



**Communication/  
Language**

**Exploring Words**

- Option 1 (OO)** A toddler explores the meaning of in and out as part of a shared book reading.
- Option 2 (IG)** Toddlers participate in a shared book reading related to farm animals, and in open-ended play with animal figures and a toy barn.
- Option 3 (IG)** Toddlers participate in a story and practice using clues to make predictions.



**Cognitive**

**Solving Problems**

- Option 1 (IG)** Toddlers carry a ball between two baskets placed on opposite sides of an activity area, putting and retrieving his/her ball in each basket.
- Option 2 (IG)** Toddlers pull a wagon around the room as part of play focused on giving a ride to a toy animal or doll and securing a pretend food item for the toy animal or doll as part of the outing.
- Option 3 (IG)** Toddlers manage a physical barrier as part of pushing a cart during a shopping trip in the room.



**Self-Regulation**

**Focusing and Remembering**

- Option 1 (OO)** A toddler participates in looking closely at and describing each piece of a puzzle as it is removed from the puzzle frame and then returned to where it fits in the puzzle.
- Option 2 (OO)** A toddler practices taking apart and putting together a puzzle with staff guidance.
- Option 3 (IG)** Toddlers take turns taking apart and putting together a puzzle.



**Social-Emotional**

**Interacting with Others**

- Option 1 (IG)** Toddlers imitate staff and peer actions with a scarf.
- Option 2 (IG)** Toddlers imitate staff and peer actions in moving a scarf to music.
- Option 3 (IG)** Toddlers imitate staff and peer actions in moving a scarf while walking around your room.



**Physical/Health**

**Using Our Hands**

- Option 1 (IG)** Toddlers use their hands to flatten and manipulate a ball of play dough.
- Option 2 (IG)** Toddlers make a print of their hand in play dough.
- Option 3 (IG)** Toddlers use small toys to make prints in flat play dough and engage in open-ended manipulation of play dough.

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



## 24–36 Months

### Option 1 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

**Receptive language**  
**Awareness of print and pictures**

A toddler explores the meaning of in and out as part of a shared book reading.



#### Key Concepts

Animals  
Barn  
In  
Out



#### Materials Needed

*Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive

Sit on the floor and invite a toddler to explore the book with you. Read the text and point to and describe pictures.

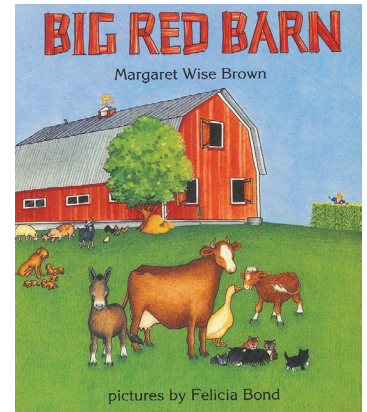
Point out other details of the story, particularly how the animals are in the barn, and how the animals are out of the barn. The book is particularly useful for introducing and reinforcing a toddler's awareness of in and out. As the story progresses, encourage the toddler to point to or name the animals.

Example: "Our story is telling us about a cow. Where is the cow?" Spend more time on pages that appear to be of special interest to the toddler.

If the toddler remains engaged, extend the questions about identifying items on the pages.

Example: In addition to animals, encourage the toddler to point to and/or name other objects, such as grass, tree, egg, corn, hay, and moon. Discussion of key items on a page can help strengthen the toddler's understanding of the story. Example: Use your own words to explain what the animals eat or where they sleep. Repeat and extend the toddler's comments and pointing, including responses to your questions or comments. Example: "You found the brown cow, Caleb! The brown cow is in the red barn."

Toddlers enjoy revisiting books. Repeat the child's exploration of this book, especially if interest is shown. Expand on the naming and description of animals and other objects as well as what is happening on each page.



### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Some toddlers may participate by pointing and nodding, whereas others know more words that help them share their ideas. Maximize the advantage of a one-to-one setting by paying close attention to the toddler's nonverbal and verbal responses to a page. Be sure to acknowledge each type of response. You may notice the child looking at a specific item on a page that you can use as a focus of discussion. Remember, a highly interactive story time helps a toddler strengthen language and communication skills.

### 📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

**Extra support** ■ Summarize or repeat key parts of the story as you read it to help the toddler follow along. ■ Support engagement by encouraging the toddler to help hold the book and turn the pages. ■ If the toddler seems to be losing interest in the book, skip several pages or come to a close and offer to read the book at another time. There may be another book the toddler would like to look at with you.

***Option 1 continued***

**Enrichment** ■ Encourage the toddler to relate their experiences to the story. Examples: "Did you visit a farm with a horse, Maria? Let's see if there is a horse in our story." "Max, I think you have a dog. Does your dog look like the dog on this page?" "The animals in this story sleep in a barn. You sleep in a house."

## 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 related to farm animals, and in open-ended play with animal figures and a toy barn.



#### Key Concepts

Farm animals

Barn

In

Out

Sleep

Play



#### Materials Needed

*Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown

Farm animal figures (see Be Prepared)

Barn



#### Also Promotes

Self-Regulation

Cognitive

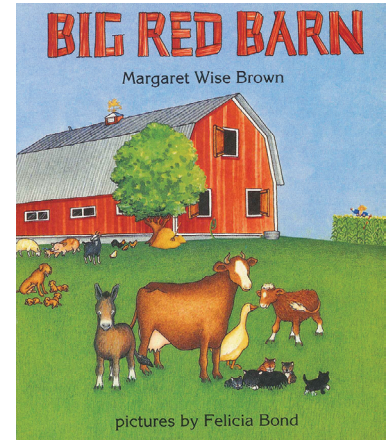
**Be Prepared:** Gather more animal figures than the number of toddlers likely to participate in the gathering, so each toddler has at least one animal to play with.

Sit on the floor with the book, barn, and farm animal figures, and invite toddlers to help you tell a story. Explain that we have some toy farm animals and a barn we can play with. Display the book cover and explain that a barn and some of the animals are in the story told in our book. Turn to and describe pages of the book that offer play themes you may pursue in this activity. Examples: “Here is a picture of the barn that the farm animals sleep in.” “This picture shows the farm animals going in the barn. They sleep in the barn.” “Today we have some toy animals that are like the animals in our book. Here is a picture of a cow in our book. And here is a toy cow we can touch and play with.”

Encourage toddlers to hold and manipulate the animal figures. Help toddlers label each one. Example: “Jocelyn is holding the cow. It is a brown cow.” Introduce the barn that the animals sleep in. Example: “Here is our barn. We know that the animals sleep in the barn.” Help toddlers act out stories with themes, such as the following:

- The sun is shining and the animals are coming out of the barn to play. What will the animals play outside?
- It is getting dark. Do you think the animals are getting sleepy? How might animals act when they are getting sleepy?
- The animals are ready to sleep. It is time for the animals to go in the barn.

Encourage toddlers to describe what they are thinking and doing. Example: “I see you are putting the horse in the barn, Jacob. What do you think your horse will do in the barn? Why?” Describe toddlers’ actions with the animal figures and their ideas about the animals or barn. Examples: “Peter, you are making the dog jump up and down. It looks like your dog is playing.” “I see that you have a big pig and a little pig, Skylar. Do you think one of the pigs is a mommy? Which one?”



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

There are likely to be differences among toddlers in how much they invent small stories around their animal figures and barn. Toddlers who are familiar with the *Big Red Barn* may enjoy enacting what they recall about the book. Or they may expand upon the book's story by creating their own versions of how the animals play. There may be hints of children's own peer play experiences in their uses of the figures. Example: "The cow doesn't like to play with anyone. The cow likes to play by itself." Some toddlers may limit their participation to moving an animal figure in and/or out of the barn or simply watching and listening to what is happening around them. Accept and positively acknowledge all forms of participation. Remember that your words provide a language model for toddlers. At the same time, be careful not to direct the play or talk all of the time. Offer pauses that indirectly invite toddlers to talk and to move their animal figures. Encourage toddlers to talk about what they can see and touch.

**📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

**Extra support** ■ Repeat and expand upon toddlers' utterances. Example: "Nighttime. Sam said it is 'nighttime.' Does 'nighttime' mean it is time to go to sleep?" ■ Describe what is happening in the gathering. Example: "Emma is taking her chicken out of the barn. The chicken is awake." ■ Use each toddler's name. ■ Offer verbal connections across toddlers' different uses of the animal figures. Example: "We just pretended our farm animals were getting sleepy. The cow is having a hard time holding up its head. How do tired animals get into the barn so they can sleep?"

**Enrichment** ■ Encourage toddlers to think about similarities and differences across the animal figures, such as big/small, color, furry/feathered, what they eat.

## 24–36 Months

### Option 3 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

Receptive language

Expressive language

Awareness of print and pictures

Toddlers participate in a story and practice using clues to make predictions.



#### Key Concepts

Walking

See

Binoculars



#### Materials Needed

*I Went Walking* by Sue Williams



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive

Physical/Health

**BEGIN:** [Invite 3–4 toddlers to join you for sharing a book. Sing “Old McDonald Had a Farm” as toddlers arrive at the gathering. Conclude with a verse of instructions for sitting down. Example: “We all sit down for a story. E-I-E-I-O.” Sit facing toddlers.]

**EXPLAIN:** [Show book cover. Point to the little girl.]

Our book is about a little girl who goes on a walk. The girl lives on a farm. Our book has pictures and words that will tell us what she sees on her walk! We use our eyes to see the pictures.

[Point to your eyes.]

We use our ears to listen to the story and to what other people say.

[Point to your ears.]

We use our mouth to say things about the book, and say the words in the book.

[Point to your mouth.]

We can even use our hands to join in the story! When the story says walking, we can make our fingers walk.

[Demonstrate “walking” with your fingers.]

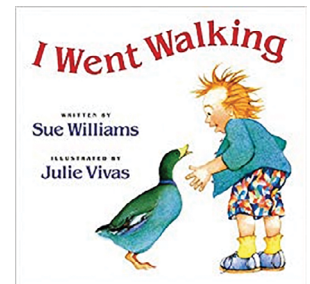
When the story says see, we can make pretend binoculars for our eyes. Binoculars are a special tool we can use to see things better. Binoculars help us look at things that are far away.

[Demonstrate using your thumb and pointer finger to form a circle around one or both of your eyes.]

**ACT:** I will turn to the first page of our book and read the words. I wonder what the little girl will see?

[Read and talk about the book. Use strategies, such as the following, to help toddlers further understand words and story of the book:

- Follow the repetitive text with your finger as you read it. Some toddlers may want to join in chanting the repetitive verses, “I went walking . . . what did she see?” Others may want to watch and listen.
- Encourage toddlers to use their fingers and hands to “walk” and to make pretend “binoculars” at appropriate times in the story.



**Option 3 continued**

- Encourage toddlers to consider the book's clue for the next animal. Example: "I wonder what animal will be on the next page. What does this look like? I wonder what animal this belongs to?"
- Offer prompts in a lighthearted and fun manner, encouraging toddlers to enjoy "guessing" the animal, whether it is silly or accurate.
- Acknowledge each child's response (including a nonverbal response, such as the child that acts like a dog). Examples: "Paige is acting like a dog. Does she think there will be a dog on the next page?" "Ben said he thinks the animal is a horse. Let's see what the animal might be!"
- As each page is turned to reveal the next animal, enthusiastically ask toddlers to name what the little girl sees. Acknowledge each response. Then read the full text on the page.
- Maintain enthusiasm throughout the story, acknowledging each toddler's "guesses" as well as their naming of the animals.]

**RECAP:** The words in our book told us about the animals the little girl saw on her walk. The pictures helped us guess what animal she would see next. We made some hand motions and said some of the words in the story!

### What to Look For—Option 3

Toddlers may have different responses to this activity depending on how familiar they are with the story, and how comfortable they are participating in a small gathering. Toddlers who are new to the story, or the items depicted in the story, may watch and listen, whereas other toddlers may repeat the text and provide guesses about the next animal the girl sees. Some toddlers may include characteristics of the anticipated animal, such as its color. While it is important to maintain a lighthearted approach to toddlers' predictions, it is also helpful to draw children's attention to clues that toddlers may use in predicting what animal the girl may see next. This moves the toddlers' participation beyond random guessing and potentially introduces more words or concepts connected to animals. Example: "Josiah thinks the girl will see a dog. I wonder if the picture of the yellow tail on this page gave Josiah the idea of a dog. Josiah, did the picture of a yellow tail help you guess what animal the girl might see?"

Maintaining enthusiasm and a playful tone during the story will encourage participation. Toddlers enjoy communicating when they are having fun and don't have to worry about their responses being "wrong or right." Observing and acknowledging each child's response to the story strengthens their language development and understanding of words.

### More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

**Extra support** ■ Remember that some toddlers may prefer to stand next to you. Be sure to positively recognize a toddler who chooses to leave the activity. He/she may return before you are done with the book. ■ If the "walking" and formation of pretend binoculars is too challenging for some toddlers, encourage them to use one hand for "walking" and making pretend binoculars or simply watch others

**Option 3 continued**

engage in this fine motor part of the activity. ■ Toddlers who show keen interest in the book may wish to remain for a repeat of the book or participate in another sharing of the book later in the day. ■ A child who is slower to participate in a small gathering may enjoy reading the book in a one-to-one setting with you.

**Enrichment** ■ Encourage toddlers to say the repetitive words on each page. ■ Invite toddlers to predict what animal we may see on the next page (based on the clues in the story). Acknowledge, restate, and expand upon each prediction. Example: "Ben thinks the tail belongs to a cat. Ben thinks the girl will see a cat on the next page!"

**Interest Area**

**Materials Needed:** toy farm animals, family figures, toy barn, *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown, *I Went Walking* by Sue Williams, other farm books

Create an inviting place to play with farm animals by placing toy farm animals and family figures around a toy barn. These items may be added to the block area or placed on a low table. Place the books *Big Red Barn* and *I Went Walking* nearby and display other farm animal books on the bookshelf.

**Family Child Care**

**Materials Needed:** toy farm animals

Children of all ages enjoy songs with actions. Give each child a toy farm animal to hold. Talk with children about the farm animals they are holding. Invite the group to sing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm". Encourage the older children to hold up the named animal in the song. Example: "And on his farm, he had a pig. Yes, Cora has a pig! Cora is holding her pig up high." The younger children may want to participate with their farm animal, or they may enjoy watching and listening.





## 24–36 Months

Option 1  
Informal GatheringSkill and Goal  
Problem-solving

Toddlers carry a ball between two baskets placed on opposite sides of an activity area, putting and retrieving his/her ball in each basket.



## Key Concepts

In  
Out  
Carry  
Away



## Materials Needed

Indoor balls—1 per toddler and staff (see Be Prepared)  
2 laundry baskets



## Also Promotes

Physical/Health  
Self-Regulation

**Be Prepared:** Place two laundry (or similar type) baskets on opposite sides of the room to encourage toddlers to carry balls back and forth. The two baskets will provide destinations for toddlers' ball-carrying efforts.

It is preferable to provide different colors of toddler-size balls. It is helpful to have some extra balls if a ball that “gets away” cannot be easily retrieved. The activity can be adapted for outdoor use.

You may wish to split up toddlers so some start at one basket and others start at the other basket. This may avoid crowding around one basket. It also may avoid the possibility of all toddlers moving together across the room.

**BEGIN:** *[Invite several toddlers to join you for playing with balls. Give each toddler one ball. If there are differences across balls, describe the ball when you give it to a toddler. Example: “Here is a blue ball, Jillian. You can use this blue ball.”]*

**EXPLAIN:** *[Point to and name each of the two baskets by walking from one basket to the other.]*

Today we will practice carrying a ball. We will carry our ball to a basket. We will put our ball in the basket and take it out of the basket. Then we will carry our ball to the other basket and do the same thing.

*[Use a ball to demonstrate and describe the steps. Use both of your hands to carry a ball prominently placed in front of you.*

*Encourage toddlers to carry their ball to the basket on the opposite side of the room, put their ball in the basket, take their ball out of the basket, and then carry it to, and put it in, the other basket. Move between the two baskets and use the following strategies to support toddlers' efforts:*

- *Emphasize the words in and out as toddlers place their balls in a basket and take their balls out of a basket.*
- *When a ball rolls away, ask the toddler to point to the ball's location or where the toddler thinks the ball may be. Examples: “Please point to your ball. Yes, it is under the table. How can you get the ball back?” “Your ball rolled away. You said ‘all gone.’ Where do you think your ball is? Can you point? Let’s look for your ball under the table.”*
- *Describe toddlers' actions. Examples: “You are carrying your ball with two hands.” “Your ball rolled on the floor and you followed it.” “The ball bounced out of the basket and you picked it up.” “You carried your big ball to the basket and put it in the basket.”*



## **Option 1 continued**

- *Help toddlers exchange (trade) balls, if they wish. Example: “Cassandra, you are holding your ball out to Nena. Do you want Nena to use your ball? Do you want to use Nena’s ball? What do you think, Nena? Do you want to share balls?”*
- *Offer reminders, as needed. Example: “Daniel, you did a great job putting your ball in a basket! Now you need to take your ball out of the basket and carry it to the other basket.”]*

**RECAP:** We worked hard to carry a ball from one basket to another basket. Some balls rolled away and we figured out how to get them back.

*[Add several highlights of toddlers’ experiences, especially those related to spatial relations skills.]*

### What to Look For—Option 1

Positively accept different forms of participation in this spatial awareness activity. Some toddlers will enjoy simply carrying a ball in his/her hands and not attempt to put a ball in a basket. Other toddlers may explore different ways of putting their ball in a basket or carrying their balls. Some toddlers may toss a ball into a basket, but it is not an expectation at this age.

Toddlers will differ in their speed of movement between baskets. Discourage toddlers from running between baskets or tossing balls from a distance; the activity is not intended as basketball practice! Your commentary can offer support, enthusiasm, and guidance to individual toddlers. Limit your suggestions that toddlers look at what another toddler is doing because drawing attention to another toddler may distract toddlers’ focus on their own actions.

### More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

**Extra support** ■ Some inflated balls may need a little air taken out so they are easier to hold and will not roll too far. ■ Invite a toddler to demonstrate the steps (carry, put in, take out, carry again) after you demonstrate the steps. Describe what the toddler is doing.

**Enrichment** ■ If toddlers seem comfortable with the walking part of the activity, move one of the baskets partway through the activity so toddlers walk in another direction. ■ Place additional balls (preferably of different size or color) in a basket so toddlers may pick up a different ball and leave a ball for another toddler to use, if interested.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 2 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Problem-solving

Toddlers pull a wagon in the room as part of play focused on giving a ride to a toy animal or doll and securing a pretend food item for the toy animal or doll as part of the outing.



#### Key Concepts

In  
Pull  
Around



#### Materials Needed

Toy animal or doll—1 per toddler  
Pull wagon—1 per toddler (see Be Prepared)  
Pretend food items (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Physical/Health  
Self-Regulation



#### Optional Reading

*Maisy Goes Shopping* by Lucy Cousins

**Be Prepared:** If your room has a shortage of pull wagons for each toddler who participates in the activity, consider securing a “slide and storage” container or empty shoeboxes. Tie a 20-inch ribbon or shoelace on the end of each basket so a toddler may pull it behind him/her when walking in the room. Display pretend food and related items, such as small empty food containers, on a low table as part of a pretend grocery store located near (but not next to) the area where toddlers will pull their wagons.

Invite several toddlers to join a gathering near the housekeeping dramatic play area. Encourage toddlers to give an animal (or doll) a ride in a wagon and go shopping. Invite toddlers to choose a toy animal or doll to place in one of the pretend wagons. Talk with toddlers about where they will pull the wagon.

Invite toddlers to visit a pretend grocery store with their wagon to get something their toy would like to eat. Invite a toddler to select one item each time he/she visits the store. Encourage toddlers to tell where they will pull their wagons after visiting the store.

Conclude the activity by offering some highlights of what you observed in toddlers’ shopping trips. Encourage toddlers to return their items to their appropriate locations.

### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Pay attention to toddlers’ use of spatial relations skills promoted in this activity. Your help may be needed for some situations. Keeping “ownership” of the problem-solving with a toddler is generally best. Example: If a toddler gets the pull toy stuck on a chair leg or shelf corner, help him/her with problem-solving by describing the situation and giving the toddler ample time to solve the problem. Example: “Your pull wagon cannot go because it is caught on the chair. I am sure you can solve this problem. What will you try first? I will stay next to you as you get the pull wagon free.” If a toddler is upset, help him/her get calm before attempting to solve the problem. Encourage and praise problem-solving. “You tried a great idea. You moved your wagon backwards with your hand.”

Toddlers enjoy independence and may want to use the pull wagon for materials you did not suggest. It is okay if toddlers want to transport little cars, blocks, or small toy animals.

Show toddlers how they can fit several cardboard blocks into the pull wagon to take them to a different location in the room. Also, if a toddler is trying to carry two dolls in his/her arms, suggest he/she place the toys in the wagon to pull.

**Option 2 continued**

Toy wagons are not suggested for this activity because they tend to tip over easily. Generally, toddlers will not try to sit in the box or wagon described in this activity, but may try to sit in a small unstable wagon. Wagons for toddlers to ride in should be large and sturdy.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

**Extra support** ■ Move furnishings, if necessary, so toddlers can pull the wagons in a circular pattern in the room.

**Enrichment** ■ Invite toddlers to share *Maisy Goes Shopping* by Lucy Cousins (see Optional Reading). Draw attention to the pictures of a wagon and shopping cart.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 3 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal Problem-solving

Toddlers manage a physical barrier as part of pushing a cart during a shopping trip in the room.



#### Key Concepts Walk around



#### Materials Needed

- Small toys or food packages (see Be Prepared)
- Toy pushcart—1 per toddler
- Paper and marker for staff use (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

- Communication/Language
- Social-Emotional



#### Optional Reading

- Maisy Goes Shopping* by Lucy Cousins

**Be Prepared:** Arrange play housekeeping items on 1–2 low tables as a pretend store. Print the word “Store” or “Open” on a sheet of paper and attach it to the front of the table. Use toddlers’ interests to select other items to place in the store.

Set up the pretend store in an area that requires moving around an object (such as a post in the room) or center for walking from one part of the room to another part of the room. Another option is to create a temporary construction zone that toddlers must walk around. The intent is to promote toddlers’ spatial relations skills as part of pushing a cart.

A doll carriage may be used to supplement available toy pushcarts for toddlers to move items around the room. The intent is to provide something a toddler can push, in contrast to pulling a wagon in Option 2.

**BEGIN:** *[Invite 3–4 toddlers to the dramatic play area.]*

**EXPLAIN:** Today we have a pretend store where we may get things for our pretend homes.

*[Walk with toddlers to the table set up as the store. Note the object or center toddlers need to walk around to get to the pretend store.]*

There are different kinds of things we can get at the pretend store.

*[Point to and briefly name and describe some items.]*

**ASK:** What things would you like to get at the pretend store?

*[Pause for toddlers to share their interests. Repeat and extend toddlers’ comments. Example: “Dog food. Cheri says she wants to get some food for her dog.”]*

**EXPLAIN:** There are different ways to walk to the store from our home (the housekeeping area).

*[Describe paths toddlers can use. Example: “We can walk around the block shelf and get to your home. Or we can go another way and walk around the computer station. Demonstrate different routes to the store or house.”]*

Return to home (housekeeping area) and invite toddlers to go in pairs to the store. Encourage toddlers to bring home 1–2 items at a time, and go again to the store if there is something else they want to get.

After several rounds of shopping, explain that it is time for the store to close. Encourage toddlers to put away items they played with. Remind toddlers where the carts are stored. Acknowledge toddlers’ efforts. Example: “Tyler is putting baby dolls in the bed. Serina is putting dishes on the shelf.”

**Option 3 continued**

**RECAP:** We used carts to move things from our pretend store to our home. How did we get around the (describe barriers) with our carts?

**👁️ What to Look For—Option 3**

The activity may engage some toddlers for several trips to the store and other toddlers for one trip. Some toddlers may get new play ideas from the activity and move to another area to build or pretend.

Describe the paths you noticed toddlers taking if they seem reluctant to describe their route. For most toddlers, the appealing part of the activity is likely to be securing and carrying items from the pretend store. Give reminders to walk indoors, and to watch where other friends are standing or moving. Keep an eye on the store's inventory and replenish with items of interest to toddlers.

**📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3**

**Extra support** ■ Provide some suggestions of what to secure at the store if a toddler seems unclear on what to get. Emphasize the use of possible items. Example: "Do you think people at your pretend house will be hungry when you get home? What would they like to eat?" ■ Draw a detour sign with an arrow for posting in the area toddlers should walk around.

**Enrichment** ■ Provide half sheets of paper for toddlers to "write" a shopping list. Talk with toddlers about what they will get at the pretend store.

 Interest Area

**Materials Needed:** *The Little Red Hen* by Carol Ottolenghi, lightweight sleds, lightweight objects to carry such as cardboard blocks, milk jugs, plush animals, dolls, and balls in assorted sizes, 2 baskets, large-size toy vehicles, books about vehicles, direction signs, small cars and trucks

Talk with toddlers about how people carry things from one place to another. Draw attention to the cart used by the little red hen in the Carol Ottolenghi book.

If you live in a climate with snow, encourage toddlers to pull lightweight sleds to move snow, or other material.

Provide lightweight objects that are easy to carry. Toddlers enjoy carrying cardboard blocks, milk jugs, plush animals, dolls, and balls in assorted sizes. If space is available, put two baskets in different locations for toddlers to use as a variation of the first activity. Alternatively, toddlers may carry items to/from a basket and another location in the play area. On another day, set out large-size toy vehicles and encourage toddlers to transfer toys from one place to another using the vehicles. Display books about vehicles.

Another day, place direction signs in the construction area with small cars and trucks.

 Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** balls; soft items, such as ruffled plastic bath sponges, adult socks, newspaper and tape, or kitchen scrubbies; boxes and round laundry baskets; carpet squares; music

Older children will enjoy opportunities to move items in your setting. In addition to the balls, offer soft items such as ruffled plastic bath sponges or adult socks rolled up together. Other possibilities include balls made from newspaper and tape or kitchen scrubbies. Provide boxes and round laundry baskets as targets and containers. Consider creating a barrier in the children's path to encourage them to find a way around it.

For mobile children, place carpet squares around the perimeter of the room and turn on music you and the children enjoy. Lead the children in walking around the room. Older children may enjoy hopping around the perimeter. Outdoors, walk with children to the border of the play area and encourage them to look at familiar items from "far away."



## 24–36 Months

### Option 1 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Executive function

A toddler participates in looking closely at and describing each piece of a puzzle as it is removed from the puzzle frame and then returned to where it fits in the puzzle.



#### Key Concepts

Look  
Puzzle  
Piece



#### Materials Needed

Melissa & Doug® Farm  
Wooden Chunky Puzzle  
(see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive  
Physical/Health

**Be Prepared:** The suggested puzzle has eight pieces. You may wish to select a more or less challenging puzzle, based on the toddler's skill with puzzles.

**BEGIN:** *[Invite a toddler to join you at a table to do a puzzle. Sit next to the toddler with the completed puzzle in front of the toddler.]*

Look at this puzzle! It has different animals that live on a farm.



**ASK:** What animals do we see?

*[Encourage the toddler to look at and name the animal on each puzzle piece. Provide clues as appropriate.]*

**EXPLAIN:** I am going to look at each puzzle piece I take out of the puzzle. I can see that this puzzle piece shows a sheep. It has white, curly hair. I am feeling the edges of the sheep puzzle piece with my fingers. The piece has a bumpy shape.

*[Demonstrate tracing the outline of the puzzle piece with your finger. Encourage the toddler to do the same.]*

I am going to look at each piece of the puzzle when I take it out of the puzzle. I am going to look at the animal and the shape of each piece.

**ACT:** *[Continue the process described above with each puzzle piece. Encourage the toddler to talk about and feel the edge of each piece. Put the pieces you take from the puzzle in a group near the puzzle frame.]*

*After all pieces have been removed, put each piece in the puzzle as you describe your thinking and point to what you are noticing. Example: "This piece shows the sheep. It has white, curly hair. I remember the sheep was in this part of the puzzle. Here is where the piece goes in the puzzle! The piece fits here!"*

**RECAP:** We worked on a puzzle together. We looked at each piece of the puzzle and felt its edges. Then we put each piece of the puzzle where it fits. Let's point to each piece of the puzzle together.

*[Encourage the toddler to join you in pointing to and saying the name of the animal pictured on each puzzle piece.]*



24–36 Months

Option 2  
One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Executive function

A toddler practices taking apart and putting together a puzzle with staff guidance.



Key Concepts

- Look
- Puzzle
- Pieces



Materials Needed

Melissa & Doug® Farm Wooden Chunky Puzzle (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

- Cognitive
- Physical/Health

**Be Prepared:** The suggested puzzle has eight pieces. You may wish to select a more or less challenging puzzle, based on the toddler’s skill with puzzles.

Invite a toddler to work on a puzzle with you. Place a completed puzzle in front of the toddler. Sit across from or adjacent to the toddler, to indirectly communicate that the toddler is in charge of the puzzle work, with your help as needed.



Encourage the toddler to describe what he/she sees on the puzzle. Then encourage the toddler to remove each piece of the puzzle, one by one, and look closely at its characteristics. Offer support for paying attention to the image and shape of each piece, including tracing its edges. Encourage the toddler to put the pieces in a small group next to the puzzle.

After all pieces are in a small group near the puzzle frame, invite the toddler to put the pieces together in the puzzle. Offer questions or comments when it appears the toddler is uncertain about where the piece should go. Draw attention to the images on the puzzle frame, if necessary.

Conclude the activity by acknowledging the toddler’s efforts in looking at each puzzle piece, and inviting the toddler to point to each piece and say what animal it shows.



24–36 Months

Option 3  
Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Executive function

Toddlers take turns taking apart and putting together a puzzle.



Key Concepts

- Look
- Puzzle
- Pieces



Materials Needed

- Melissa & Doug® Farm Wooden Chunky Puzzle (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

- Cognitive
- Physical/Health

**Be Prepared:** The suggested puzzle has eight pieces, providing four turns for each of two toddlers. You may wish to select a more or less challenging puzzle, based on toddlers' skills with puzzles.

Invite two toddlers to sit next to each other at a table with a completed puzzle in front of them. Encourage toddlers to take turns (a) removing one of the pieces from the puzzle frame, (b) describing what it shows, and (c) place the removed piece in a small group next to him/her (each child has a group of puzzle pieces he/she removed). Remind toddlers that taking turns means we wait patiently while someone else works with the puzzle.



Invite toddlers to swap the group of pieces he/she removed from the puzzle, so each toddler is returning to the puzzle the pieces the other child removed. Encourage toddlers to take turns (a) describing a puzzle piece ("what does it show?") and (b) putting the piece where it fits on the puzzle frame.

Conclude the activity by asking toddlers how they knew where a piece fits on the puzzle and acknowledging their efforts to work together by taking turns.

 What to Look For—Options 1–3

These options gradually increase the challenge of practicing executive function skills by beginning with guided participation (Option 1) and moving to options with higher levels of independent work with the puzzle pieces. Option 3 is more challenging than the other options because toddlers work independently (with staff help as needed only) and also play with a peer by taking turns. It can be challenging for some children to wait and/or to avoid telling another child what to do with a puzzle piece. In addition to offering a reminder, it may be helpful to offer a preview of waiting patiently. Example: "Anthony, now it is Samuel's turn. You need to wait patiently and not tell Samuel what to do."

Some toddlers may welcome the activity's systematic approach of looking at each puzzle piece as it is removed and returned. Other toddlers may wish to move more quickly through the task and rely on the images that remain on the puzzle frame for matching puzzle pieces to their appropriate location. If there is a tendency to rush through the puzzle, encourage the toddler to slow down. You might encourage the child to pause briefly between pieces by taking two deep breaths before looking at another piece.



### More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

**Extra support** ■ Offer a puzzle with fewer pieces if a toddler finds it challenging to remain focused or pursue eight pieces. Also, in Options 1 and 2 you could limit the number of pieces removed from and returned to the puzzle. Ensure each toddler has the opportunity to be successful at one of the options in this plan. ■ Offer encouraging progress reports that may help the toddler persist. Example: “Look at all of the puzzle pieces you have completed! There are only two pieces left!”

**Enrichment** ■ Invite the toddler to tell how he/she knew where to place the puzzle pieces. Example: “How did you know the duck piece would fit here?”

#### Interest Area

**Materials Needed:** two developmentally-appropriate puzzles

Place the puzzles on a low table. Invite toddlers to practice removing the pieces and putting them back in. Talk with toddlers about their actions as they work.

#### Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** variety of puzzles with different challenge levels

Provide a variety of puzzles for children in your care. Toddlers will enjoy watching older children work on more challenging puzzles, and may help with support. Older children may enjoy assisting younger toddlers. Encourage children to talk with each other about the puzzle pieces.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 1 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Social interaction skills

Toddlers imitate staff and peer actions with a scarf.



#### Key Concepts

Watch  
Do the same  
Copy



#### Materials Needed

Scarves—1 per toddler and staff



#### Also Promotes

Physical/Health  
Self-Regulation

**BEGIN:** *[Invite toddlers to join others in a large open area of your room to play the Copy Cat game.]*

**EXPLAIN:** Today we are going to play the *Copy Cat* game.

Copy cat means we do what someone else does. Each of us will have a scarf to play our game.

I am going to move a scarf and say a rhyme. Please watch what I do. Then you can do the same thing with your scarf. You can copy what I do.

**ACT:** *[Use one hand to wave your scarf up and down as you say the “Copy Cat Rhyme.” Use your other hand to pat your leg to the rhyme.]*

**Copy cat, copy cat**  
**The name of the game.**  
**When I do this,**  
**You do the same.**

**EXPLAIN:** You used your eyes to watch what I did with my scarf. I waved my scarf up and down.

Now you can copy what I did. You can wave your scarf up and down. You can do what I do with my scarf.

**ACT:** *[Give each child a scarf.]*

Let’s try it again! Watch what I do with my scarf. You do the same thing with your scarf.

*[Recite the “Copy Cat Rhyme” as you wave your scarf up and down. Encourage toddlers to do what you are doing. Repeat several times so toddlers can practice.]*



**EXPLAIN:** You did what I did! You copied what I did with my scarf. You watched me and moved your hand and arm to wave your scarf in the air.

**ACT:** Please watch me again. I am going to do something different with my scarf. You can do the same thing with your scarf.



## Option 1 *continued*

*[Move your scarf in a different direction, such as from side to side. Say the rhyme as you move your scarf. Encourage toddlers to copy what you do with your scarf.]*

**ASK:** What would you like to do with your scarf? We can copy what you do!

*[Pause for toddlers to offer or demonstrate an idea. Offer some ideas, if necessary. Examples: twirl it around above your head, alternate moving it up and down and from side to side.]*

**ACT:** *[Recognize the first several ideas offered by toddlers. Encourage toddlers, one at a time, to show what to do with the scarf. Describe what the toddler is doing with the scarf and remind toddlers to do the same. Example: "Heather is waving her scarf back and forth above her head. We can copy what Heather is doing with her scarf. Let's watch Heather and do what Heather does with her scarf."]*

*Avoid leading the scarf play at this point. Offer verbal support. Say the "Copy Cat Rhyme" while toddlers follow the lead of another toddler.*

*There may be several toddlers' actions with scarves that could be copied.]*

**RECAP:** Today we used scarves to play the *Copy Cat* game. You watched what I did and then copied what I did. You did the same thing. Then we copied what some of our friends did with their scarves! We are learning how to watch and copy what others do.

### What to Look For—Option 1

Watching and imitating others is an early step in learning how to play with others. This option provides the opportunity to practice watching and imitating you as well as peers. At this age, it is not expected that toddlers will pat their leg as you say the rhyme. The emphasis of this activity is watching and perhaps copying the actions of others.

Pay attention to and support the transition that is to occur at the midpoint of the activity, when toddlers shift from watching and imitating your actions to watching and copying a peer(s). Some toddlers may not imitate the actions of another person until they have had time to make their own movements with a scarf. Acknowledge and affirm a range of forms of participation.

### More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

**Extra support** ■ Some toddlers may wish to observe rather than move their scarf. The process of watching is an important aspect of the activity. Also, some toddlers may not wish to suggest a scarf movement. ■ If children need support in calming down after the activity, encourage toddlers to sit down and imitate a few slow scarf movements you provide. Example: "Let's all sit down and move our scarves slowly like this."

**Enrichment** ■ Say the "Copy Cat Rhyme" while a toddler shows an action with his/her scarf, unless you anticipate this may be a distraction for the toddler who is demonstrating or toddlers who are copying. ■ Consider a scarf action that involves moving our body, such as walking in a small circle.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 2 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Social interaction skills

Toddlers imitate staff and peer actions in moving a scarf to music.



#### Key Concepts

Watch  
Copy



#### Materials Needed

Scarves—1 per toddler and staff  
Music and music player



#### Also Promotes

Physical/Health  
Self-Regulation

Invite toddlers to gather in an open area of the room to copy what someone does with a scarf. Explain that one of us can move our scarf the way we would like to move it. Others can watch how the scarf moves and copy the actions. We can move our scarf to music. We can play Musical Scarves!

Provide each toddler with a scarf. Play music and move your scarf in a simple, easy-to-follow pattern, such as up and down. Encourage toddlers to copy your actions with the scarf. Then invite toddlers to take turns moving their scarf to the music. The rest of us will copy the movements.

Close the session by reminding toddlers that we watched and copied what someone did with his/her scarf.

### What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers enjoy moving their bodies to music, and adding scarves enhances this experience. Some toddlers may become excited about moving their bodies and need extra time to focus on the activity of watching and imitating someone else’s actions. It is important to help toddlers stay focused on copying someone else’s scarf action. Example: “Look at how Jamal is twirling his scarf to the music. Let’s all twirl our scarf the same way Jamal is twirling his scarf!” See also the first Extra Support tip below.

Encourage each toddler to think of his/her own movements for others to follow. At the same time, respond positively to a toddler’s actions that are similar to those of the prior leader. Being a leader can be challenging! Some toddlers may prefer not to offer scarf actions for others to follow.

### More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

**Extra support** ■ Toddlers who are excited to move their bodies to the music may enjoy several minutes of “free dance” with the scarves prior to focusing on watching and imitating your movements. ■ If following a peer’s actions with a scarf generates too much excitement, offer a long pause and then lead children in several actions that are suggested by a toddler leader. This arrangement acknowledges a child’s leadership while providing clear adult presence and guidance.

**Enrichment** ■ Toddlers may enjoy adding “freeze” to the musical scarf game that occurs when there is a pause in music that you provide.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 3 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Social interaction skills

Toddlers imitate staff and peer actions in moving a scarf while walking around your room.



#### Key Concepts

- Watch
- Follow
- Do the same
- Copy



#### Materials Needed

Scarves—1 per toddler and staff



#### Also Promotes

- Physical/Health
- Self-Regulation

**Be Prepared:** Arrange for another adult to help with the activity. One of you serves as leader and the other provides verbal support.

Invite toddlers to each move a scarf as we play *Follow the Leader* in your room’s activity space. Encourage toddlers to follow you and watch what you do as you walk around the room. Explain that Follow the Leader means we follow someone in walking around our room and moving our scarf the way the leader moves his/her scarf. We copy the leader. We do the same as the leader. We are walking and we are moving our scarf.

Begin walking slowly with your scarf held high, and then continue walking as you hold your scarf lower. Use a simple path in your room, such as a large circle. Emphasize watching and imitating what the leader does. Describe examples of toddlers imitating the leader’s actions. Example: “Alex is watching carefully. He is moving his scarf up high just like our leader! He is copying our leader.”

Invite toddlers, one at a time, to serve as leader. Offer suggestions of simple walking patterns and/or scarf movements, if necessary.

### What to Look For—Option 3

Some toddlers may watch and imitate the leader’s walking pattern and movements with the scarf whereas others may enjoy walking around the room behind the leader. Acknowledge each type of participation while continuing to draw attention to the leader’s actions. The activity should be fun and lighthearted rather than focused on correctly imitating movements. Watching and imitating both a walking pattern and scarf movements (especially changes in scarf movements) is challenging. A short activity may be best. Toddlers should not be expected to follow in a straight line.

### More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

**Extra support** ■ Describe each movement a leader makes, including changes in movements. Example: “Now I am holding my scarf up high. Try to do the same with your scarf. Try to hold your scarf up high.” ■ Walk alongside a toddler-leader, as a co-leader, to provide an additional example for toddler-follower.

**Enrichment** ■ Two toddlers may wish to discuss and agree on a walking pattern and scarf movement(s) and then co-lead other toddlers with the actions.



### Interest Area

**Materials Needed:** scarves—1 per toddler and caregiver

Provide scarves in a basket on a low table or surface. Invite toddlers to play with the scarves. Toddlers may interact with the scarves in different ways, such as dancing, twirling, waving them in the air, or wrapping the scarves around themselves. Encourage toddlers to imitate each other as they think of different ways to interact with the scarves. Recite the “Copy Cat Rhyme” (Option 1) to remind toddlers of the imitation aspect of the activity. Comment as toddlers imitate others. Example: “Adrianna, you are twirling your scarf around just like Brice!”



### Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** scarves—1 per toddler and caregiver

Children of all ages enjoy *Follow the Leader*. Older children may enjoy taking turns being the leader. You may wish to include different scarf movements as part of the song “Shake to My Lou.”





## 24–36 Months

### Option 1 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal Fine motor development

Toddlers use their hands to flatten and manipulate a ball of play dough.



#### Key Concepts

Round  
Push  
Flat



#### Materials Needed

Soft play dough (see Be Prepared)  
Low table



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive  
Social-Emotional

**Be Prepared:** Make one play dough ball for each toddler, slightly larger than a toddler's fist. Place the balls on a low tabletop.

**BEGIN:** *[Invite several toddlers to join you.]*

We have nice soft dough today. There is one ball of play dough for each of us. Our play dough is round. Let's find out how we can change the shape of the balls.

**ACT:** *[Demonstrate and describe how to flatten the ball of dough with two hands, with one on top of the other. Emphasize the words push and flat.*

*Encourage toddlers to flatten their dough using one hand on top of the other hand. Describe toddlers' actions. Example: "You changed the shape by pushing down on the dough with two hands. Kyle, your dough ball is flat now."*

*Respond to each toddler's reactions to manipulating the play dough. Example: If a toddler says "Look mine," you might respond by saying "I see you changed the shape of your dough ball. How did you do that?"*

*If time and child interest permit, reroll the dough into balls so toddlers can practice flattening the dough or manipulating the dough in ways they wish.]*

**RECAP:** We played with soft play dough today. We started with a round shape. Our play dough looked like a ball. We pushed down on our dough with both hands to make our dough balls flat. We used our hands to change the shape.



### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Some toddlers will be excited to see their handprint in the dough. Flattening a ball of dough may lead some toddlers to explore other ways to manipulate their dough. Toddlers will be most successful with soft dough balls slightly larger than their own fist. The table must be low enough for toddlers to stand and press the dough with their hands. For a possible second round of practice, the activity plan recommends you reroll the dough because most toddlers will not have the ability to re-form the dough into a new ball shape.

**Option 1 continued**

Look for opportunities to promote social interactions. The play dough table is an excellent setting to foster social interaction among toddlers. Describe positive social interactions. Example: “You are having fun watching Sam.” Some toddlers may need extra time to observe the activity before working with his/her own ball. Give friendly reassurance to a toddler who wants to observe the activity before participating.

If toddlers are unfamiliar with play dough material, they may taste it. Remind toddlers that the dough stays on the table and is used only with their hands. Discard any dough that touched a toddler’s mouth.

**More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

**Extra support** ■ Encourage toddlers to stand as they push down on the dough. ■ Urge toddlers to squeeze the dough with both hands. ■ The activity easily accommodates more participants. Example: “Jalynn, we have a place for you at the table. You are welcome to join us.”

**Enrichment** ■ Encourage toddlers to use one finger to poke a hole in his/her dough. Ask “What will happen if you push harder?” ■ For toddlers who are interested in further exploration, offer two balls of dough. Emphasize the words “more” and “bigger” as you talk with toddlers about their explorations with more play dough.





## 24–36 Months

### Option 2 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Fine motor development

Toddlers make a print of their hand in play dough.



#### Key Concepts

Push



#### Materials Needed

Air dry dough (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive

Social-Emotional

**Be Prepared:** Make for each toddler a ball of dough that is slightly larger than a toddler's closed hand (about three inches around). Use salt and flour dough if you wish to save toddlers' handprints. See the internet for recipes; the no-cook dough can be easily mixed up in your room.

Sit at a low table with toddlers and give each toddler a ball of play dough. Explain that today we can make a print of our hand in our play dough.

Encourage toddlers to push down with both hands to make the play dough flat like a pancake. Next, encourage toddlers to open their fingers and press their open hand into their flattened dough. Demonstrate and describe the actions as you work alongside toddlers.

Talk with toddlers about the imprint of their hands in the dough. Some toddlers may enjoy placing their hand back into the print. If time and child interest permit, reroll the dough into balls for toddlers to practice making another handprint.

Take a photo of each child working with his/her play dough to share with family members. Another option is for toddlers to take their work home and/or display the handprints in your room.



### What to Look For—Option 2

Notice instances of toddlers' looking closely at the image of their hand in the dough. Making a handprint can draw toddlers' attention to parts of their hand, especially their fingers. Encourage a toddler to describe what his/her handprint looks like or offer a description of what you see in a child's print.

You may also notice that, for some toddlers, working with play dough is a calming experience. Providing sustained time for a toddler(s) to work with the dough is a useful way to respond. This is one of the reasons play dough is a standard material in toddler rooms. Soft, malleable play dough also provides an excellent way for toddlers to develop hand strength and dexterity.

For many young children, the process of manipulating the dough holds more interest than a product to take home. This is the reason we suggest taking a photo of each child's work with the dough for family members to see.

The open-ended activity gives toddlers opportunities to change the shape of the dough by pinching, pressing, squeezing, and rolling. Toddlers will discover the dough can be divided into many small pieces and put back into a big ball.

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

**Extra support** ■ If making a handprint is too challenging, toddlers may wish to make simple finger holes. Another option is to encourage a toddler to push his/her thumb (not the end of the thumb only) into the dough to see how a print is made.

**Enrichment** ■ If you wish to provide a way to hang the handprints, make a small hole in each handprint shape with a pencil or straw (while the dough is still pliable). ■ Help toddlers experiment with making imprints by suggesting they apply different amounts of pressure to their fingers. ■ Provide simple rolling pins for toddlers to use in follow-up experiences with play dough.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 3 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Fine motor development

Toddlers use small toys to make prints in flat play dough and engage in open-ended manipulation of play dough.



#### Key Concepts

Push  
Flat  
Round  
Squeeze  
Pinch



#### Materials Needed

Soft play dough (see Be Prepared)  
Variety of small toys (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Communication/Language  
Cognitive

**Be Prepared:** Prepare one ball of soft play dough for each toddler. Select small toys that will create a pattern when pressed into dough. Examples: chunky vehicles, fit-together blocks, star builders. Consider offering some household items, such as a large comb, that create appealing patterns when pressed into dough.

Invite toddlers to join you at a low table to work with play dough. Provide each toddler with a ball of dough and encourage toddlers to push down on the ball with both hands (one hand on top of the other) so the ball becomes flat. Demonstrate and describe, as appropriate. Emphasize how we used our hands to make a round piece of dough into a flat piece of dough.

Explain that we can use different toys to make a print in our flat play dough. Provide some toys for toddlers to work with. Demonstrate and describe making a print in your flat play dough by using a chunky toy car or truck to make tire marks. Encourage toddlers to use a toy(s) to find out what happens when they push it into flat play dough.

Explain that we can also play with the dough without a toy. Encourage toddlers to find out what happens when they squeeze or pinch the play dough. They may wish to break up their flat piece of play dough to make small pieces, and then put the pieces into a ball again.

Stay at the table with toddlers to describe their actions and talk about what happened to their play dough when they did certain things. Provide time for toddlers to explore the dough and repeat their actions, or try new actions, with the dough. Reroll the play dough into a smooth ball for each child as needed.

### What to Look For—Option 3

Pay attention to toddlers' looking at the cause and effect of their actions when they make an imprint of an object or manipulate dough in particular ways. Emphasize the cause and effect by asking the toddler what happened, or by offering your own brief comments on what happened.

Some toddlers may wish to repeat an action or activity with the dough. The experience of manipulating the dough provides immediate and satisfying results for toddlers. The texture of the dough is responsive to light and heavier pressure. Toddlers can feel and see differences in imprints when light or firm pressure is applied. Some toddlers may benefit from squeezing or pounding a ball of dough. Provide suggestions or demonstrations as appropriate without directing their actions.

**Option 3 continued** More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

**Extra support** ■ Encourage toddlers to use their fingers to make holes in the dough. ■ Sit or kneel next to a toddler who wants extra support. ■ Make little rounded shapes with dough and ask a toddler to flatten them with his/her hand or an object.

**Enrichment** ■ Draw attention to the shape of each object and the imprint it leaves in the dough. ■ For fun, introduce toddlers to saying “Ta-Da” when showing or making a pattern.

 Interest Area**Materials Needed:** gel bag, tape, and bristle blocks

Select materials to encourage toddlers to use their hands to push down, such as plastic bags with gel inside. Tape the gel bag to a table to prevent toddlers from carrying it. Toddlers can observe items moving inside the bag when they apply a downward push with their hands. Connecting bristle blocks gives toddlers additional experience using a push down motion. Arrange the blocks so toddlers can clearly see the variety of shapes. Sit on the floor to interact with toddlers about their play. Describing toddlers’ actions strengthens emerging communication and language.



**Another day gather the following materials:** 1 sheet of heavy paper for each toddler and staff, 1 large paper plate for each toddler, 2 cups liquid tempera paint (2 colors), 2 containers (size of a cereal bowl), 2 teaspoons, 1 art smock for each toddler

Invite several toddlers to explore the action of pushing down with two hands using a different material. Demonstrate the activity before toddlers begin. Place a teaspoon of each color of paint in the center of the heavy paper. Put the bottom of the paper plate over the paint. Push downward on the paper plate and then lift it up. The paints will be mixed together in a new way.

Print each toddler’s name on his/her paper. Pass the dish of paints to each child. Each toddler may spoon some of each color onto his/her paper and center the paper plate. Encourage toddlers to stand as they push downward on the plate with two hands. Toddlers will enjoy repeating the process.

A small brown house icon with a chimney, positioned to the left of the text "Family Child Care".

### Family Child Care

**Materials Needed:** water mat, play dough, cookie cutter

Infants will enjoy the sensation of pushing down on a water mat and seeing items move in the water. Help preschool-age children learn to roll their play dough into ball shapes. Toddlers and older children will also enjoy using play dough of different colors and observing changes as they manipulate the dough. Using play dough without implements is a great way to foster creativity and cognition. If an older child asks for a cookie cutter, encourage him/her to explore ways to create shapes using his/her hands only.