



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

Option 1 (OO) A toddler looks at and talks about existing symbols designed to tell how a room works.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers use picture cards to identify familiar songs.

Option 3 (OO) A toddler looks at and talks about sequenced pictures in a handwashing poster or daily schedule.



Cognitive

Sorting and Matching

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers identify objects that are the same and different.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler sorts a collection of puzzle pieces into two groups.



Self-Regulation

Focusing and Remembering

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers practice watching and remembering the location of a moving toy car.

Option 2 (IG) Two toddlers take turns “driving” and hiding a toy car and remembering its location.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

Option 1 (OO) A toddler and caregiver work cooperatively on a puzzle.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers work together in passing a ball back and forth.



Physical/Health

Moving Our Bodies

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers move their arms while pretending to fly like a bird.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers practice moving their arms to swing a colorful streamer in different ways.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers practice moving both of their arms to swing two colorful scarves in different ways.

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

Revision: 02/19/2020



24–36 Months

Option 1
One-to-OneSkill and Goal
Receptive language

A toddler looks at and talks about existing symbols designed to tell how a room works.

Key Concepts
PictureMaterials Needed
Existing symbols in room
(see Be Prepared)Also Promotes
Cognitive

Be Prepared: Identify existing pictures or drawings posted in your room aimed at helping toddlers understand how your room works. Examples: a photo on a shelf that tells where specific toys belong, pictures that show your room's daily schedule, a handwashing poster, pictures of toddlers above their cubbies, an exit sign.

Invite a toddler to join you in looking at some pictures that tell us how our room works. Walk around the room with the toddler, stopping to talk about pictures you wish to emphasize or which are of interest to the toddler. For each picture, invite the toddler to say what the picture tells us. Repeat and extend the toddler's response. Example: Toddler says "star" for a picture of star builders. "Yes, this is where we put our star builders. Our star builders are on this shelf when we are not playing with them." Emphasize the practical purpose of a picture, such as helping a caregiver know what door to use during a fire drill or shelter-in-place procedure.

The one-to-one arrangement for this activity promotes individualized interaction with a toddler. This is beneficial because toddlers likely differ in their understanding of specific pictures in your room. The activity may be done with a small gathering of toddlers.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Visual symbols support children's understanding of and effective participation in an environment. They also are a valuable way to promote receptive language skills. Toddlers will likely be well informed about pictures of toddlers above the cubbies, but some symbols are sometimes overlooked in a room. The activity offers an opportunity to highlight potentially useful pictures and, at the same time, heighten a toddler's awareness of the role of symbols in an environment.

A toddler may want to look at and talk about artwork and other items posted in your room. Support this interest while giving attention to pictures related to the activity's goal. Also, a toddler may wish to join an activity or interest area while you are walking around your room.

If you involve a small gathering of toddlers in the activity, anticipate that some may become impatient talking about a familiar picture that other toddlers in the gathering do not know.

**Option 1 continued**A small icon consisting of three black squares of increasing size, stacked vertically. **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

Extra support ■ Describe the picture and its purpose if a toddler does not respond to your invitation to share his/her understanding. ■ Ask “How do we know where your cubby is?”

Enrichment ■ Draw attention to symbols in other parts of your facility, such as a hallway and on the playground, when you are in these areas with toddlers.

24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Awareness of print and picture

Toddlers use picture cards to identify familiar songs.



Key Concepts

Picture
Song



Materials Needed

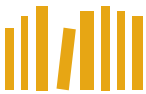
*Picture cards for songs (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive

*Printables provided



Optional Reading

Clap Hands by David Ellwand

Five Little Ducks by Penny Ives

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star by Iza Trapani

Wheels on the Bus by Jerry Smath

Itsy Bitsy Spider by Annie Kubler

Revised: 6/30/2023

Be Prepared: Secure the provided picture cards for 3–5 of the following songs frequently sung in toddler rooms: “Wheels on the Bus,” “Open, Shut Them,” “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” “Itsy Bitsy Spider,” and “Five Little Ducks.” Give priority to songs familiar to toddlers in your room. You may wish to prepare a simple picture card(s) for another song(s) enjoyed by toddlers in your room. It is not necessary to use ELM-provided cards and the songs they represent.

BEGIN: *[Invite toddlers to join you in figuring out what some picture cards tell us.]*

EXPLAIN: I have some cards with pictures. The picture on each card tells us about a song we like to sing. Let’s look at each card and try to figure out what song the picture is telling us about.

ASK: *[Display a picture card for a song you anticipate toddlers will readily identify.]*

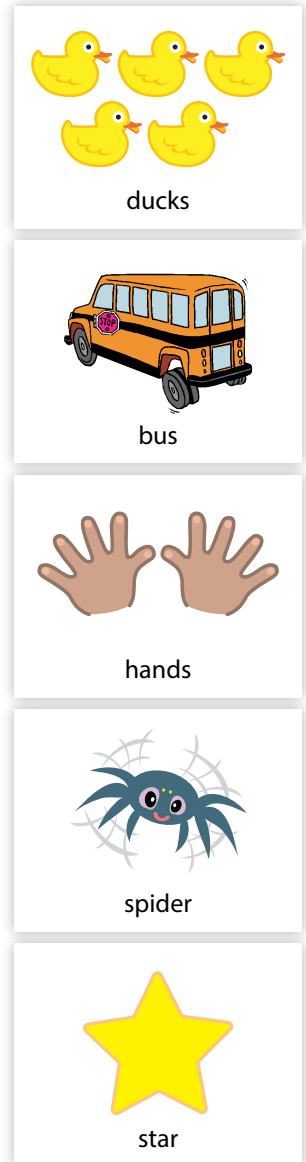
- What do we see in this picture?
- Do we know a song about (item in picture)?
- What is the song?

ACT: *[Enthusiastically sing the first several lines of the song, not an entire verse, to help toddlers recall the song and connect the picture to the song. Hold the card for all toddlers to see while you sing. Some toddlers may join you in singing.]*

After you sing part of the song, point to the word at the bottom of the card, tell what it says, and then point to the picture when you explain the word is the name of what is shown in the picture. Example: “There is a word on our card. This word says bus. There is a picture of a bus on our card.”

Repeat this process with several more cards. Then display one of the cards you reviewed with toddlers.]

Remember, this card tells us about one of the songs we like to sing. Let’s sing the song together.



**Option 2 continued**

[Lead toddlers in singing one verse of the song. Hold the card for toddlers to see while you sing. Refrain from saying the name of the song until you have finished singing. If time and toddler interest permit, hold up another card and invite toddlers to sing the first verse with you.]

RECAP: We looked at some picture cards about songs we like to sing. We figured out which card goes with which song.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

One of the challenges in facilitating any informal gathering is monitoring children's comprehension of information shared in the session. In the current activity, it is important to remember that if some toddlers accurately identify the name of a pictured item or the song the item represents, this does not mean that all toddlers in the gathering have a similar level of understanding. The first Extra Support tip suggested below—repeating in a clear voice the name of the item identified by toddlers—is one simple way to reinforce learning and ensure all toddlers hear the word.

In addition to supporting toddlers' awareness that symbols (pictures) can be used to represent a song, the suggested approach to the cards can help toddlers distinguish words and pictures. Look for opportunities to promote this important literacy goal. (See Enrichment tip.) Teaching specific words is not a goal at this age.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Repeat in a clear voice the name of the pictured item identified by toddlers. ■ Add some excitement to the singing by moving around the picture card slightly as you sing. ■ In the RECAP, show each card included in the activity, one at a time, and encourage toddlers to recall what song the card tells us about.

Enrichment ■ After you say the word printed on the card, ask why the word would be on the card (instead of explicitly connecting the word to the picture, as suggested in the activity description). Example: "Why would the word 'bus' be on this card?"

24–36 Months

Option 3 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Awareness of print and pictures

A toddler looks at and talks about sequenced pictures in a handwashing poster or daily schedule.



Key Concepts

Picture



Materials Needed

Handwashing poster (see Be Prepared)

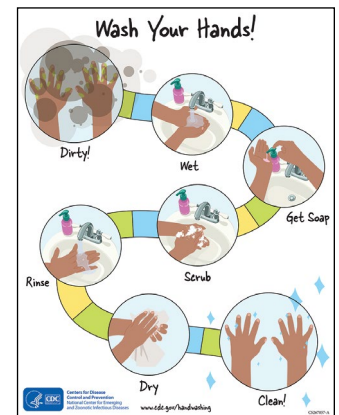


Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Cognitive

Be Prepared: The activity description assumes a handwashing poster is used but you may use pictures in your room's posted daily schedule instead. If you focus the activity on handwashing pictures, use the handwashing poster displayed in your room or a poster available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at the following site: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>. An image of the CDC poster is embedded in this activity description. It's important for the poster to be mostly pictures or drawings of the sequence of steps in washing hands.

Invite a toddler to look at pictures of how we wash our hands. Follow the sequence shown in the poster. Point to each illustration and encourage the toddler to talk about what the picture tells us. Repeat and elaborate on the toddler's comments. Offer a simple description of a picture if the toddler seems uncertain about a picture. Emphasize the sequence of steps shown in the pictures. Example: After talking about a picture, introduce the next picture by pointing to it and saying "Then we do this. What does this picture tell us?" Be flexible about how many pictures a toddler wishes to look at and talk about.



👁️ What to Look For—Option 3

The focus on symbols in this activity option is more challenging than Options 1 and 2 because all pictures relate to the same task and the pictures show a sequence. The activity provides an opportunity to focus on specific components of handwashing. Anticipate differences across toddlers in their interest in taking a closer look at the parts of handwashing. Some toddlers may look at and talk about 1–2 pictures in the poster and then move on. In addition to helping a toddler consider what a picture tells us, look for ways to promote the cognitive benefit of noticing the sequence of steps. There is similar opportunity and benefit if you opt to use your room's pictures of the daily schedule.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ It may be easier for a toddler to look closely at pictures in a poster temporarily placed on a low table rather than hanging on a wall.
■ If a toddler remains engaged at the conclusion of talking about individual pictures, offer a quick review of the steps. Example: Point to each picture and say "First we do this. Then we do this. Then we do this. . . ."

Enrichment ■ At the conclusion of talking about each picture in the poster, point to the final picture and ask whether we do this first. Why not? A toddler will enjoy responding to your silly question.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: Option 2 picture cards and Optional Reading books

Put the books and picture cards on a low table and invite toddlers to put a card with its corresponding book. Share a book of interest with an individual toddler or small gathering of toddlers. Encourage toddlers to talk about how the book tells us about the song.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

You may wish to consider adding symbols to your setting, such as creating a sign-in area where older toddlers and preschool-age children can make a mark next to their picture at arrival/departure times. You also may wish to prepare and use symbol cards to represent activity choices for the next play period, such as a simple drawing of a tricycle as one choice for outdoor play.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers identify objects that are the same and different.



Key Concepts

Same
Different



Materials Needed

Medium-size basket—1 per toddler
Items that match (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Secure sets of two materials that match by type (not color), such as two crayons, two pig figures, two paintbrushes. See a list of possibilities below. Use toddlers' interests to identify objects. Place in each basket 4–5 sets of two matching items (total of 8–10 items per basket). Note the activity description suggests inviting 3–4 toddlers at a time to participate.

Invite 3–4 toddlers to sort things we use in our room. Gather at a low table or sit with the toddlers on the floor. Give each toddler a basket of items and encourage toddlers to put together things that are the same in their basket. Encourage toddlers to put items that are the same on the table or floor, next to their basket. It is not necessary for toddlers to take turns.



Talk with toddlers about how things are the same and different. Emphasize observable details. Examples: “The tractor has no top or window.” “The back wheels of this tractor are big. Can you find one more tractor in your basket?” Identify the names of items as part of your descriptions and conversations. Encourage toddlers to talk about some feature of an item and avoid an emphasis on asking the name of a toy. Pause in your talk frequently so toddlers have an opportunity to contribute to conversations.

If time and toddler interest permit, invite toddlers to return all items to their baskets and swap baskets with a toddler in the gathering.

Possible Items for Matching Activity

Toy cars	Feathers	Toddler-size scissors
Toy tractors	Pinecones	Cow figures
Plastic keys	Crayons	Horse figures
Stones	Paintbrushes	Sheep figures
Seashells	Markers	Pig figures

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

The activity helps toddlers focus on visual discrimination and think about how things are used. Matching by color is not a goal. If a toddler puts together two items that have the same color, such as a red crayon and a red ball, positively acknowledge the color match. Then point to one of the items, such as the ball, and encourage the toddler to find another ball.

**Option 1 continued**

Toddlers may dump the contents of their basket and begin playing with them right away. In a conversational way, begin talking with one toddler about what he/she found in the basket and point to how some items are the same. Respect each toddler's approach to finding items that are the same.

A toddler may take an object from his/her basket and give it to you. Help the toddler look closely at the item by pointing to and talking about a key feature. Example: "Thank you, Simon. The toy you gave me has wheels in the front and back. Is there another toy like this in your basket?" Pause for the toddler to respond.

If a toddler shows little interest in the activity, make a note to draw attention to objects that are the same and different during play periods with balls, cars and trucks, or dramatic play materials. Present the activity again, using materials that are of special interest to a toddler. Some children may be very interested in matching little cars and trucks, whereas others will enjoy matching balls of the same size.

 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ In the opening segment, provide a demonstration of same and different by displaying three items, two of which are the same. Talk about how items are the same and different. ■ Reduce the number of items in a basket if you anticipate 4–5 sets of two matching items will be too challenging.

Enrichment ■ Offer a follow-up activity with two toddlers. Provide two baskets to each toddler with a total of 4–5 sets of two matching toys placed randomly across two paired baskets. The added challenge is finding matching items that may be in different baskets.



24–36 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills
Problem-solving

A toddler sorts a collection of puzzle pieces into two groups.



Key Concepts

Group
Go together



Materials Needed

Two wooden puzzles (see Be Prepared)
One large tray
Two felt pieces (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Select two simple puzzles focused on different themes, such as pets and vehicles or clothes and food. Use puzzles that are easy for toddlers to manipulate, such as chunky puzzles or puzzle pieces with knobs. Use your knowledge of a toddler's interests to determine your choices. Remove all pieces from the two puzzles and place them in random order on the tray. Use no more than 4–5 pieces from each puzzle. Put the puzzle forms to the side; they are not used in this activity. Secure two felt pieces in contrasting colors and approximately 9 x 12 inches in size. Place the felt pieces next to the tray.

BEGIN: *[Invite one toddler to join you on the floor or at a low table to help you fix a problem. Place the tray of puzzle pieces in front of the toddler. Sit facing the toddler.]*

EXPLAIN: Two puzzles are mixed up! Some of the puzzle pieces are (one puzzle theme). Some of the puzzle pieces are (other puzzle theme).

Will you help me look at the puzzle pieces on our tray and find pieces that go together?

[Pause for the toddler's response. Describe how two items are similar if it appears that the toddler is uncertain about the concept of go together. Example: Point to a banana puzzle piece and then to an apple puzzle piece. Explain these go together because they are things to eat.]

Point to the two felt pieces when you describe each. Example: "We can put things we wear on this felt piece. We can put things we eat on this puzzle piece."

ACT: *[Encourage the toddler to take one puzzle piece from the tray and say its name. Promptly say the name if the toddler seems uncertain. Then ask the toddler which group the selected piece goes in. Example: "This puzzle piece is an apple. Is an apple something we eat, or is an apple something we wear?"]*

Next, remind the toddler of the felt piece to be used for the type of item he/she selected. Encourage the toddler to put the puzzle piece on the designated felt piece.



Option 2 continued

Continue this procedure with each remaining piece on the tray.]

EXPLAIN: You are making two groups of things that go together. One group is for animals, and the other group is things that go.

RECAP: The pieces of two puzzles were mixed up. You put pieces that go together on our different felt pieces.

[Invite the toddler to describe each group. Example: Why do these puzzle pieces go together?]

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Pay close attention to a toddler's initial response to the activity and quickly change a puzzle if it appears the theme is not of interest to the toddler.

Notice whether a toddler looks at the two groups of puzzle pictures on the felt pieces as part of considering where to put a puzzle picture. If the toddler is not looking at the groups, describe why a group of pictures go together as suggested in an Extra Support tip. If a toddler places a puzzle piece in an inappropriate group, you may wish to say nothing at the time of placement but later review each piece in a group and talk about how/whether it fits with the others. This may lead a toddler to correct his/her initial placement. Assure a toddler that it is okay to change his/her idea.

If a toddler shows little interest in sorting the puzzle pictures into two groups, modify the activity to fit his/her interest. A toddler may want to talk about puzzle pieces or point to pieces you name or line up all the pieces.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Provide three pieces from each puzzle if you anticipate 4–5 pieces per puzzle will be too challenging. ■ Take turns with the toddler removing a puzzle piece from the tray, naming it, and describing why you put it in the group you selected. ■ When a puzzle piece is added to its appropriate group, briefly comment on how it is similar to other puzzle pieces already placed in the group. Example: "This puzzle piece shows a dog. A dog is an animal. A dog goes here with the cat and bird. A dog, a cat, and a bird are all animals."

Enrichment ■ Add a pretend element to the felt pieces. Example: "We can pretend this felt piece is a basket of food. We can pretend this felt piece is a closet for our clothes." ■ A toddler may be interested in assembling one or both of the puzzles at the end of the activity.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: toy vehicles representing 2–3 different colors, play dishes representing 2–3 different colors, green paper circles and squares, 2 baskets

Provide opportunities for toddlers to pay attention to and potentially sort items by color. Arrange the toy vehicles on a low surface in random order and invite toddlers to put together vehicles of the same color. Add challenge by encouraging toddlers to make a set of two vehicles that are different colors, such as a blue car and a red car. Set the table in dramatic play with dishes in random order that can be organized by color.

Cut circles and squares from green paper, or a color of your choice, that toddlers can sort into one of two baskets. As a follow-up activity, consider promoting creative work with the shapes by providing card stock, glue, and an invitation to affix the shapes on a sheet of card stock any way a toddler wishes.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: small toys such as animal figures and vehicles, 2–3 baskets, large buttons or beads, tray, *Go Fish* card game

In addition to offering Options 1 and 2, small toys (such as animal figures and vehicles), can be placed randomly in baskets for toddlers to sort and match. Preschool-age children will enjoy sorting and matching large buttons or beads by placing them in a tray. The activity should be offered away from infants and toddlers. Preschool-age and older children will enjoy a game of *Lotto* or identifying identical cards in a *Go Fish* deck.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Executive function

Toddlers practice watching and remembering the location of a moving toy car.



Key Concepts

Watch
Remember



Materials Needed

Toy car
3 small cardboard boxes



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: The car should fit fully inside each box. The cardboard boxes are pretend garages in this activity. If a box has a flap(s) that closes so nothing in the box is visible, put the box on its side during the activity and pretend the flap is a garage door. If a box has no flap, put the box opening on the floor so the car can be fully hidden when put in the box. Put the boxes in a row for the activity.

BEGIN: *[Invite several toddlers to join you in a game. Show the toy car and point to each of the three cardboard boxes when you explain they are pretend garages.]*

Our game has a toy car and three boxes. We will pretend the boxes are garages for our car. Our toy car likes to drive around and then hide in one of the garages! Let's play a game of watching the car drive around and remembering where the car hides.

ACT: *[Place the three garages in a row so the toddlers can see each garage.*

Drive the car around on the floor, always in front of the toddlers. Avoid holding the car in your hand where it is not visible. While the toddlers are watching, drive the car in or under the middle garage. Make sure none of the car is visible in the box.]

EXPLAIN: The car drove into a garage. The car is hiding!

I am trying to remember which garage the car is in. I did not watch carefully to see where the car went!

[Look in/under the right and then the left garages. Have fun pretending you did not pay attention to where the car drove. Show excitement when you find the car in/under the middle garage!]

The car is going to drive around and then hide again. This time I am going to watch closely. I want to remember where the car hides.

ACT: *[Drive the car on the floor, always in full view of the toddlers. Drive the car in/under the left or right garage.]*

The car drove into a garage. The car is hiding from us again! This time I watched where the car went. I remember where the car went.

[Look under the correct garage. Show excitement when you find the car!]

I watched the car drive around and remembered where it was hiding. I found the car because I watched and remembered.



Option 1 continued

Should the car drive around and hide again?

[Repeat if the toddlers appear interested.]

RECAP: We played a game with a toy car that likes to hide. We found the car in one of the garages because we watched and remembered where the car went.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Executive function

Two toddlers take turns “driving” and hiding a toy car and remembering its location.



Key Concepts

Watch
Remember



Materials Needed

Toy car
3 small cardboard boxes



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language
Social-Emotional

Be Prepared: The car should fit fully inside each box. The cardboard boxes are pretend garages in this activity. If a box has a flap(s) that closes so nothing in the box is visible, put the box on its side during the activity and pretend the flap is a garage door. If a box has no flap, put the box opening on the floor so the car can be fully hidden when put in the box. Put the boxes in a row for the activity.

Invite two toddlers to join you on the floor to play a game. Introduce the car and three boxes that are pretend garages. Explain that the car likes to drive around and then hide in one of the garages. Explain that the two toddlers participating in this game will take turns driving and hiding the car, and then remembering where the car is hiding. Show toddlers how to hold the car so it can always be seen. You might want to show how putting the car in the palm of our hand can make it difficult to see the car.

Invite one of the toddlers to drive the car around the floor and then hide the car in one of the garages. Offer assistance as needed. Urge the other toddler to watch where the car goes, including where it hides. After the car is fully hidden in a garage, pause a few moments and then invite the watcher (second toddler) to say and point to where the car is hiding. Show excitement when the car is shown. Emphasize that watching the car carefully helped the toddler remember where the car was hiding.

Reverse toddlers’ roles, with the toddler who was the car’s driver in the first round serving as the watcher of where the car goes. Again, briefly pause after the car is hidden and then invite the watcher to tell and point to where the car is hiding.

Offer descriptions of actions. Examples: “Our car drove around and around. Now it is hiding from us!” “You watched the car drive around and then hide from us. You remembered where the car was hiding!”

Repeat if toddlers remain interested. Conclude the session by emphasizing how watching and remembering helped us find the car.

What to Look For—Options 1–2

Closely observe toddlers’ visual tracking of the car’s whereabouts in both activities. Offer friendly reminders to watch if it seems a toddler is not fully engaged. Also, avoid moving the car in Option 1 when toddlers are not watching.

Option 2 involves a self-control task for the driver of the car when you ask the watcher to identify the hidden car’s location. You can help the driver resist the temptation to tell or show the car’s location by urging the driver to sit still while the watcher tells and points to the car’s location.



Avoid actions that change the activities into guessing games. Random guessing does not promote the idea that watching something helps us remember what happened. Do not suggest a toddler “make another guess” if he/she does not select the correct garage in Option 2. Instead, invite the driver of the car to reveal where the car is hiding. Positively recognize toddlers’ efforts.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

Extra support ■ Explain that a garage is a place where a car can be parked. ■ Match the speed and distance you move the car in Option 1 to toddlers’ level of visual attention. If one or more toddlers appear to be looking elsewhere, move the car slowly until they again look at the car’s actions. ■ Ask whether we should watch the car or watch the person moving the car.

Enrichment ■ Extend Option 1 by inviting interested toddlers to make the toy car drive and hide, one toddler at a time, while you watch and remember where the car is hiding.

Interest Area

Materials Needed: 3–4 toy cars, 3 small cardboard boxes from Options 1 or 2

Invite several toddlers to play in the block area with the cars and pretend garages. Invite toddlers to use blocks to build more pretend garages for the cars to hide in. Toddlers may wish to repeat Option 2 or create a different or related type of play arrangement with cars and pretend garages.

Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

A preschool-age child may enjoy serving as the driver of the car in Option 1 as a toddler watches and remembers the car’s location. Preschool-age children may also like to participate in the suggested Interest Area activity.



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

A toddler and caregiver work cooperatively on a puzzle.



Key Concepts

Work together

Take turns



Materials Needed

2 simple puzzles (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Physical/Health

Cognitive

Be Prepared: Secure two simple puzzles (3–6 pieces each) that are responsive to the interests of the toddler who participates in this activity. Select appropriately challenging puzzles (not a puzzle the toddler has easily put together previously). Offer chubby puzzles or puzzles with a knob on each piece. The activity description assumes butterfly and owl puzzles are offered. These are for illustration purposes only.

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to work with you on a puzzle. Place the two assembled puzzles in front of the toddler. Point to each when you describe it.]*

It is fun to put together a puzzle. We can work together on a puzzle.

Here are two puzzles. This puzzle shows a butterfly. The other puzzle is about an owl.

ASK: Which puzzle would you like to work on?

ACT: *[Move the puzzle not selected out of the work space.]*

Let's take apart the puzzle. We can take turns.

[Encourage the toddler to take out the first piece. Then you remove a second piece. Describe actions and offer guidance on taking turns. Example: "You took out a puzzle piece. Then I took out a puzzle piece. Now it is your turn again to take out a puzzle piece." Put the removed pieces in a common location near the puzzle.]

We worked together to take apart our puzzle. We can take turns putting together the puzzle. What puzzle piece would you like to put in the puzzle first?

[Quietly describe the toddler's actions with puzzle pieces without directing the action or interfering with his/her focus. Example: "You are trying different ways to make the piece fit." Describe your actions. Example: "I am going to turn this piece. I think it might fit if I turn it just a little." Continue to provide turn-taking guidance, such as "Now it's your turn."]

RECAP: We worked together on a puzzle. We took turns taking the puzzle apart and putting it together. Look at our finished puzzle. We did this together!

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

Look for ways to support the cooperative focus of the puzzle work. Offer encouraging comments that show you are fully in tune with the toddler's efforts.

The concept and practice of taking turns is not generally well established with toddlers. An individualized session like the current activity is ideal for promoting this key part of getting along well with others.

If a toddler shows more interest in doing the puzzle by him/herself than cooperatively with you, acknowledge the toddler's interest and suggest the two of you work together on the first puzzle and the toddler do another puzzle independently or with you nearby. If cooperative puzzle work is not an option, consider other ways to engage in back-and-forth activity with the toddler. Remember this activity is about promoting social interaction skills, not puzzle skills.

Note the activity description does not refer to the number of puzzle pieces in sample discussions with the toddler. This is intentional. It is not necessary to formally teach counting and numbers to toddlers.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ If there are early signs that the puzzle is too challenging, suggest you find a different puzzle for the toddler to consider. Be sure to ask whether the replacement puzzle is one the toddler wants to pursue. Alternatively, if the puzzle seems too easy for the toddler, encourage the toddler to tell you (when it is your turn) where a piece should be placed.

Enrichment ■ Ask the toddler "Whose turn is it?" and/or encourage the toddler to remind you whose turn is next.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Toddlers work together in passing a ball back and forth.



Key Concepts

Work together
Up
Down
Back
Forth



Materials Needed

Soft, medium-sized ball
Play tunnel



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Physical/Health
Cognitive

Invite two toddlers to play a game with the ball and the tunnel. Explain they can work together to pass the ball back and forth through the tunnel. Invite each toddler to sit on one end of the tunnel and roll the ball to each other through the tunnel. Describe each toddler's actions. Example: "Alayna rolled the ball through the tunnel to Max. Now Max has the ball!"

If the ball stops rolling in the tunnel, state the problem and encourage the toddlers to figure out how to get the ball out. Example: "Wow, the ball stopped in the middle of the tunnel. What can you do to make it roll again?"

After rolling the ball back and forth several times, invite the toddlers to stand up and take turns lifting their end of the tunnel to make the ball move. Encourage toddlers to practice moving their end up and down without the ball, and then work together with the ball. It is not necessary for a toddler to lift his/her end of the tunnel before the ball rolls out. Offer guidance on whose turn it is to lift and whose turn it is to put down their end of the tunnel. Example: "Alayna is lifting her end of the tunnel. That means it is Max's turn to put down his end of the tunnel." Point out the consequences of lifting and lowering ends of the tunnel. Example: "Look, the ball is rolling toward Max because Alayna lifted her end of the tunnel. Now the ball is rolling back toward Alayna!"

Conclude the activity by emphasizing how the two toddlers worked together to move a ball back and forth.

What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers typically enjoy playing with balls independently and with others. The tunnel adds novelty to ball play and actively promotes cooperation, especially turn taking. Emphasize teamwork rather than success in moving the ball. If insufficient power in pushing the ball into the tunnel becomes a source of frustration in the first segment, promptly move to the second segment (lifting/lowering the tunnel) where pushing the ball is not a factor.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ If the toddlers seem confused about what to do with a ball that stops in the middle of the tunnel (first segment of the activity), suggest they consider lifting one of the ends of the tunnel. ■ Kneel next to a toddler(s) to provide quiet coaching on what to do.

Enrichment ■ Offer different sizes and types of balls.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: parachute or large sheet, assortment of simple puzzles

Lay the parachute or sheet on the floor or ground outside in a large open area. Invite toddlers to stand around the edges and hold on to a section of the parachute. Explain that everyone will work together to move the parachute. Invite toddlers to hold the parachute “up, up, up” and then “down, down, down.” Consider inviting toddlers to move the parachute up and down quickly (fast) and then slowly. Also consider providing a beach ball for toddlers to move on top of the parachute.

As a second activity, place puzzles of varying challenge on a low table and invite toddlers to work on different puzzles of their choice. Encourage toddlers to work together by doing one puzzle jointly or helping a peer do a puzzle.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Preschool-age children may wish to participate in Option 2 and in the Interest Area activity with a parachute. Older infants will enjoy holding a ball while watching the action in Option 2.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Gross motor development

Toddlers move their arms while pretending to fly like a bird.



Key Concepts

Arm
Wing
Fly
Come back



Materials Needed

*3 pictures as shown
Carpet squares—1 per toddler and caregiver



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Self-Regulation

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Determine the boundaries of an open area for toddlers to pretend they are flying like birds. Clear the space of obstacles. Offer the activity outdoors if possible.

Invite 3–4 toddlers to join you to pretend to fly like a bird. Encourage each toddler to sit on a carpet square.

Open the session by explaining that we often see birds when we go outside. Show the picture of a bird sitting on grass. Encourage toddlers to talk about birds they see near their homes or your center. Point out that the birds we see may not look like the bird in the picture. There are many different kinds of birds.

Explain that birds have two wings and they use their wings to fly. Show the picture of a bird in flight. Point to the bird's wings. Also explain that birds build nests to live in. Show the picture of a bird in a nest.

Invite toddlers to point to one of their arms. Explain that we can use our arms to pretend we are flying like a bird. Stand up to demonstrate with your arms how a bird uses both of his/her wings to fly. Move your arms up and down, as if flapping your wings, and hold them out straight, as if coasting or coming in for a landing. You may wish to demonstrate in a stationary position or while moving around slightly.

We can pretend to fly around part of our room. Then we will come back to our nest. We can pretend our carpet square is our nest. Demonstrate coming back to your nest by pretending to fly a small distance from your carpet square and then returning. Emphasize you are coming back to your pretend nest.

Point out the space boundaries for flying. Then lead toddlers in pretending to fly. Encourage toddlers to move in the same direction. It is not necessary to move arms in a uniform manner. Remind toddlers that we can pretend to fly by moving our arms up and down. We can also pretend to fly by holding our arms out straight. After several moments of pretend flying, announce it is time to come back to our nests. Lead toddlers to their nests. Repeat flying and coming back if time and toddler interest permit. Conclude the session by reminding toddlers that we pretended our arms were the wings of a bird. Describe how toddlers moved their arms.



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

Most toddlers will readily use both arms for the activity and will likely imitate your motions and maintain proximity to you. Some toddlers may begin to make flapping motions as soon as you introduce the idea of pretending to be birds.

Maintaining the boundaries of the flying space and coming back to the pretend nest upon request support self-regulation skills in a playful manner. The two-part activity of flying and then coming back to a carpet square supports cognitive awareness of sequences. Some toddlers will be able to follow the activity structure and some toddlers may need reminders and repeated experiences.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Spatial awareness is an emerging skill at this age. Help toddlers maintain a good distance from each other so moving arms do not touch others. ■ If toddlers need support for calming down after the activity, suggest they rest quietly in their pretend nest. ■ Offer comments to support participation. Example: “Jada is flying high.”

Enrichment ■ In a repeat pretend flying experience, invite toddlers to take turns leading others in flying. ■ Introduce the idea that we are a pretend flock of birds. Explain that a flock of birds is a group of birds.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

Toddlers practice moving their arms to swing a colorful streamer in different ways.



Key Concepts

Arm
Front
Back
Swing
Streamer



Materials Needed

Crepe paper streamers—1 per toddler and caregiver (see Be Prepared)
Carpet squares—1 per toddler



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Cognitive

Be Prepared: To make one streamer, cut five lengths of crepe paper of different colors, eight inches long. Put the five pieces of paper together by twisting them about two inches from an end. Wrap the twisted end with one piece of masking tape. Immediately prior to the activity, put carpet squares in your activity space with enough distance between each for toddlers to swing their arms to their sides without touching anyone.

BEGIN: [*Gently swing a streamer to your side as you invite 3–4 toddlers to each stand on a carpet square for fun in swinging a streamer.*]

EXPLAIN: [*Display a streamer.*]

This is called a streamer. It is made with a special kind of paper. Look at the different colors in this streamer. It is fun to swing a streamer and look at its different colors.

We swing a streamer with our arm. Let's practice swinging our arms. We can swing one arm at a time. We put our arm out to our side and then move it from front to back.

Demonstrate swinging your arm on your side, from front to back. Then lead toddlers in swinging one arm and then their other arm at the side of their body.]

ACT: [*Give each toddler a streamer.*]

Let's have fun with our streamers! Let's swing our streamer by moving our arm at the side of our body. Remember, we move our arm to the front and then to the back.

[*Lead toddlers in swinging their streamer on their side, from front to back. Emphasize we use one hand to hold our streamer and we move our arm.*

Then encourage toddlers to try one or more contrasting ways to swing the streamer as suggested below:

- *swing our streamer in our other hand*
- *swing our streamer slower and then faster*
- *swing our streamer higher and then lower*

Briefly demonstrate each motion. Draw attention to moving your streamer from one hand to your other hand by describing your actions and using slightly exaggerated movements. Encourage toddlers to briefly stop swinging between each contrast. Example: Other hand. Stop. Slower, faster. Stop. Higher, lower.

Acknowledge toddlers' actions. Example: "Tiana, now your streamer is in your other hand. Roberto, you are trying your other hand, too."

**Option 2 continued**

RECAP: *[Describe what happened. Emphasize how we moved our arm in different ways to swing the streamer. Encourage toddlers to tell what it was like to change hands or swing the streamer in different ways.]*

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

It may be challenging for some toddlers to briefly stop moving their streamer between the suggested contrasting ways to move their arms. Offer gentle reminders and draw attention to how you stopped moving your streamer. The brief pauses can help toddlers think about and transition to a different set of arm movements. The pause supports the cognitive part of body control and awareness in this fun activity. Practice in swinging an arm supports movements in underhand throwing of a ball that toddlers may pursue during preschool or school-age years.

Some toddlers may not follow requested arm movements and may not move their streamer to their other hand. It is important to be flexible and supportive of each toddler's actions with a streamer. Hand preference is not well established at this age. Also, it is not necessary to teach the concepts of right and left at this age.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Point to or lightly touch a toddler's hand if there seems to be confusion about using the "other hand." ■ Remind toddlers we "keep our feet on our carpet square" and "keep our streamer off friends," as appropriate. ■ Limit the number of contrasting arm movements if you anticipate toddlers may get overexcited.

Enrichment ■ Provide two streamers, one for each hand, to interested toddlers. Making similar movements with each arm is useful practice in body coordination.

24–36 Months

Option 3
Informal Gathering

Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

Toddlers practice moving both of their arms to swing two colorful scarves in different ways.



Key Concepts

Arms
Front
Back
Swing



Materials Needed

Colorful scarves—2 per toddler and caregiver
Carpet squares—1 per toddler and caregiver



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Cognitive

Be Prepared: Put carpet squares in your activity space with enough distance between each for toddlers to swing scarves without touching anyone.

Gently swing a scarf as you invite 3–4 toddlers to each stand on a carpet square for fun in swinging colorful scarves. Put down your scarf after toddlers are on their squares. Invite toddlers to stand tall and try to copy what you do, as suggested below:

- wave hello with one hand
- wave hello with your other hand
- swing your two arms to your side, front to back

Enthusiastically acknowledge toddlers' efforts to copy your actions. Explain that we can have fun moving two scarves with our arms. We will have one scarf in each of our hands.

Give each toddler two scarves. Lead toddlers in trying the following ways to swing their scarves:

- swing one arm to the side, front to back while the other arm rests against his/her body
- swing the other arm to the side, front to back, while the other arm rests against his/her body
- swing both arms to the side, front to back

Encourage toddlers to stop moving their arm(s) briefly between each different movement.

Conclude the session by recognizing each toddler's efforts with the scarves. You may wish to clap.

 What to Look For—Option 3

This activity extends the supports for body control and awareness offered in Options 1 and 2. The activity's use of two scarves with concurrent movement of both arms is more challenging than the Option 2 focus on the movement of one arm at a time.

As noted in Option 2, the brief pause after each arm movement can help toddlers think about and transition to a different movement. This is a valuable cognitive part of motor actions. If toddlers find it challenging to briefly stop moving their scarf, offer gentle reminders and draw attention to how you stopped moving your scarf. It also may be helpful to slow the pace of the activity.

At this age, it is unnecessary to introduce the concepts of left and right.

**Option 3 continued** A small icon of a ladder or scaffolding structure. **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3**

Extra support ■ When you distribute scarves, help a toddler hold one scarf in each hand, if necessary.

Enrichment ■ Add movement variations, such as faster/slower or higher/lower or turning around.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: art smocks, foam brushes, card stock, craft glue for toddlers, crepe paper streamers from Option 3, chubby vehicles

Provide chubby vehicles on a low table to encourage arm movements. Toddlers may enjoy driving the vehicles with one hand or the other hand.

Leave several crepe paper streamers (Option 3) in a basket next to a mirror. Encourage toddlers to watch their arms swing forward and back.

The use of crepe paper for the Option 2 streamers may prompt some toddlers' interests in working with craft glue and crepe paper. Cover a low table with paper and provide art smocks. Put a small amount of craft glue in a small cup and provide one small foam brush for each toddler. Demonstrate how to paint glue onto paper and press torn crepe paper bits on the glue for a small collage. Toddlers will see color transfer from the crepe paper into the glue. Consider leaving the materials out so toddlers can return for continued exploration.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: streamers

Younger toddlers may enjoy simply shaking a streamer while older toddlers participate in Option 2.

Preschool-age children may enjoy using the streamer to draw a pretend circle or line in the air.

Encourage children to consider making up-and-down lines, side-to-side lines, and going around and around.

Older children may enjoy moving the streamer as a rainbow writer. Possibilities you might suggest include: making a square, a circle, a figure eight, and the first letter of their name.

Children may enjoy hearing you sing "I Can Sing a Rainbow." You can become familiar with the song at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences website: <https://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/songs/childrens/sing-a-rainbow/index.htm>.