



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about the adventures of an egg, with an opportunity to pretend a baby bird visits their room.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about the adventures of a hen and a big egg.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers pretend they are a baby animal that pushes out of an egg and explores your room.



Cognitive

Exploring Objects

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers put together basic parts of a Potato Head toy.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers put together basic and accessory parts of a Potato Head toy.



Self-Regulation

Paying Attention

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers help a caregiver identify picture cards that show the same image or same color.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers practice paying attention to whether picture cards show the same image or the same color as part of a matching game played with caregiver guidance.
- Option 3** (IG) Toddlers practice paying attention to whether picture cards show the same image or the same color as part of a matching game played with minimal caregiver guidance.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about good things we do with our hands.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers use their hands to create a gift of art for someone of their choosing.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers explore ways to change a ball of play dough with finger and hand actions.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers make a creation of their own design with dough and several open-ended tools.

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

Revision 1/16/20



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about the adventures of an egg, with an opportunity to pretend a baby bird visits their room.



Key Concepts

Somersault
Spotty
Pretend



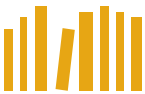
Materials Needed

Roly-Poly Egg by Kali Stileman



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Social-Emotional



Optional Reading

Hank Finds an Egg by
Rebecca Dudley

Revised: 6/30/2023

UPDATE: The *Roly-Poly Egg* book featured in Option 1 may be challenging to secure. Option 2 is an alternative activity that also uses an egg theme to promote language skills.

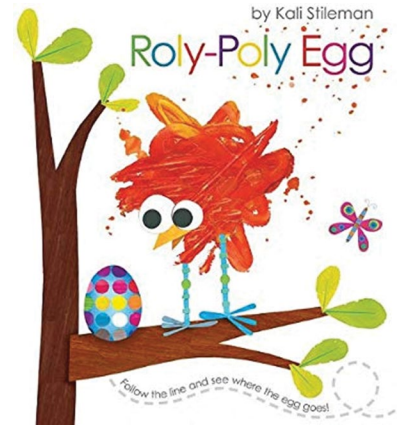
Invite 3–5 toddlers to share a book about an egg that falls out of its nest and rolls around and around.

Open the session by showing the book cover and talking with toddlers about what we see. Draw attention to the mother bird and the egg. Emphasize that the egg has many spots. The spots are different colors. Explain the mother bird and egg are on the branch of a tree. Read the title of the book. Explain that short and round things are sometimes called “roly-poly.”

Read book text and use the following strategies to share the book:

- Explain that the egg is called spotty because it has a lot of spots.
- Move your finger along the line on each page as you describe the egg’s movements.
- Describe a somersault and use your finger to draw attention to how the line on the corresponding page makes a circle (above the giraffe).
- Point to aspects of key pictures related to the story, including each of the animals the egg encounters and how animals used parts of their body with the egg. Examples: a crocodile tried to catch the egg with its open mouth and the elephant caught (“slurped up”) the egg with its trunk.
- Explain that “crack, crack, crack” are sounds the eggshell made when the baby bird was pushing its way out of the egg.
- Explain that the mother bird thought the egg and the baby bird inside the egg were great (“perfect in every way”).
- Acknowledge and expand on toddlers’ comments and pointing.

At the end of the book sharing, invite toddlers to pretend the baby bird visited our room. What would we want to show the baby bird in our room? How might the baby bird get to the parts of our room we want to show? Will we carry the bird in our hands or put the bird on our shoulder as we walk around? Or will the baby bird fly from place to place?



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

The book's colorful illustrations and involvement of different animals in the egg's adventures will appeal to toddlers. Be attentive to words or concepts a toddler may not know. In addition to those highlighted in the activity plan, toddlers may benefit from a brief explanation of munch, meadow, and maybe some of the animals.

Some toddlers may express concern through a facial expression or comment that a zebra kicked the egg when it rolled into its area. Explain that the zebra was busy eating breakfast with another zebra and probably did not look up to see the egg. The zebras were paying attention to their breakfast, not the egg. Point out that other animal friends (monkeys) passed the egg around carefully. Show and describe the pertinent picture (toward the end of the story).

The final segment of the session is an opportunity for toddlers to extend the book's theme of the roly-poly egg's movements (from animal to animal) to a pretend visit to your room. Toddlers may have different ideas about how the bird gets around in the room. Maybe one toddler carries the bird and another toddler puts the bird on his/her shoulder. Pretend play is one way toddlers express their understanding of the world, including their room at the child development center. At this age, toddlers are not expected to tell a logical story or create a complete visit plan, with a beginning, middle, and end. The intent is to foster imaginative thinking and talk.

If a toddler does not engage in pretend play after sharing the book, encourage him/her to join you in moving like a bird. Example: "Let's pretend to be a little bird flying in our room. We can open our wings like this." Demonstrate opening your arms as wings. Ask the toddler "Where should we fly?" If the toddler begins to pretend, follow his/her lead. If the toddler does not offer a suggestion, propose an idea, such as flying to a center of interest to the toddler.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Explain that the words "roly" and "poly" sound alike. ■ When you describe the branch of a tree on the book cover, remind toddlers that we know how to pretend to be a tree with branches (Self-Regulation, Block 22). ■ When you point out the spots on the egg, remind toddlers of spots on the puppy and mother dog in the book *Where's Spot?* (Communication/Language, Block 21) and, if available, spots on the speckled frogs and log in *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* (Communication/Language, Block 20). Someone in the gathering may be wearing a clothing item with spots. ■ Use a doll to demonstrate a forward somersault.

Enrichment ■ Accentuate the beginning sounds of animal names, such as Madison Monkey, Emma Elephant, and Christopher Crocodile. Explain that the two words in each animal's name start the same way, such as the /m/ sound in Madison Monkey. ■ If "excited" is a topic of recent discussion in your room, emphasize how the mother bird showed her excitement by jumping up and down after laying an egg.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about the adventures of a hen and a big egg.



Key Concepts

Big
Small
Cart
Pushing
Crack
Loud
Quiet



Materials Needed

Big Egg by Molly Coxé



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Social-Emotional

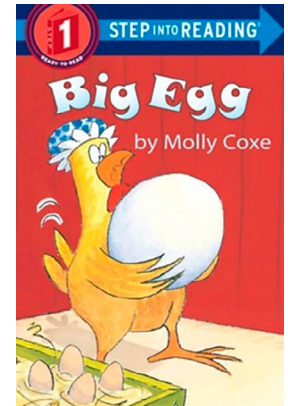
Revised: 6/30/2023

Invite 3–5 toddlers to share a book about a hen and big egg.

Open the gathering by showing the book cover and talking with toddlers about what we see. Draw attention to the big egg. Compare the big egg to the size of the small eggs shown at the bottom of the book cover. Ask toddlers whether they think it is easy for the hen to hold and walk with the big egg in her arms and hands. Point to the title of the book as you read it.

Read the book text and use the following strategies to help children engage in the story:

- Point to and invite toddlers to name smaller images on each page, such as the line of kittens moving behind the cat.
- Acknowledge and expand on toddlers' comments and pointing.
- When the hen says the big egg is not hers, ask toddlers why the hen thinks the big egg is not her egg. Point out that the big egg is the only big egg. There is one big egg. The rest of the hen's eggs are small.
- Talk with toddlers about what is inside the eggs (little chicks that will grow up to become chickens).
- In the early pages of the book, briefly explain the focus of the story: the hen takes the big egg in a cart to show other animals. The hen wants to find out if the big egg belongs to another animal. Draw attention to the hen pushing the cart to see other animals.
- When the hen visits the fox, explain in your own words that the fox may be trying to fool the hen ("fibbing" or not telling the truth) when it says the big egg is his. The fox may want to keep the big egg and the small eggs so it can eat the chicks.
- Point out how the animal in the big egg made a loud noise when it cracked out of its egg ("squawk"). The animals in the small eggs made a quiet sound ("peep, peep"). Invite toddlers to join you in saying a loud "squawk" and a quiet "peep peep."
- Talk with toddlers about how the foxes want to eat the baby chicks. Point out the forks and knives in their hands. Ask toddlers who in our story was scared by the loud noise coming from the big egg (foxes).
- Ask toddlers why the hen told her chicks to "run!" (to stay away from the foxes).



**Option 2 continued**

- End the session by briefly reviewing any part of the story that may have been confusing to some toddlers (such as the fox saying the big egg belonged to him) or talking about why the hen visited so many animals with her big egg.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Watch and use the toddlers' interest in the pictures and story, not the small number of words on each page, as a guide to your pace with the book. Toddlers may like to pause on each or selected pages to look at and talk about details of a picture. Some may want to return to pages of special interest after they learn how the story ends.

Pay attention to toddlers' understanding of the contrasting concepts in this story: big and small, loud and quiet. Talk about prior classroom experiences or objects in your room to emphasize the differences. A toddler may welcome an invitation to point to big and small items in your room, for example.

Look for opportunities to say more about the concepts of pushing and crack, which are emphasized again in Option 3 of this activity plan. Toddlers may want to talk about or show how they push a cart in your room, for example.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Point to and talk about the cart the hen uses to carry the big egg. Draw attention to its wheels. Ask toddlers if their family uses a cart at a store. Do they ever ride in a cart or help push a cart at a store? ■ Describe what happens when an egg cracks: the egg breaks open and what is inside the egg (like a little chick) comes out. ■ Some toddlers may wonder about the big chick because it does not look like a chick or chicken. Some people who have read the book think it looks like a goose. Remind toddlers that the hen loves all of her chicks, big and small (show and describe last page).

Enrichment ■ In an early picture in the book, draw attention to how the hen put straw in the cart so the big egg would be comfortable and maybe not bounce around a lot when the hen pushed the big egg in the cart. ■ Invite toddlers to join you in making the noise of some of the animals the hen visits, such as the cat's "meow," the dog's "bark," and the pig's "oink oink." ■ If you talk with toddlers about how it may be difficult for the hen to carry the big egg, point out how the hen is standing (legs apart) on the cover of the book. People often stand like this when they are carrying something very heavy. A child may wish to demonstrate.

24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

Toddlers pretend they are a baby animal that pushes out of an egg and explores your room.



Key Concepts

Pretend
Pushing



Materials Needed

Big Egg by Molly Coxé

or

Roly-Poly Egg by Kali Stileman

*4 pictures as shown



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health
Self-Regulation

*Printables provided



Optional Reading

Are You My Mother? by P. D. Eastman

Revised: 6/30/2023

Be Prepared: This activity is intended for toddlers who participated in Options 1 or 2 or are familiar with the idea that some animals begin their life in an egg. Use the book you shared with toddlers previously (see Materials Needed) or select one of the books to remind children that a bird and some other animals begin their life in an egg. The *Roly-Poly Egg* book may be challenging to secure. This Option is a slight revision of an activity offered as Option 2 in the original version of the plan.

Invite 3–5 toddlers to join you to pretend we are an animal that comes out of an egg. Display one of the book covers and remind toddlers that a bird and some other animals begin their life inside an egg. Turn to and describe the book's picture of an egg (or eggs) breaking open.

Show the provided picture of a small bird. Explain this is a picture of a real bird that started its life in an egg. Then explain that other kinds of animals begin their life in an egg. Show provided pictures of a fish and a turtle, one at a time. Invite toddlers to say the name of each. Offer a brief description of each animal as appropriate.

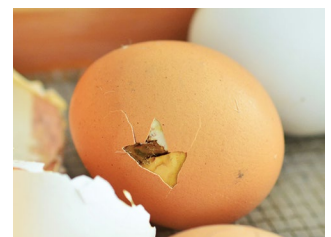
Show the provided picture of an egg that is cracking open. Point to the crack and ask toddlers what is happening to the egg. Expand on their comments. Emphasize that something living in the egg is pushing on the sides of the egg and is about to come out. Use your arms to pretend you are a small animal pushing your way out of the egg. Invite toddlers to do the same.

Invite toddlers to pretend they are a small animal in the egg. Explain that we can be whatever animal we would like to be. Each of us can be a different animal. We could be a little bird or a fish or a turtle or some other animal. It is our choice.

Encourage toddlers to kneel on the floor with their heads down and arms folded, as if they are inside an egg. Example: "Let's pretend our whole body is inside your pretend egg. Close your eyes if you like." Demonstrate the pose.

Explain that now our pretend animal is pushing its way out of the egg. Again demonstrate pushing with your arms.

Invite toddlers to say what animal they are pretending to be. Repeat the animal's name and show excitement for the toddler's decision, even if all toddlers opt to be the same animal.





Option 3 continued

Explain that each of us can make up a little story about what our pretend animal does. Offer a simple story example that includes a description and/or demonstration of how your animal moves around. Example: A fish swimming to a quiet part of your room for a nap. The fish is tired from working hard to come out of the egg. Encourage interested toddlers to tell a story about their animal. How will it move around? Where will it go or what will it do?

Repeat the experience if time and toddler interest permit. Conclude the session by describing toddlers' pretend animals and their actions.

What to Look For—Option 3

Some toddlers will enjoy pretending and others will choose to observe. If a toddler wants to observe during the first telling of a story, he/she may wish to participate if you repeat the process. A toddler also may want to show and tell about his/her pretend animal in a one-to-one exchange with you later. The activity involves listening, waiting, speaking, and physical movement.

Language is an important part of the activity. Encourage toddlers to describe what they are doing. Repeat and expand upon toddlers' comments. Example: "Mina pretended to be a duck in an egg. David pretended to be a shark in an egg. Diego was a pretend whale in an egg."

If it is too challenging for toddlers to pretend they are different animals, suggest that all of us can pretend to be the same animal. Example: "Ruby wants us all to pretend we are fish inside our eggs." Invite toddlers to help you make up a story about the fish. Do they swim together around the room or swim to different parts of the room? Do the fish swim fast or slow?

Toddlers are not expected to know what animals truly hatch from eggs. It is not important to correct a child's response if a toddler opts to be an animal that does not begin life in an egg.

The activity supports self-regulation by encouraging toddlers to wait for their turn in talking about and showing their pretend animal. Offer verbal guidance by announcing turns and indicating whose turn will be next.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Invite a toddler to sit next to you for support. ■ Acknowledge a toddler's efforts to wait for a turn to talk about his/her pretend animal.

Enrichment ■ When toddlers are pretending to be inside an egg, encourage them to pretend their egg is wiggling. Demonstrate wiggling while in an "egg" position. Explain that our pretend animal is moving around in the egg. It wants to get out of the egg. ■ Introduce the word hatch as part of your description of a small animal breaking out of an egg.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: toy fish and turtle, books of interest to toddlers, people and animal figures, dollhouse, novel materials (such as finger puppets) that promote pretend actions

Promote pretend play by rotating props in dramatic play areas. Providing a toy fish and turtle may prompt some toddlers to extend Option 3. To prevent an overabundance of play materials, be sure to put one item away for every item added. Display books with subjects of interest to the toddlers. Arrange baskets of books in the building area.

Place people and animal figures in a sensory table. Place novel items near the dollhouse, such as finger puppets or small farm animals.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: simple toys such as blocks, animal figures, dollhouse, people figures

Preschool-age children may enjoy participating in Option 3. Children's storytelling and imaginative play can be fostered in a mixed-age setting by providing simple toys that children can use in different ways, such as materials listed above. A few well-chosen toys are a better choice than an overabundance of play items. Stay close during imaginative play to observe, assist when needed, and facilitate turn taking.

Young children often act out stories of their own making that involve running, climbing, and shouting. Provide time and materials for preschool-age children and toddlers to talk about their imaginative play

Preschool-age and older children often enjoy telling stories structured by an adult. Example: "One day a group of friends got on a train and went to _____ (children respond). When they got there it was raining, so the friends _____(children respond)." Continue for a minute. End the story by saying the children all returned home.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers put together basic parts of a Potato Head toy.



Key Concepts

Part

Feet

Face

Top

Bottom



Materials Needed

Potato Head toys—1 per toddler and caregiver (see Be Prepared)

Place mats—1 per toddler and caregiver



Also Promotes

Physical/Health

Communication/Language

Be Prepared: For each toddler, provide basic parts of a Mr. and/or Mrs. Potato Head toy: head, feet, arms, mouth, eyes, ears, and nose. (Other parts are offered in Option 2.) Place unassembled parts of one toy on a place mat at a low table for each toddler. Put together the basic parts of one Potato Head toy for your use during the activity. Place your toy on a place mat you use during the activity.

BEGIN: *[Invite 2–4 toddlers to play with a Potato Head toy.]*

EXPLAIN: Our toy is like a puzzle. We can put the parts together and make our toy look like a potato person. Look at my Potato Head toy. There are different ways to use the parts of our toy. This is how I put together the parts.

[Draw attention to your assembled toy.]

Let's look at the parts of our Potato Head toy. Each of us has the head of our toy.

[Encourage toddlers to hold up or point to the head part of their toy. Continue this process for each toy part on a place mat. Invite toddlers to say the name of the part. Example: Point to an arm on your assembled toy, ask toddlers the name of this part, and invite toddlers to hold up or point to an arm part for their toy. Emphasize that there are two arms.]

Demonstrate and describe how a part can be put on the Potato Head. Draw attention to the holes where a part can be affixed. Encourage toddlers to feel a hole on their toy.]

ACT: Let's put the feet on our Potato Head. The feet go on the bottom of our toy head. The feet help the rest of the toy to stand up.

[Lead toddlers in putting feet on their toy head. Provide verbal support or hands-on assistance as appropriate.]

The face is on the top of our Potato Head. What parts should we put on Potato Head's face?



**Option 1 continued**

[Point to the location of the toy's face. Encourage toddlers to affix mouth, eyes, nose, and ears in any order each toddler prefers. Again, provide verbal or hands-on assistance as appropriate, ensuring each toddler is in charge of putting together his/her toy.]

What parts do we have left on our place mat? (arms) Where do arms go on our Potato Head toy?

[Provide support for affixing arms as appropriate. Encourage toddlers to place arms facing any direction they wish on the side of the toy.]

Acknowledge both verbal and nonverbal communication, such as a toddler holding the potato figure toward you. Example: "You are showing me your potato man with a red nose."]

RECAP: Each of us put together a Potato Head toy. What parts did we put on our toy?

[Lead toddlers in pointing to and saying the name of each part.]

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Fit-together toys offer useful ways for toddlers to explore characteristics of objects and solve problems about how they can go together. Fit-together toys also promote fine motor skills. The most recent ELM Curriculum activity with a fit-together material is Block 21. The toy used in the current activity offers unique challenges compared to objects featured in prior activities. The Potato Head toy is akin to a three-dimensional puzzle. In addition to providing practice in connecting toy parts, the activity helps toddlers identify and name body parts.

Some toddlers who are familiar with a Potato Head toy may promptly begin attaching parts and have little or no interest in discussing body parts as suggested in the opening segment of the activity. If this occurs, consider focusing your initial attention on toddlers in the gathering who may benefit from naming and exploring the toy's parts, including how to attach them to the head.

Look for opportunities to emphasize the position of various body parts as you describe toddlers' efforts. Example: As toddlers are affixing eyes, nose, and ears, comment on how eyes go above the nose. The mouth is below the nose.

You may see some toddlers put feet and eyes on the potato shape and believe the toy is complete. Give each toddler support for their existing interest and skills. If a toddler puts a few parts in the holes and moves to another area, offer the activity again at a later point in a one-to-one arrangement.

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

Extra support ■ Provide 2–3 basic parts at a time rather than putting all basic parts on a toddler’s place mat. ■ Pass around your assembled toy in the opening segment when you explain the parts can be put together. ■ Explain that each of our toy parts are on a place mat so we can keep them together in one place. ■ In the review of each toy part, encourage toddlers to point to the corresponding part on their body. Example: “Let’s point to our own eyes.” ■ Offer just enough assistance for a toddler to be successful in attaching a part while also engaging in problem-solving with parts.

Enrichment ■ Invite a toddler to take apart his/her assembled toy, naming each body part as it is removed from the head.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers put together basic and accessory parts of a Potato Head toy.



Key Concepts

Part
Above
Below



Materials Needed

Potato Head toys—1 per toddler and caregiver (see Be Prepared)
Place mats—1 per toddler and caregiver



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Froggy Gets Dressed by Jonathan London
Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? by Nancy White Carlstrom

Revised: 6/30/2023

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who readily put together a Potato Head toy in Option 1 or a similar activity. For each toddler, provide basic parts of a Mr. and/or Mrs. Potato Head as offered in Option 1 plus a separate group of accessories, such as glasses, hat, and similar items. You also may wish to provide a mustache and different types of mouths. Place unassembled parts of one toy on each toddler's place mat in two separate groups: basic and accessory. Use a low table. Put together the basic parts of one Potato Head toy for your use during the activity. Put accessories for your toy in a separate group on your place mat. Place your assembled toy on a place mat you use during the activity.

Invite 2–4 toddlers to play with a Potato Head toy at a low table. Explain that each toddler has two groups of parts on their place mat. Invite toddlers to put together their Potato Head toy as they wish, using items in the collection of basic parts on their place mat. Use Option 1 strategies, such as naming body parts, as appropriate. As toddlers put together their toy, comment on the relative position of various parts, such as a mouth goes below the nose and the eyes go above the nose.

After toddlers have attached basic parts to their toy, draw attention to the second collection of parts on their place mat. Provide an orientation to the additional parts by encouraging toddlers to name each accessory part and tell where the part would go on their toy.

While toddlers are attaching accessory parts to their toy, ask if their Potato Head person is getting ready to go somewhere. Some toddlers may have ideas, such as “He is going to get food” or “Mr. Potato is going to play at the park.” Talk with toddlers about their ideas. Consider prompting toddlers to incorporate reasons for certain accessories, such as a hat or glasses, into their plans for the Potato Head toy's outing.



👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

A toddler may not affix all basic parts to his/her toy. Acknowledge an unused part(s) by emphasizing its function on a body. Example: “I see that you did not put ears on your Potato Head. How will your Potato Head hear things?” Accept a toddler's decision about what to affix to his/her Potato Head toy. A toddler also may opt to not use all accessory items.



Option 2 continued

If a toddler reverses the order of features or purposely places parts in the “wrong” place, it may be an expression of toddler humor. Once a toddler has mastered appropriate locations of parts on the figure, he/she may find it humorous to mix up the parts.

Some toddlers may enjoy talking further with you about what their figure is going to do.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Place only basic parts on each toddler’s place mat at the beginning of the activity. Provide the accessory parts for each toddler’s Potato Head after basic parts have been attached to the head. ■ Provide some assistance if a toddler needs help making glasses or other accessories stay on the toy.

Enrichment ■ Instead of giving each toddler the parts for his/her Potato Head toy, put all available parts in distinct groups (eyes, arms, noses, etc.) in the middle of the table.

Interest Area

Materials Needed: fit-together toys

Rotate manipulative materials so toddlers may practice putting together and taking apart different types of toys. Offer some materials on a low surface and other materials on the floor. Reflect on toddlers’ interests and skills to provide two choices of materials each day. Example: Some toddlers may enjoy star builders, whereas others are interested in bristle blocks.

Family Child Care

Materials Needed: manipulative objects to take apart, scarf, box, container with top, knob puzzles, Duplo® blocks, magnetic tiles

Add to the Interest Area materials some items that are likely to be of interest to preschool-age children, such as magnetic tiles, building shapes, and manipulative materials that are smaller and more complex than items appropriate for toddlers. Both toddlers and younger preschool-age children may enjoy knob puzzles and Duplo blocks.

Infants may enjoy pulling a scarf through a hole in a box or taking the top off a clear container to get ahold of a toy. Encourage mobile infants to pull infant snap-lock beads apart as you put them back together.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers help a caregiver identify picture cards that show the same image or same color.



Key Concepts

- Same
- Different
- Pay attention
- Look
- Match



Materials Needed

*Egg and bird picture cards (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

- Cognitive
- Communication/Language

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: Use one set of the egg and bird picture cards provided for this activity. There are six cards in a set. Three cards show an egg in one of three colors (red, blue, yellow) and three cards show a small bird in one of the same three colors. Offer the activity at a low table.

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

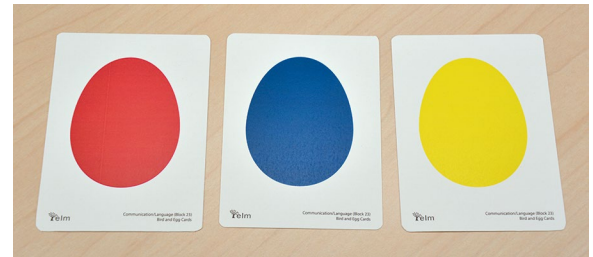
EXPLAIN: *[Display the three cards that show an egg, one at a time. Put the three cards in a row in front of toddlers.]*

Some of our cards show an egg. Here is an egg. Here is an egg. And here is another egg.

Each of our cards shows the same thing. The cards show an egg.

ASK: How are our pictures different?

[Follow-up prompt, if needed: “Are the colors of our pictures the same or different?”]



EXPLAIN: Our pictures of an egg are in different colors. There is a red egg, a blue egg, and a yellow egg.

[Put the three cards showing an egg on your lap. Then display the three cards that show a bird, one at a time. Put the three cards in a row in front of toddlers.]

Some of our cards show a small bird. Here is a bird. Here is a bird. And here is another bird.

Each of the cards in front of us shows the same thing. The cards show a small bird. The bird is sitting on the branch of a tree.



ASK: What is different about the pictures we are looking at?

[Follow-up prompt, if needed: “Are the colors of our pictures the same or different?”]

**Option 1 continued**

EXPLAIN: Our pictures of a bird are in different colors. There is a red bird, a blue bird, and a yellow bird.

I am going to mix up our cards. Then I am going to try to put together the pictures of an egg and put together the pictures of a bird. I am going to pay attention to whether a picture shows a bird or shows an egg. I am not going to pay attention to the color of the picture.

Please watch to make sure I get all of the egg pictures together and all of the bird pictures together.

ACT: *[Place the stack of six shuffled cards face down in front of you. Use the following approach to form two groups of cards on the table: a group of egg pictures and a group of bird pictures:*

- *Take the top card from the stack, put it on the table, and invite toddlers to say whether it is a picture of an egg or a picture of a bird. Restate the accurate name.*
- *Then take the next card from the stack, show the card to toddlers, and ask whether the card shows a picture of an egg or a bird.*
- *Place the card next to the existing card on the table or begin another group of cards. Explain your action. Examples:*
 - *"I am putting this picture of an egg with the other picture of an egg. The pictures show the same thing. The two pictures match."*
 - *"Pictures of a bird and an egg do not go together. The pictures are different. The pictures do not match."*
- *Continue this process with two more cards. Remember to ask toddlers to say the name of each picture. Explain your action with each card. Emphasize how pictures are the same or different.*

Put the fifth or sixth card you take from the pile in the wrong group without explanation. Wait for toddlers to notice your error. If the error is not identified by a toddler(s), ask "Did I put this picture where it belongs?" "Where does the card belong? Why?"

EXPLAIN: Now please help me look at the cards a different way. I want to put together cards that are the same color. Remember, our cards show a picture in different colors. Some of our pictures are red, some of our pictures are blue, and some of our pictures are yellow.

I will look at the color of a picture. Then I will put the picture with another picture that shows the same color. I will not pay attention to whether the picture shows an egg or shows a bird.

ACT: I am going to mix up our cards and then look at the color of each picture.

[Shuffle the cards and place the stack of six cards in front of you, face down. Take one card at a time from the top of the stack and use procedures described above for putting together cards of the same color. There will be two cards in each of three small groups: red, blue, yellow.

For the second and each subsequent card, invite toddlers to say where the card goes on the table. Emphasize whether colors are the same or different.]

**Option 1 continued**

RECAP: We used our cards to find things that were the same. This is called a match. First we paid attention to whether a picture was an egg or a bird. We put together pictures that were the same. Did we pay attention to the color of a picture when we put together pictures of an egg and pictures of a bird?

Then we looked at the color of a picture. We put together pictures that were the same color. Did we pay attention to whether a picture was a bird or an egg when we put together pictures of the same color?



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers practice paying attention to whether picture cards show the same image or the same color as part of a matching game played with caregiver guidance.



Key Concepts

- Same
- Different
- Pay attention
- Look
- Match



Materials Needed

*Egg and bird picture cards—1 set per toddler (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

- Cognitive
- Physical/Health
- Communication/Language

*Printables provided

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who participated in Option 1 or are familiar with how to play a matching game with cards. Limit the activity to 2–3 toddlers at a time so you can provide individualized support. The egg and bird picture cards for this activity are described in the Be Prepared section of Option 1. There are six cards in one set.

Invite 2–3 toddlers to play a matching game. Carefully show and describe the cards, focusing first on image (egg or bird) and then color, as suggested in Option 1. Emphasize how cards are the same and how cards are different. Remind toddlers that cards match when they show the same thing.

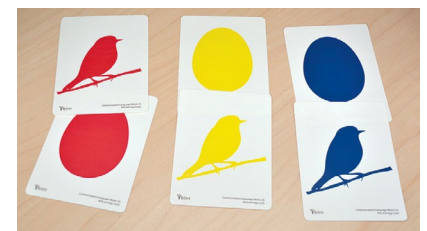
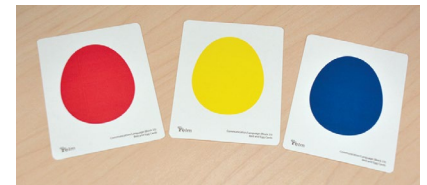
Explain that we will play our matching game two times. First we will put together cards that show the same picture. Give each toddler a stack of the six cards, face down. Invite toddlers to take one card at a time from their own pile of cards and put together cards that show the same thing. Pictures of an egg go together. Pictures of a bird go together. Remind toddlers that we are looking at the pictures on each card. We are not paying attention to color.

After each toddler has matched cards by picture, invite toddlers to put their cards in a pile in front of them, face down. Provide hands-on assistance in creating piles as needed. The cards do not need to be shuffled.

Explain that we will now try to match cards by color. Remind toddlers of the three colors by pointing to and naming each of the colors. Invite toddlers to take one card at a time from their own pile of cards and put together cards that show the same color. Remind toddlers that this time we are looking at the color of a picture. We are not paying attention to whether our card shows an egg or a bird.

In each game round, provide verbal support as appropriate. Offer reminders that we are putting together cards that show the same picture or the same color. Use questions, such as “You’re looking at a picture of a bird. Does the picture of a bird go with another picture of a bird or with a picture of an egg?” Point out mismatches. Example: “Jadon, I see a picture of a bird next to a picture of an egg. Do the pictures show the same thing or different things?” Avoid telling a toddler where to put a card.

Conclude the session by encouraging toddlers to describe what they did. Remind toddlers that we paid attention by looking carefully.





24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Concentration

Toddlers practice paying attention to whether picture cards show the same image or the same color as part of a matching game played with minimal caregiver guidance.



Key Concepts

Same
Different
Match



Materials Needed

*Egg and bird picture cards—1 set per toddler (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health
Communication/Language

*Printables provided

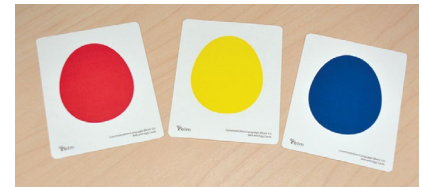
Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who readily participated in Option 2. Limit the activity to five or fewer toddlers so you can provide guidance as needed. Although the activity emphasizes minimal caregiver assistance, it is important for each toddler to experience success in some aspect of a matching game. The egg and bird picture cards for this activity are described in the Be Prepared section of Option 1. There are six cards in one set.

Invite up to five toddlers to play a matching game. Show and encourage toddlers to describe the cards, focusing first on image (egg or bird) and then color, as suggested in Option 1. Expand toddlers' descriptions by emphasizing how cards are the same and how cards are different. Remind toddlers that in a matching game we put together cards that are the same.

Explain that we will play two matching games. First we will match by the picture. We will put together cards that show an egg and put together cards that show a bird. Then we will match by color. We will put together cards that show the same color. Explain that you will watch and help if someone asks for help. You also will help each toddler get ready for the second matching game (focused on color). Urge toddlers to take their time. We can finish a matching game at different times. We are not in a race.

Provide each toddler with a set of the six cards in a stack, face down. Encourage toddlers to begin the first matching game (putting together eggs and birds).

Serve as an attentive observer. When a toddler is done matching cards by image, quietly help him/her put the cards into a stack in front of him/her, face down. Remind the toddler that now he/she is to put together cards that show the same color. Avoid drawing attention to a toddler's completion of a matching game.



👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–3

Experiences in sorting and matching different types of items are offered as Cognitive activities in the ELM Curriculum. Sorting and matching tasks involve concentration skills that also receive focused support in Self-Regulation activities. For example, support for paying close attention to characteristics of different pictures was offered in Block 16 (Self-Regulation).



A self-regulation challenge of the current activity is to focus on one of two features of a picture at one time. See Extra Support tips for ideas of how to help a toddler be successful with this challenge.

If a toddler finds it too challenging to focus on one feature (image or color) of a picture card in Option 2, offer the set of picture cards used in Block 16's Self-Regulation activity (sea animals) or a set of picture cards that differ by one feature only. Providing an opportunity for success with a less challenging set of cards is far better than allowing a toddler to think that he/she cannot manage and also enjoy a matching game with picture cards.

Option 3 calls for each toddler to be on his/her own timeline; each toddler begins a second matching game (by color) when the first matching game (by image) is done. Most likely your help will be needed in putting cards in a stack in the transition from the first to the second matching game. It is best if you become aware of this transition by watching each toddler's work and not encouraging toddlers to announce when they are done with one game and ready for another. Announcements of completion may distract other toddlers from concentrating on the cards and also might foster inappropriate competition.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

Extra support ■ When you present the cards showing an egg and a bird, remind toddlers of our *Roly-Poly Egg* book (Communication/Language, current block). ■ Eliminate one of the colors so there are four rather than six cards in a set. ■ Incorporate parts of Option 1 into Option 2 if toddlers need more demonstration and description of the matching process. ■ Omit the second matching game (by color) in Option 2 if you anticipate it will be too challenging. ■ Offer Option 2 in a one-to-one arrangement.

Enrichment ■ Introduce the concept of a group by explaining that we are making groups of cards that show the same thing. Example: "We have a group of cards that show an egg. We have a group of cards that show a bird."

Interest Area

Materials Needed: see activity description

Set out several sets of materials for toddlers to sort and match. Examples: smaller and larger cardboard blocks, toy cars and toy trucks, toy plates and toy cups. You may wish to provide placemats to designate areas for putting together items that are the same. Describe and demonstrate how to sort and match the items. Toddlers may have their own ideas about what items go together. Talk with toddlers about their ideas and actions.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Preschool-age children may enjoy participating in any of the activity options. Offer a mobile infant several small, age-appropriate toys to hold and manipulate while watching toddlers participate in the activity options.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about good things we do with our hands.



Key Concepts

Thumb
Fingers



Materials Needed

Hands Are Not for Hitting
(Board Book) by Martine Agassi



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language

BEGIN: [*Invite 3–5 toddlers to join you in reading a book about our hands.*]

Let's all look at one of our hands. Each of our hands has a thumb and fingers.

[*Hold up one of your hands for toddlers to see. Point to your thumb and then your fingers.*]

Let's all hold up our thumbs. Sometimes we call this "thumbs up."

[*Lead toddlers in holding upright each thumb, with fingers pulled toward the palm of the hand.*]

Now let's hold up our hand so we can see our thumb and all of our fingers.

[*Lead toddlers in holding up their hands.*]

EXPLAIN: [*Show book cover. Point to the pictured boy's hands. Point to the book title when you read it.*]

The boy on the cover of our book is having fun with his hands! Look at his big smile.

Our book reminds us of many things we do with our hands.

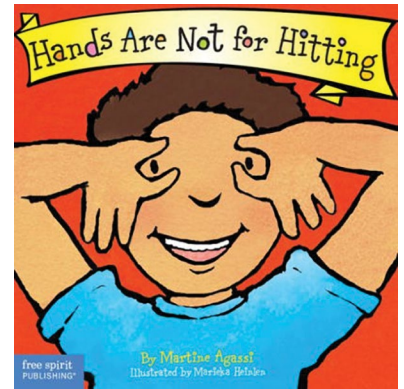
Our book also reminds us of something we should not do with our hands. Our book is called *Hands Are Not for Hitting*.

ASK: Why is it wrong to hit someone?

[*Engage toddlers in brief discussion of how someone feels when he/she is hit. Also talk about what the person who does the hitting might feel after hitting someone.*]

ACT: Our book can help us talk about how we use our hands in good ways.

[*Help toddlers connect the book's text and pictures to their own experiences. Examples: Invite toddlers to talk about and show how we can use our hands to say "hello." Ask toddlers to tell and show what they do with their hands if someone gives them a hug and when they give a hug.*]



**Option 1 continued**

Draw attention to some hand-related details of book illustrations, such as the following:

- *what children are drawing on the sidewalk*
- *in a picture about playing, the girl is making cakes with mud and the boy is using his fingers for a pretend spider game*
- *in the picture about eating and drinking, the dog is using its paws (an animal's hands) to hold a bone*
- *a child is holding an adult's hand to cross a street safely*
- *children are using their hands to take care of themselves by washing hands and brushing teeth, and to help take care of others (Example: helping a younger child get dressed)]*

RECAP: We talked about ways we use our hands to do good things for ourselves and for other people. Sometimes people give a “thumbs up” when they are happy about something they see or are doing. Let’s give ourselves a “thumbs up” for using our hands in good ways!

[Lead toddlers in “thumbs up” actions.]

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

The benefits of this activity depend largely on using the book as a springboard for discussion about how we use our hands to take good care of ourselves, have fun, and help others. The many ways we use our hands every day are often taken for granted, even by toddlers. Pay attention to toddlers’ reactions to the book text and pictures as possible opportunities for fostering conversation and improved awareness of how we use our hands.

In the discussion of hitting, emphasize that both our body and our feelings can get hurt. Hitting is not safe. Hitting is not a good way to get along with others. If a toddler tells about a time he/she was hit, respond with empathy in a way that acknowledges the incident and also moves the conversation to the session’s focus on good ways to use our hands.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ In the discussion of how we use our hands to take care of ourselves, lead toddlers in pretending to wash their hands or brush their teeth.

Enrichment ■ If some toddlers are familiar with “Itsy Bitsy Spider,” sing a small part of this nursery rhyme when you talk about the boy using his fingers for play with a pretend spider.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills

Toddlers use their hands to create a gift of art for someone of their choosing.



Key Concepts

Gift



Materials Needed

Art materials (see Be Prepared)

Hands Are Not for Hitting
(Board Book) by Martine Agassi



Also Promotes

Physical/Health

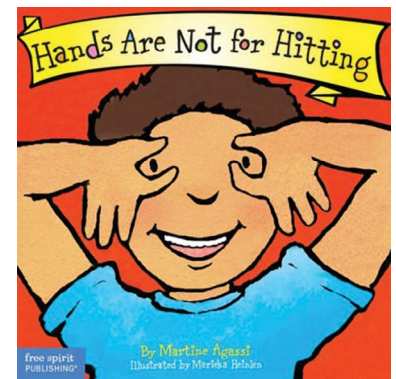
Cognitive

Communication/Language

Be Prepared: This is a follow-up activity for toddlers who participated in Option 1. Secure paper, crayons, and markers or other art materials of your choice. Place materials on a low table for 2–4 toddlers to use at one time.

Invite up to four toddlers to draw a picture or make another type of art that they can give to someone. Remind toddlers that there are many ways we can use our hands to do good things. Show the book's picture of children engaged in drawing. Explain that our picture or piece of art can be a gift. Sometimes we call a gift a present. Making a gift is one of the ways we can use our hands to be kind to someone else. We can give our present to our family, someone in our family, or to a friend. It is our choice.

Encourage toddlers to draw or create whatever they wish. Facilitate access to materials and talk with individual toddlers about their efforts. Emphasize that we are using our hands to do a good thing. You may wish to offer a “thumbs up” for a toddler’s efforts (see Option 1). Offer to write a toddler’s words on the back of their work. Help each toddler get the work to the intended recipient.



👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

A toddler may not have a firm plan for a drawing or piece of art work at the point he/she begins creating. Talk about a toddler’s effort while the work is in process. Example: “You are using a lot of beautiful red for your picture.” The toddler also may be uncertain about who might receive the work. A toddler can tell you about the work and its recipient when you offer to write on the back of it. Look for ways to use the dictation time to emphasize the toddler made something special with his/her own hands. If a toddler seems uncomfortable with the idea of creating a picture for one person only, remind him/her that the work could be given to his/her family or more artwork can be created (see Interest Area suggestion).

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ If a toddler seems uncertain about what to draw or make, offer suggestions for the toddler to consider, such as a picture of self, family member, pet, or a favorite activity.

Enrichment ■ Explain that sometimes we give a present to ourselves. Some toddlers may want to keep their artwork.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: Option 2 materials

Provide art materials for toddlers who wish to create additional piece(s) of art as a gift for someone. A toddler may wish to draw a picture for each member of his/her family. Support toddlers' efforts with strategies suggested in Option 2, including your offer to write on the back of the work.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

A preschool-age or older child in your setting may enjoy participating in Option 2. Engage in a one-to-one sharing of the board book's pictures with a mobile infant or younger toddler (12–24 months).



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Fine motor development

Toddlers explore ways to change a ball of play dough with finger and hand actions.



Key Concepts

Change
Push
Pull
Squeeze
Squish
Pinch
Piece
Roll



Materials Needed

Soft play dough (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Cognitive

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

BEGIN: [*Invite 2–4 toddlers to join you in working with play dough.*]

EXPLAIN: Each of us has a ball of dough to play with. Our dough is soft. There are many ways we can change our ball of dough by using our hands. Our fingers and hands can get strong playing with our dough!

ACT: [*Encourage toddlers to hold and touch the dough. Ask toddlers how the dough feels.*]



After a period for exploration, explain that we can have fun changing our dough with our hands. Suggest the following actions as toddlers' interest and time permit:

- *Squeeze the dough with two hands: Demonstrate picking up and holding the dough between both hands and then pushing on the dough with both hands. Explain that some toddlers like to call this squishing our dough. Invite toddlers to say the word squish.*
- *Flatten the dough with two hands: Demonstrate putting dough on the table and making it flat by pushing with one hand and putting your other hand on top of the hand that is pushing the dough. Emphasize the words flat and push.*
- *Pull little bits off flattened dough: Demonstrate pinching and pulling little pieces from flattened dough. Emphasize the words pinch, pull, and piece. We could pretend our small pieces of dough are food for a baby bird.*
- *Roll dough into little balls: Demonstrate rolling some small pieces of dough into little balls with your fingers. We could put our small pieces of dough into a line and pretend we have a caterpillar.*



Throughout the activity, emphasize how the dough changes when we move it with our hands. Example: "Look how our dough changed

**Option 1 continued**

when we pushed down with two hands! Now the dough is flat.” Use action words, such as push and pull, to describe toddlers’ efforts.

Repeat and extend toddlers’ comments.

Bring the activity to a close by asking each toddler to squeeze all their play dough into one piece and pile it on top of yours in the middle of the table. Encourage toddlers to watch the play dough pile get bigger and bigger!]

RECAP: We started with one ball of play dough. We changed the ball by squeezing, pushing, and pinching the dough. We pushed down on the ball and made it flat. We used our fingers and our whole hand to work the dough.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Play dough is an excellent material for helping toddlers increase their hand strength and dexterity. The flexible consistency of play dough makes it fun to explore. Toddlers are likely to differ in their interests in the manipulations suggested in the activity description. Some toddlers may prefer to focus on one action only, such as pinching off pieces of dough. It is fine for toddlers to be engaged in different actions with their dough.

At this age, toddlers are not expected to create a particular shape, such as a bird, with dough. Avoid suggesting toddlers make a specific type of object with their dough. Focus on explorations, not outcomes. Toddlers can become discouraged when adults present dough shapes that they are not able to produce.

Look for ways to support toddlers’ awareness of words that describe actions with the dough, as suggested in the activity description. Also, encourage toddlers to have fun manipulating the sounds of words. Many will enjoy saying squish!

Play dough is featured in a Block 6 activity (Physical/Health) with a primary focus on using both hands to flatten dough. The current activity suggests more ways to manipulate dough.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Encourage a toddler to stand and press into the dough if sitting is not a good position. ■ Remind toddlers that each of us has our own ball of dough. We do not need to use our neighbor’s dough. Encourage toddlers to tell you if more play dough is needed. ■ Remind toddlers of the little bird in the story of *Roly-Poly Egg* (Communication/Language, current block) when you suggest the small pieces of dough could be pretend food for a baby bird. ■ If a toddler tastes the dough, offer a simple reminder that the dough is for hands only. Discard the mouthed dough and wash the toddler’s hands if necessary.

Enrichment ■ Some toddlers may enjoy rolling a dough rope, hot dog, or snake with two hands. Remind a toddler who is rolling dough to roll the “fat part” of the rope. ■ Suggest a toddler use two hands to pull apart a flattened piece of dough.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers make a creation of their own design with dough and several open-ended tools.



Key Concepts

Push
Mark
Hole
Line



Materials Needed

Air dry dough (see Be Prepared)
Small paper plate—1 per toddler
Craft sticks—2 per toddler
Different colors of markers



Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Cognitive

Be Prepared: Play dough that has been used a few times can be repurposed for this activity. Air dry dough recipes are available on the Internet. Provide one ball of dough per toddler. The suggested craft materials are open-ended tools that can be used in different ways with dough. Avoid providing cookie cutters or similar items that can limit creative use. Use a low table for the activity, with craft materials placed in the middle of the table.

Invite 2–4 toddlers to make a creation with play dough. Describe the air dry dough (“getting hard”) and other materials available, including different colors of markers. Explain that we can create whatever we want with our dough. Show how to use a craft stick to make a hole by pushing an end of the stick into the dough, and to make a line by pushing the stick’s side into the dough. Also show how a marker can be used to make marks, such as dots or lines or drawings on the dough. In addition, show how a thumb or finger can be used to make a hole in the dough. Use action words to describe your efforts, such as pushing a stick into dough. Explain that we can use different things for our creation (craft stick, markers, fingers).

Move around the table to interact with each toddler about his/her creation. Encourage toddlers to talk about what they are doing with their dough. Provide access to materials, including sharing specific colors of markers, as appropriate. You may wish to provide additional craft sticks if a toddler(s) wants to leave a stick(s) in their creation. Encourage toddlers to look at what their peers are doing.

Place each creation on a paper plate to dry overnight.

What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers enjoy pretend play with the dough and may give familiar labels to their shapes, such as house or animal. Encourage toddlers to create whatever they wish. Avoid offering a model. Emphasize how the craft materials can be used in different ways, such as making holes or lines with a craft stick, and different types and colors of marks with markers. The multi-use nature of these items, plus fingers, can support creativity to a greater extent than cookie cutters or similar items that are generally used in one way only.

A toddler may wish to engage in actions promoted in Option 1 but find them difficult to do in air dry dough. Use the experience as an opportunity to talk about soft and harder dough, and how air makes dough harder.

Some toddlers may enjoy playing with the dough but have little interest in making a creation to keep.

Option 2 continued More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ If a toddler seems to be losing interest in the activity through use of one tool only, ask or suggest the toddler consider using another item. Example: “You are making a lot of lines on your dough with the craft stick. Would you like to color some of lines with a marker or make more lines with a marker?”

Enrichment ■ Offer to write several words of the toddler’s choosing on his/her paper plate. ■ Explain that leaving our creations overnight in our room will give our dough more time to get harder. Air makes dough get hard.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: water, sand, sensory table, small toys, blocks, pegboards, puzzles, puffy salt paint (salt, flour, tempera paint), large bowl, squeeze bottles, paper

Add water to sand in the sensory table and encourage toddlers to scoop it, pat it down, and/or fill small containers. On another day, bury small toys in damp sand and encourage toddlers to find them by digging with their hands.

Also provide fit-together blocks, pegboards, and puzzles to encourage fine motor explorations.

For a creative activity, make Puffy Salt Paint. Mix equal parts of salt, flour, and a bit of tempera paint for color. In a large bowl, whisk small amounts of water into the flour/salt and paint mixture until it is the consistency of thick pancake batter. Fill squeeze bottles. Toddlers will enjoy using two hands to squeeze dots of puffy salt paint onto stiff paper. Make the puffy paint thick enough so that the toddlers will have an appropriate challenge squeezing the paint onto the paper.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: water mat, gel bag, tape, air dry clay, shoelace

In addition to offering Options 1 and/or 2 to toddlers, provide fine motor experiences for children of other ages. Mobile infants who do not use play dough will enjoy pushing down on a water mat (see Birth–12 Months, Block 12, Option 1, Cognitive). Pushing on a water mat will cause an object(s) in the mat to move. More than one infant can play with a water mat with you. You may also want to make your own gel bags for infants to use on a low surface, in a tub on the floor, or on a high chair tray. Put hair gel and a few very small items into a heavy, zip-type bag. Add color if you wish. Seal the bag with heavy tape. Attach the bag to a surface with strong, clear package tape.

Preschool-age and older children may enjoy Option 2. They also may enjoy making large beads from the air dry clay. Provide a shoelace for stringing the clay beads.