have ridges can enhance toddlers’ exploration of coloring by drawing attention to what a crayon can look and feel like on a bumpy surface.

Although it is appropriate for you to point out the aspects of coloring described in the plan, decisions about what and how to color should rest with the toddler. Some toddlers may draw curving lines around the plate, whereas other toddlers will prefer to mark in the center of the plate. Some toddlers may turn the plate over and put marks on two sides. The plate may lead some toddlers to create a coloring theme focused on food.

**Option 2 continued**

It is not necessary for a toddler to follow or create a theme to benefit from coloring. The plan's suggestion that you ask toddlers to describe how they drew on their plate focuses on the coloring process, not their product.

Toddlers are likely to differ in whether they want to stand or sit to color. Some may want to color on a second plate.

A small icon of a staircase with three steps, positioned to the left of the section header.**More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

Extra support ■ Look closely at toddlers' facial expressions and whether they are looking at another child's efforts. There may be clues regarding how you can support a toddler's exploration. Example: "Sam, I see that you are looking at the dark lines that Noah made. Would you like to make dark lines, too?"

■ Offer to put your hand over a toddler's hand if he/she communicates confusion or frustration about how to press down to make a deeper or bolder color.

Enrichment ■ If possible, secure large cardboard pizza plates for toddlers to color on, especially if there is strong interest in using the paper plates. ■ Placing the colored plates in the dramatic play area may prompt creative play-based uses of the plates. ■ As a possible follow-up activity, toddlers may enjoy having a peekhole cut in the paper plate after their plate is colored. On the back of the paper plate, draw a two-inch circle and cut a hole for toddlers who wish to have a peekhole. For this age, one larger hole is easier to see through than two eye holes. Ask toddlers to describe what they see when they peek through the hole.



24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Gross motor development

Toddlers use different colors of markers to make circles on paper while walking around a small table together.



Key Concepts

Color

Circle



Materials Needed

Roll of paper

Tape

Markers of many colors



Also Promotes

Social-Emotional

Cognitive

Be Prepared: Cover a toddler-level table with white paper that is firmly secured to the table with tape. Remove the table's chairs.

Invite 2–3 toddlers to join you in coloring big circles. Give each toddler one marker with the lid removed. Give each toddler a different color. Explain that we will put our markers on the paper and walk around our table to color big circles. Urge toddlers to not walk fast, to avoid bumping into the person ahead of us.

Lead toddlers in walking around the table, each drawing a big circle or continuing a circle started by another toddler. Toddlers may not necessarily make a full circle. Accept all markings, including lines. Emphasize the involvement of several peers in the activity. Example: “We are working together.”

After one walk around the table, pause for toddlers to look at the markings on the paper. Describe what you see. Remind toddlers that we used our fingers and hands to hold and move our markers. We also made a big circle by walking around the table. We worked hard paying attention to our marker, our walking, and where we were going.

Toddlers may enjoy going around the table several times. A toddler might want a different color for each round. Eventually the paper may be full of circles.

What to Look For—Option 3

This activity provides toddlers with practice in coordinating large and fine motor actions. Look at toddlers' efforts to walk in a circle around the table while also holding a marker on the paper. A second round of the activity may help toddlers become more accustomed to the motor actions.

If it appears the activity is too challenging for some toddlers, arrange for toddlers to take turns going around the table with you or consider the Extra Support tips. You also may wish to arrange for another adult to walk with toddlers so you can monitor the activity and provide guidance where appropriate.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ At the beginning of the session, provide a demonstration of walking around the table and making a big circle on the paper. ■ Invite a toddler to walk next to you while going around the table. ■ For a toddler(s) who finds the activity too challenging, provide another table and paper for coloring with several markers.

**Option 3 continued**

Enrichment ■ Consider playing calm recorded music as you and the toddlers walk around the table making lines of color. Stop the music when you pause the activity (after the first round of walking) to encourage toddlers to look at and talk about the coloring they have done together. ■ Make the colorful work available after the activity if toddlers want to draw around the edge of the large paper with circles on it. ■ Reverse the direction of a third (not second) round of walking around the table to provide toddlers with experience in holding the marker in their opposite hand.

**Interest Area**

Materials needed: markers, crayons, paper, dot markers, coffee filters

Place markers or crayons on a table that has been covered with paper. Provide large paper squares for toddlers to color. On another day, toddlers will be pleased to make bright spots of color with dot markers on coffee filter paper. The cause and effect is obvious and gratifying.

**Family Child Care**

Materials needed: chubby crayons, paper, tape, watercolor paint

As an alternative to using a table for the activity, consider unrolling paper onto a hard floor surface and placing chubby crayons on the paper at 12-inch intervals. Tape the ends to prevent the paper from moving. Toddlers may sit on the floor or lie down to make marks with crayons. Older children may enjoy exploring a combination of crayon and watercolor. Encourage preschool-age and older children to draw or scribble with crayon and then paint over the drawing with watercolors. The crayon will resist the paint, giving a novel effect.