



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing focused on a duck family.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler uses a stick puppet to show the meaning of “far away” and “come back” in a book sharing about a duck family.



Cognitive

Sorting and Matching

Option 1 (OO) A toddler identifies and matches real and pictured items.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler finds items in the room that match pictures of similar items.



Self-Regulation

Paying Attention

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers help a caregiver pay attention to whether pictures of sea animals are the same or different in a picture-matching game.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers practice paying attention to pictures of sea animals in a picture-comparison game.



Social-Emotional

Exploring Feelings

Option 1 (OO) A toddler talks about different facial expressions, including what an expression can tell us.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers talk about and make different facial expressions.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

Option 1 (OO) A toddler practices using his/her entire hand or all his/her fingers to manipulate puzzle pieces.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler practices using several fingers to manipulate puzzle pieces with pegs.

Option 3 (OO) A toddler practices taking apart and putting together a chunky puzzle without pegs that focuses on size differences.

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



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

Toddlers participate in a book sharing focused on a duck family.



Key Concepts

Duck
Little



Materials Needed

Five Little Ducks illustrated by Penny Ives from Child's Play
Plush duck or duck puppet



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Self-Regulation

BEGIN: [Use the plush duck or puppet to invite toddlers to a book sharing. Use a “duck voice.”]

Quack-quack. Please come on over so you can see me in our book! You can pet my soft feathers.

[Say the names of toddlers who join the gathering.

When several toddlers have joined you, use your own voice to speak to the duck.]

Mother Duck, thank you for calling us together to share a book. Some of us would like to gently pet your head.

[Move around the gathering with the duck puppet to give each toddler a turn to pet its head. Then move puppet so it is no longer seen.]

Mother Duck is going to her nest now.

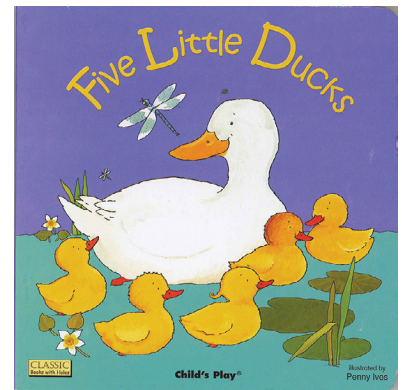
EXPLAIN: [Show book cover. Point to ducks as you describe them.]

Here are the little ducks with the mother duck. The baby ducks are little.

Our book is called *Five Little Ducks*. Let’s find out what happens.

ACT: [Use the following strategies to share the book:

- In addition to reading the book’s text, use your own words to describe pictures and what happens. Point to images/pictures that you describe.
- Encourage toddlers to repeat “quack, quack, quack, quack” and other fun words/sounds that attract their interest. Explain how the words help tell the story, such as “quack, quack, quack, quack” as the way Mother Duck calls her babies.



**Option 1 continued**

- *Acknowledge toddlers' comments and pointing to pictures. Repeat and expand on their utterances.*
- *Point to words as you read the text. Explain that the words tell us about the story.*
- *Support toddlers' anticipation of what happens in the story. Example: "One duck did not come back. Let's see what the ducks do next!"*
- *Encourage toddlers to recall part of the story. Example: "Where did the little ducks go?"]*

RECAP: The little ducks in our story went away. The mother duck wondered where they went. What did the mother duck say to call back her babies? ("quack, quack, quack, quack") Did the little ducks come back to the mother duck?

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Five Little Ducks is a popular children's book that may be familiar to some toddlers in your gathering. They want to tell the story! Keep in mind that other toddlers may be unfamiliar with the book and will benefit from an intentional opportunity to hear the words, look at the pictures, and talk about the story.

The recall questions suggested in the activity description are intended to support short-term memory skills and story comprehension. If toddlers seem uncertain about how to respond, reread the pertinent text or use your own words to describe the event that is the focus of your question.

Toddlers may want you to talk about some of the rich illustrations in this book. Acknowledge the interest, provide some information, and follow up with a question.

The book uses number words that are important for children to eventually know, but are not a focus of the current activity. Toddlers are not expected to count the ducks.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Remind toddlers that little means small. Point to the size differences between the mother duck and the little ducks. ■ Include the name of each toddler in your gathering as you discuss the book. Example: "Look, Clara, here is the frog!"

Enrichment ■ Invite toddlers to look closely at a picture to find less prominent images. Example: "Where is the butterfly?" ■ In addition to "quack, quack, quack, quack," encourage toddlers to repeat phrases with you, such as "far away." ■ Emphasize the concepts of under and over. Example: "On this page, the fish are under the mother duck. The frog is jumping over the ducks."

24–36 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

A toddler uses a stick puppet to show the meaning of “far away” and “come back” in a book sharing about a duck family.



Key Concepts

Far away
Come back



Materials Needed

Five Little Ducks illustrated by Penny Ives from Child’s Play

*Little duck stick puppet (see Be Prepared)



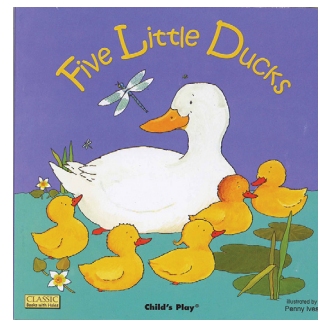
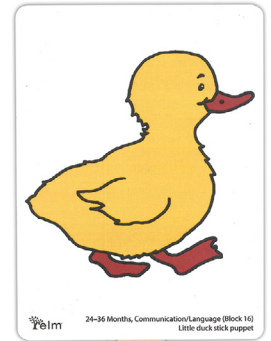
Also Promotes

Cognitive
Self-Regulation

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Affix the provided picture of a little duck to a stick. Prepare a second stick puppet if you wish to use one during the activity.

This activity is for a toddler who is familiar with what happens in the *Five Little Ducks* story. Remind the toddler that the little ducks go far away and come back in the story. Explain that we can use a stick puppet to show what it means to go far away and to come back. Demonstrate far away and come back actions with the stick puppet while reading sentences in the book text that include these concepts. Then offer the stick puppet to the toddler to use while you share the book with strategies suggested in Option 1. Provide verbal cues and gestures to indicate when it is time in the story for the toddler to move the stick puppet in far away and come back motions. Encourage the toddler to say the key phrases with you. You can add a little humor and drama to the activity by pretending you are a surprised and happy mother duck when the ducks return.



👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

The stick puppet offers a way to act out part of the story and connect important concepts to motor actions. It is important to be flexible about how a toddler manages the puppet. A toddler may have his/her own idea about how to show the duck going far away and coming back. A toddler may also wish to simply hold the puppet.

📌 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Use a second stick puppet for your own far away and come back actions. This approach offers a useful demonstration and reminder of what to do. It also moves the book sharing into more of a joint activity with the toddler.

Enrichment ■ Sing the “Five Little Ducks” song. Encourage the toddler to move the stick puppet to the song. ■ Help the toddler connect far away and come back to his/her own experiences. Example: “Your mommy goes away to work, Joseph. Does she come back when her work is done?” ■ Offer this activity in an informal gathering of 3–4 toddlers.



Interest Area

Materials needed: *Five Little Ducks* by Child's Play; other richly illustrated books about ponds or water animals, such as fish and frogs; rubber ducks and figures of other aquatic life

Place the books and related materials on a low table or defined area on the floor. Invite toddlers to use the materials to tell the story of little ducks going far away and coming back. Toddlers may wish to extend the little duck actions to frogs and fish. Little fish might swim far away, for example. Add blue fabric to support the pretend pond image.



Family Child Care

Materials needed: 1 rubber duck for each child; *Five Little Ducks* by Child's Play; plush duck or puppet; duck-related books such as *Little Quack* by Lauren Thompson, *A Cuddle for Little Duck* by Claire Freedman, and *The Little Duck* by Phoebe Dunn.

Invite younger and older children in your setting to join a toddler in Option 2. In addition to sharing the *Five Little Ducks* book, invite children to move their ducks as you sing the "Five Little Ducks" song. Babies will enjoy holding a duck and listening to the song.

Toddlers and older children will enjoy sharing the other duck-related books with you.



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Object inquiry skills

A toddler identifies and matches real and pictured items.



Key Concepts

Picture
Match



Materials Needed

*5 picture and real matching cards (as shown)
Items shown in picture cards (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

*Printables provided



Optional Reading

My Big Word Book by Roger Priddy

Be Prepared: Place the five cards on a low table with pictures facing up. Secure one of each of the items shown in the five cards: a book, crayon, toy vehicle, block, and doll. Put the items together on a nearby shelf or other table, not on the table with the cards.

BEGIN: *[Invite a toddler to play a matching game. Encourage the toddler to sit or stand at the table with the cards and look at the cards with you.]*

EXPLAIN: These are pictures of things children like to play with. We have these types of things in our room.

ASK: *[Point to a card that shows an item of interest to the toddler.]*

What do we see on this card?

[Encourage the toddler to name the item shown. Repeat the name of the item offered by the toddler and invite the toddler to tell how we use the item. If a toddler responds to your request by telling what is done with an item rather than saying the name of the item (such as “coloring” for crayons or “story” for books), acknowledge and expand on the description. Example: “Yes, the things in the picture are used for coloring. They are called crayons.”

Continue this process with each of the remaining cards.]

EXPLAIN: *[Point to the nearby collection of similar actual items you gathered for the activity.]*

Here are things from our room that are like the things shown in the picture cards. I think you will have fun putting each of these things next to the picture that matches the item. Things that match are the same or almost the same.

ACT: *[Encourage the toddler to point to an item, say its name, and carry the item to the table that contains the picture cards. Encourage the toddler to put the picture card and corresponding item next to each other. Engage the toddler in a brief conversation about how the*



Option 1 continued

two items match. Example: "What is the same about our toy car and the picture of a toy car?" (wheels, shape, etc.)]

RECAP: Finding things that match is fun! We talked about some things shown on picture cards. Then you put things from our room next to a picture card that matched the real thing. We talked about how things that match are the same or almost the same.

 **What to Look For—Option 1**

This activity supports a toddler's understanding that a picture can represent a real thing. It builds on a Block 12 Communication/Language activity plan focused on connecting visual symbols to items and activities.

A toddler may wish to pursue the activity without much discussion, and maybe at a fast pace. The activity description's suggestions for promoting talk are in support of language use in general and understanding the names of specific familiar objects. Gently encourage a toddler to talk about items. Beginning the activity with a picture card that shows an item of interest to the toddler may help stimulate talk. A toddler may enjoy telling you how he plays with the item in the room or at home.

The plan calls for a toddler to move an item to the table with the picture cards (rather than put cards by their respective items). This approach is intentional, aimed at helping a toddler connect with an object's characteristics via touch.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

Extra support ■ If a toddler does not offer a name of the pictured item, gently restate the question. If the toddler continues to not offer a name, say the name of the item and invite the toddler to say the name with you. Then talk about how the item is used in your room. ■ Use fewer than five cards/items if you anticipate five may be too challenging initially.

Enrichment ■ Encourage the toddler to tell what is different between the real item and the pictured item. Example: the real crayons may be different colors than the pictured crayons. ■ Invite a toddler who readily matches pictures and items to do the opposite: put items by cards that do not show the item.

24–36 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal Object inquiry skills

A toddler finds items in the room that match pictures of similar items.



Key Concepts

Picture
Match



Materials Needed

*5 picture and real matching cards (as shown)



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Ensure the items shown in the five cards are available in their usual setting in your room.

This activity extends Option 1 by inviting a toddler to find things in the room that match items shown in picture cards. Begin by showing and discussing each picture with the toddler, one card at a time. Use the Option 1 strategies of encouraging the toddler to name the item and talk about how it is used in your room. Then invite the toddler to find an item in your room that matches the item shown in the picture card. Remind the toddler that match means things are the same or almost the same.

Ask the toddler what he/she would like to find first. Give the toddler the card that shows the item and hold the remaining four cards. Accompany the toddler on his/her search. Offer verbal support when appropriate. Example: “Where do we keep crayons in our room?” Alternatively, a toddler may prefer to go on an unaccompanied hunt for the item and bring it to the space where you reviewed the cards. This arrangement supports the use of self-regulation skills related to keeping focused on the task.

Talk with the toddler about how the real item and pictured item are a match. Acknowledge the toddler’s efforts.



What to Look For—Option 2

This activity option supports a toddler’s understanding of how a picture can represent a real item and adds the challenge of finding the item in your room. Toddlers differ in their familiarity with a room’s materials, especially if they tend to play in one area only. You may need to provide clues about the locations of some items.

Option 2 continued

The decision about whether a toddler searches independently or with you in a follower role is important. The risk of an independent search, of course, is that a toddler becomes distracted and never returns with the desired item. If this happens, try the activity another time, with you accompanying the toddler's search. You may wish to offer a mix, beginning with accompanied searches for several of the items and then several independent searches.

 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Emphasize that the real item does not need to be identical to the pictured item. Examples: the color of a crayon may be different; the shape of a block may be different.

Enrichment ■ Invite the toddler to pick a picture card to send *you* on a search for a matching real item. In a lighthearted tone, bring back an item that matches and an item that does not match. Encourage the toddler to identify the item that matches the picture.

 Interest Area

Materials needed: *5 picture and real matching cards used in Options 1 and 2

Place the cards face up on a low table. Invite toddlers to find an item in the room that matches the pictured item and bring the item to the table, placing it next to the picture card. This is a version of Option 2 that involves independent searching. Talk with toddlers about where they found the item and how the pictured and real items are the same or similar and different.

*Printables provided

 Family Child Care

Materials needed: *My Big Word Book* by Roger Priddy

In addition to offering Options 1 and/or 2 to toddlers, invite preschool-age children to also participate. Their discussion of how pictured and real items are similar and different can be helpful to their own cognitive and language development as well as toddlers' understandings of objects. Share *My Big Word Book* with children of different ages in your setting. The book is an engaging way to support familiarity with names of objects.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers help a caregiver pay attention to whether pictures of sea animals are the same or different in a picture-matching game.



Key Concepts

- Pay attention
- Looking
- Match
- Same
- Different



Materials Needed

*Sea animals matching picture cards (as shown)



Also Promotes

- Cognitive
- Communication/Language

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: The picture cards show four different sea animals: starfish, octopus, shark, sea turtle (one animal per card). Three cards show the same animal (total: 12 cards). Put one card for each of the four animals face up in a row on a low table. Shuffle the remaining cards and put them in a small stack, face down, on a corner of the table.

BEGIN: *[Invite 3–4 toddlers to join you at a table to help you play a matching game.]*

EXPLAIN: Here are some cards with pictures of animals that live in the sea. Let's find out what animals are shown on the cards.

[Point to each picture card as you describe it. Hold up the card, if necessary, to ensure each toddler sees it. Some toddlers may want to take a closer look by holding the card briefly.]

This card shows a picture of a starfish. A starfish has five arms. There are different colors of starfish. The starfish shown on our card is red.

Here is a picture of an octopus. An octopus has more arms than the starfish. An octopus has eight arms! How many arms do we have?

ASK: *[Put the starfish and octopus cards next to each other or hold them up next to each other. Point to your eyes and to your ears when you ask the third question.]*

- Do the starfish and octopus look the same? (no!)
- How are these two animals different?
- Are we using our eyes or our ears to pay attention to the pictures? (eyes!)

EXPLAIN: We are paying attention by looking. We are looking closely at how pictures of things are the same or different.

[Show and discuss pictures of the remaining two animals, one at a time. Emphasize how the animals are different from others.]



**Option 1 continued**

We looked at pictures of four different animals that live in the sea. We paid attention to how the pictures were different.

I have some more pictures of the animals. Let's look at each picture and decide whether it matches one of the pictures on our table. Pictures that match show the same animal.

ACT: *[Place the row of cards, each facing up, toward the top of the table. Two more identical cards will be placed under each.]*

Place the small stack of remaining cards, facing down, in a more prominent place on the table or in your hand. Take one card from the stack of cards and hold it next to the picture of a different animal. Explain that the two pictures do not match. Example: "This is a starfish. This is a sea turtle. These pictures do not match. They are different animals."

Invite toddlers to point to the picture on the table that matches the picture in your hand. Emphasize that we are paying attention to the pictures when we decide whether they are the same or different. Example: "We are looking closely at each picture. We are paying attention to what we see in the pictures."

Turn over each remaining card, one at a time, and invite toddlers to tell which of the four cards on the table it matches. Repeat the process used with the first card, if appropriate.

Continue until all 12 cards are on the table if toddler interest and time permit.]

RECAP: You helped me play a game of matching cards that show pictures of animals that live in the sea. We looked at each picture and found another picture it matched. Things that match are the same. We paid attention by looking at each picture.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers practice paying attention to pictures of sea animals in a picture-comparison game.



Key Concepts

- Pay attention
- Looking
- Same
- Different



Materials Needed

*Sea animals matching cards (see Option 1)



Also Promotes

- Cognitive
- Communication/Language
- Social-Emotional

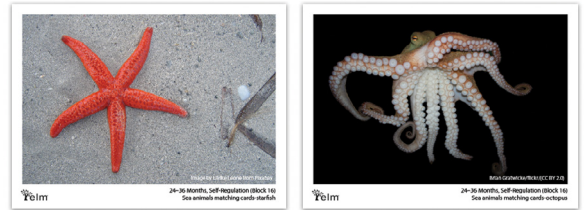
*Printables provided

Invite two toddlers to join you at a table to play a game with picture cards. Explain that the cards show pictures of animals that live in the sea. One at a time show each picture, say the name of the animal, and draw attention to some of its characteristics, such as the many arms of an octopus and color of the starfish.

Explain that in our game, we want to look at two pictures and figure out if the animals shown in the pictures are the same or different. We can pay attention to each picture by looking closely.

Display two cards that show the same sea animal and two cards that show different sea animals.

Point to each set of cards and ask the toddlers which set of cards show the same animal and which set of cards show different animals. Encourage toddlers to tell why two pictures are the same and why two pictures are different. Repeat and expand on their explanations. Example: "Jaxon said the pictures are different because they show different animals. One picture shows a starfish. One picture shows an octopus."



Shuffle all 12 cards and place the small stack of cards face down in front of the toddlers. Invite each toddler to pick up one card from the stack. Encourage the toddlers to look at the two cards and tell whether the pictures are the same or different. Invite the toddlers to explain how the pictures are the same or different. Repeat and expand on their explanation. Then put the two cards next to each other, facing up, elsewhere on the table.

Continue this process until there are no cards remaining in the small stack. There will be six sets of two cards facing up on the table. Invite the toddlers to take turns looking at each set of two cards and tell whether the pictures are the same or different. Provide turn-taking guidance for this review. Example: "Okay, now it is Jaxon's turn to tell whether the two pictures are the same or different."

Conclude the activity by briefly describing what happened. Emphasize the importance of looking closely at each picture. Looking is one way we pay attention.

 What to Look For—Options 1–2

The activity options extend the Block 15 puzzle activities that emphasize the importance of concentration in games and related tasks. The two activity options also complement the task of matching real and pictured items offered in the current block (Cognitive). The use of the same material (pictures) and focus on concentration skills provide a different emphasis in the current activity plan than offered in the Cognitive activity plan of matching pictures and real things. Option 2 intentionally emphasizes the concepts of same and different in an effort to promote a close look at each picture.

One of the challenges of facilitating an informal gathering is to notice how each child is responding to the activity. A related challenge is to ensure that each child has an opportunity to participate. It is easy for an activity to be dominated by a child who promptly and eagerly identifies the same picture on the table (Option 1) or says whether two cards are the same or different (Option 2). The review of paired cards at the end of Option 2 provides a small opportunity for each child to be an active contributor.

 More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

Extra support ■ Explain that another name for ocean is sea. An ocean has lots and lots of water. We cannot see the other side of an ocean. ■ Remove one set of identical cards, so there are eight (instead of 12) cards to look at. Eliminating one of the sea animals is an additional way to reduce the number of comparisons.

Enrichment ■ Option 2 could be offered as an independent activity to toddlers who are familiar with the process through participation in Option 2.



Interest Area

Materials needed: water table; toy sea animals—2 of each type; other sea life, such as (artificial) plants, a small amount of sand, large shells

Optional reading: *Pop-up Peekaboo: Under the Sea* by DK Publishing

Place the toy sea animals and other sea-life items in the sensory table with 1–2 inches of warm water. Invite several toddlers to play with the animals in the pretend sea. Encourage toddlers to find sea animals that are the same. They could place them together in different parts of the pretend sea. Also, encourage toddlers to put together pairs of animals that are different.



Family Child Care

Materials needed: *Go Fish* card game

In addition to offering Options 1 and 2 to toddlers, engage preschool-age and older children to play a game of *Go Fish*.



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Awareness of emotions

A toddler talks about different facial expressions, including what an expression can tell us.



Key Concepts

Paying attention

Feeling

Faces



Materials Needed

Baby Faces by Margaret Miller



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation

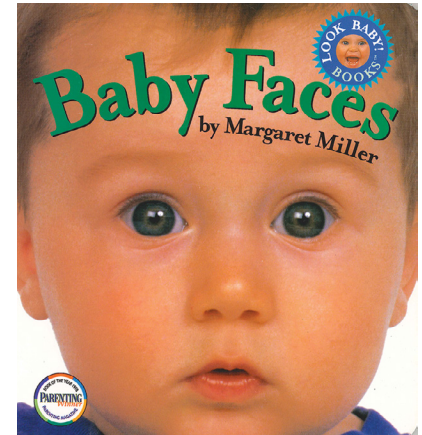
Communication/Language

BEGIN: [*Invite a toddler to look at pictures of different baby faces with you.*]

Our book has pictures of children's faces. Each face is different. Some of the faces are silly!

EXPLAIN: [*Show the book cover. Point to the baby's face and eyes when you describe them.*]

There is a picture of a baby's face on the cover of our book. Look at the baby's eyes. The eyes are wide open. I think the baby is paying attention to something.



- ASK:**
- What tells us the baby is paying attention to something?
[*Follow-up prompt, if needed: "What tells us the baby is looking closely at something?"*]
 - I think the baby is very interested in what he/she is looking at. What do you think the baby might be looking at?

ACT: Let's look at some more pictures of faces in our book.

[*Use the following strategies to explore each picture:*

- *Read the word associated with the expression. Repeat the word and invite the toddler to say the word with you. Accentuate the sounds in words that are fun to say, such as yucky, yum-yum, stinky, and yippee.*
- *Define words that may be unfamiliar to the toddler. Examples: "Yippee' means we feel excited or happy about something." "Sometimes we say 'uh-oh' when there is a problem or something bad happened."*
- *Invite the toddler to talk about how a baby's face tells us things. Example for 'yum-yum': "I think the baby ate something that tasted good. How does the baby's face tell us he ate something that tasted good?" (tongue is out, smile)*
- *Talk about a feeling associated with the facial expression, where appropriate. Example for "boo-hoo": "I think the baby is feeling sad."*

**Option 1 continued**

- *Invite the toddler to offer ideas about why a baby might be making a specific face. Example: "Why do you think the baby is feeling sad (is crying)?"*

RECAP: The faces in our book told us different things. The picture on the cover of our book told us the baby was paying attention to something that was very interesting to the baby. What did some other pictures tell us?

[Turn to 1–2 pictures that seemed to be of particular interest to the toddler. Invite the toddler to tell about the face.]

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Pictures of young children are of keen interest to most toddlers. Some facial expressions in this activity will be easier to “read” than others. Most toddlers will readily talk about the expressions associated with happy and sad feelings. The expression associated with “uh-oh” may be too vague for most toddlers to describe.

Look for opportunities to promote the idea that a face can tell us what someone is interested in (such as the gaze of concentration on the book cover) or may be feeling. Noticing what someone is looking at and how someone might be feeling are valuable parts of getting along well with others.

The pictures explored in this activity are part of a Block 16 activity plan for younger toddlers (12-24 months). The current activity for older toddlers differs from the earlier activity by offering explicit opportunities for a toddler to describe features of facial expressions and why a baby may be making the pictured expression. The current activity also includes brief discussion of what concentration (paying attention) can look like (eyes wide open!) and introduces the idea that facial expression can tell us important things.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Connect discussion of the picture on the book cover to the current block’s Self-Regulation activity on paying attention to pictures of sea animals. ■ A toddler who shows little or no interest in discussing facial expressions may enjoy talking about facial features. Example: “This baby has brown eyes. Where are your eyes? (pause) You have blue eyes!”

Enrichment ■ Talk about why it is helpful to notice what someone else is paying attention to (book cover picture). Example: Maybe we could play with someone who is looking closely at something we also are interested in.

24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Awareness of emotions

Toddlers talk about and make different facial expressions.



Key Concepts

Paying attention
Feeling
Faces



Materials Needed

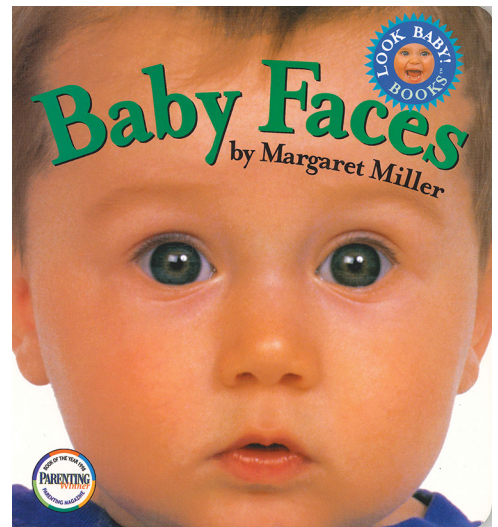
Baby Faces by Margaret Miller



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Physical/Health
Communication/Language

Invite several toddlers to look at pictures of different faces. Use strategies suggested in Option 1 to encourage discussion of facial expressions. For each picture, add an invitation for toddlers to try making a face that shows what the pictured baby's face tells us. Examples: "The child on the cover of our book is paying attention to something. Let's all show what we look like when we pay attention to something." "The baby in this picture is happy about something. Let's all show a happy face." Draw attention to features of the pictured face if support seems needed.



Toddlers are not expected to mimic the pictured face. Encourage toddlers to look at each other's facial expressions. Conclude the activity by explaining there are different ways a face can tell us about feeling happy, sad, yucky, etc. Ramon's happy face may be different than Hudson's happy face.

What to Look For—Option 2

Some of the expressions children are invited to make in this activity may be new experiences for toddlers. They may not have had chances to think carefully about the expression and to move the small muscles of their face in specific ways. Looking at the book's picture may be helpful, but should not be offered as a model for toddlers to imitate.

Making facial expressions provides an opportunity to promote the early beginnings of the idea that each of us has a unique face and facial expressions. There is not one way to look happy or sad. This idea is explored in greater detail in ELM's preschool-age activities, and is an important part of appreciating individual differences.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Describe a toddler's facial expression when you encourage others to look at it. Example: "Laurel is making a surprised face. Her eyes and mouth are open wide! This is how Laurel looks surprised."

Enrichment ■ Provide mirrors for toddlers to explore their own facial expressions.



Interest Area

Materials needed: *Baby Faces* by Margaret Miller, nonbreakable handheld mirrors

Provide the book and several handheld mirrors in a quiet part of the room for several toddlers to use in exploring different facial expressions. The book is offered as a reminder of some different expressions, not a model for toddlers to mimic. Toddlers also may welcome the opportunity to look at features of their face.



Family Child Care

Materials needed: see Interest Area

In addition to offering Options 1 and 2 with toddlers, consider pairing an older toddler and preschool-age child to make and compare different facial expressions as part of the Interest Area activity. Encourage the children to take turns looking at each other's expressions.



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

A toddler practices using his/her entire hand or all his/her fingers to manipulate puzzle pieces.



Key Concepts

In
Out
Lift
Pay attention
Remember
Space



Materials Needed

Puzzle with large pieces
(see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Cognitive

Be Prepared: Select a puzzle that will be of interest to the toddler and has large or chunky pieces, to provide practice in using an entire hand or all fingers to manipulate puzzle pieces. Do not use a puzzle with pegs (the focus of Option 2). In addition, select a puzzle that will be sufficiently challenging to assemble. Considerations include: number of pieces; color contrasts; whether there are pictures on the puzzle board under the puzzle pieces; and whether the puzzle has some characteristics of a jigsaw puzzle, such as pieces that represent part (rather than all) of a pictured item. Conduct the activity at a low table that is clear of all other materials.

Invite a toddler to join you at a table to work with a puzzle. Draw attention to the puzzle's topic. Put the assembled puzzle in front of the toddler, with you sitting or kneeling at the side. Encourage the toddler to look at the entire puzzle. What does it show? Talk with the toddler about the images and their locations in the puzzle.



Explain that the puzzle pieces are large. We can lift a piece out of the puzzle frame with our entire hand (or all fingers). Demonstrate and describe how to lift a piece from the puzzle board. Invite the toddler to grasp the piece you lift out with his/her entire hand or all his/her fingers (not hold it in palm of hand only).

Invite the toddler to take apart the puzzle, spending time to talk about each piece. Encourage the toddler to describe the piece. Example: Ask the toddler to point to a specific feature of the piece and/or to feel bumps on a piece, if available. Invite the toddler to feel around the edge of the puzzle piece and the space in the puzzle board. Remind the toddler that it is important to pay attention to what a puzzle piece looks like and try to remember where it goes in the puzzle.

Offer verbal support for lifting a piece from the puzzle frame. Example: "I think you can get the piece out of the puzzle if you use all of your fingers. Try putting your thumb on one side and your fingers on the other side." Describe how the toddler is using his/her hand/fingers to lift a puzzle piece. Encourage the toddler to put the removed pieces to a side of the puzzle.

After all pieces are removed, invite the toddler to put pieces in the puzzle board. Draw attention to a space in the puzzle board. Example: "Let's look at this space on the puzzle board. Do you think the space on our puzzle board



Option 1 continued

looks like the shoes or the jacket?" Also draw attention to features of puzzle pieces, such as image and/or shape. Give verbal clues combined with helpful gestures. Example: Rotate your hand when you suggest the toddler "turn the puzzle piece."

Encourage the toddler to remember where the piece was located in the puzzle. Describe how the toddler is using his/her hand/fingers to pick up and move the piece.

Recognize the toddler's progress and use of puzzle skills. Example: "You remembered where the shirt piece fits."

Conclude the session by acknowledging the toddler's efforts, including use of hand to hold and move the pieces. Invite the toddler to help you put the puzzle away.

24–36 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

A toddler practices using several fingers to manipulate puzzle pieces with pegs.



Key Concepts

In
Out
Lift
Pay attention
Remember
Space



Materials Needed

Peg puzzle (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Cognitive

Be Prepared: Select a puzzle that will be of interest to the toddler and has pegs to provide practice in using several fingers to manipulate a puzzle piece. In addition, select a puzzle that will be sufficiently challenging to assemble. See considerations in Option 1's Be Prepared section. Conduct the activity at a low table that is clear of all other materials.

Use the Option 1 strategies to invite a toddler to participate and to take apart and put together a puzzle with pegs. Begin by putting the assembled puzzle in front of the toddler, with you sitting or kneeling at the side. Encourage the toddler to look at the entire puzzle. What does it show? Talk with the toddler about the images and their locations in the puzzle.



Demonstrate and describe how to lift a piece out of the puzzle board with its peg. Invite the toddler to try holding the piece with its peg. Example: "I am holding the little knob with my fingers. Now you try it."

The following strategies suggested in Option 1 are important to include in the current activity:

- encouraging the toddler to describe each piece and feel around its edge as he/she removes it from the puzzle board
- reminding the toddler it is helpful to pay attention to each piece and try to remember where pieces go in the puzzle
- describing a toddler's efforts in using several fingers with the puzzle peg and offering verbal support when appropriate
- drawing attention to an open space when putting pieces in the puzzle board and asking whether the space looks like one of the pieces
- giving verbal guidance and a demonstration, if needed, on how to turn a piece so it fits in the puzzle board
- enthusiastically recognizing the toddler's progress and efforts

👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–2

The current plan offers fine motor practice in manipulating large puzzle pieces (Option 1) and peg puzzles (Option 2). It complements the Block 15 activity plan that focuses on self-regulation aspects of puzzle work. Puzzles are complex materials to manage, and it is worthwhile for a toddler to have repeated experiences that emphasize different aspects of puzzle work.

**Option 2 continued**

Take advantage of the one-to-one setting to tailor a toddler's experiences in this activity, beginning with your puzzle selection (see considerations in Option 1 Be Prepared). The amount of help you provide depends on the child's experiences and skill with puzzle work. Pace the activity to the toddler's existing skills. Acknowledge a good try! Success may be getting one puzzle piece in the puzzle board. Some toddlers may complete the puzzle quickly and be interested in more puzzles.

Remind a toddler to slow down if there's a tendency to rush, including skipping the opening segment when it is important to look at and discuss the whole puzzle. Look for opportunities to support a toddler's understanding that each piece has its own space, and to see similarities and differences in the size, shape, and images of puzzle pieces.

If it appears the toddler is losing interest or the task is too challenging, place one of the pieces in the puzzle board with the toddler's permission. This may lead to a collaborative approach to the puzzle work and provide additional demonstrations of how to approach a puzzle. Also, it is not necessary for all pieces to be removed from the puzzle. Limit the number of removed pieces if you anticipate the toddler is losing interest or finds the task too challenging.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

Extra support ■ If a puzzle piece is on the table upside down, encourage the toddler to rotate it so the piece is easier to look at in relation to openings in the puzzle frame. ■ Cover one or two spaces with your hand to help the toddler focus on fewer choices. "For now, let's just look at this space."

Enrichment ■ If the toddler has little or no difficulty putting pieces in the puzzle board, point to an opening that is clearly not appropriate for a piece in his/her hand. Ask whether the piece will fit in the opening. The toddler is likely to enjoy correcting your suggestion.

24–36 Months

Option 3 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

A toddler practices taking apart and putting together a chunky puzzle without pegs that focuses on size differences.



Key Concepts

Size



Materials Needed

Excellerations® Ducks
Chunky Puzzle (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Cognitive



Optional Reading

Five Little Ducks by Raffi

Be Prepared: Use a version of this puzzle that does not provide pictures under the puzzle piece. The puzzle has three sizes of ducks, as shown in the accompanying picture. The puzzle also offers differences in the direction a duck is facing. The puzzle used in this activity complements the five little ducks story used in the Communication/Language activity in this block.

Invite a toddler to work with a puzzle that has little ducks and a mother duck. Begin by talking with the toddler about the entire puzzle picture. Ask the toddler what he/she notices about the ducks in the puzzle. Emphasize the following:

- **Size:** Encourage the toddler to point to the big duck. Perhaps the toddler will notice the ducks are different sizes. Talk with the toddler about the size of the remaining ducks. Example: “Are they all the same size?” The element of size, at this age, is more important than correctly identifying colors.
- **Direction:** Ask the toddler which way the ducks are going. Are they all going the same way? Offer verbal support as needed. Example: “This duck is going this way. Are all the ducks going this way?”



Remind the toddler of how we lift up and move chunky pieces in a puzzle. Demonstrate and describe holding a puzzle piece with your thumb and index finger. Invite the toddler to do the same.

Watch as the toddler takes apart the puzzle and begins to put it together. Remind the toddler that the ducks are different sizes and they are not going the same way. Encourage the toddler to look at the bill of each duck to help determine the place. Positively acknowledge any trial and error approaches a toddler may use in putting pieces in the puzzle.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 3

The puzzle may seem simple but the differences in size and direction offer appropriate problems for a toddler to consider. At this age, toddlers may refer to size as they know in their families. Biggest may be called “Mommy” or “Daddy” and small size is often called “Baby.” Help the toddler see and feel the difference between the smallest (baby size) and the slightly larger ducks (big sister or big friend).

Option 3 continued

In the opening segment, a toddler may notice color differences across ducks. Positively acknowledge this recognition and then draw attention to differences in size and direction.

Some toddlers may grip puzzle pieces with their entire hand. Other toddlers may be able to hold the puzzle piece at an edge using only fingers and thumb.


More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ If a toddler attempts to place the medium duck in a smaller space, suggest he/she try a different place. You might point to the correct spot to help the toddler get started. ■ Arrange the ducks by size next to the puzzle board. ■ Illustrate difference in size by stacking two small pieces together. Compare a small duck with a medium duck. ■ Illustrate difference in direction by putting side by side two pieces of the same size that are facing different directions.

Enrichment ■ Invite the toddler to sing the “Five Little Ducks” song with you (used in the Communication/Language activity in this block).



Interest Area

Materials needed: *Hands Can* by Cheryl Willis Hudson, toddler pegboards, toy dishes and pans, play food, shape sorters and builders

Provide additional fine motor play materials for exploration. Pegboards engage the same muscles as the puzzles. Add props to a dramatic play area to foster fine motor skills, such as objects that go in a pan or bag. Shape sorters and fit-together building materials also support development of fine motor skills. Share the *Hands Can* book with several toddlers in a cozy sitting area.


Family Child Care

Materials needed: small toys, muffin pan, ping-pong balls, cardboard tubes, stacking cups, puzzles, nonslip placemat

Infants who are sitting with good balance will enjoy taking small toys out of a muffin pan. Mobile infants may enjoy putting items into the muffin pan, or dropping ping-pong balls into cardboard tubes. Two stacking cups create an easy puzzle for infants. Mobile infants will enjoy discovering which cup fits inside the other. If you are unsure of a toddler’s existing skill level with puzzles, first offer a simple puzzle. If a toddler has continuing interest, offer a puzzle with a bit more challenge.

When presenting puzzles to toddlers and preschool-age children, foster their ability to focus by removing unnecessary toys from the low surface or floor. It is often helpful to place a puzzle on a nonslip placemat to outline work space for one child and to prevent the puzzles from sliding.