



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Words

Option 1 (OO) A toddler helps a caregiver tell a story from pictures in a wordless book.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler helps a caregiver make up and tell a story from familiar items in a “story bag.”



Cognitive

Exploring Objects

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about big and little.

Option 2 (OO) A toddler touches and holds items hidden in a bag and says whether each item is hard or soft.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers move puppets up and down as part of participation in a nursery rhyme.



Self-Regulation

Focusing and Remembering

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers observe and help a caregiver play a game of *Sleeping*.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers participate in a game of *Sleeping*.



Social-Emotional

Exploring Feelings

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about different types of feelings.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers participate in a picture-focused discussion of events associated with different feelings and how feelings can change.



Physical/Health

Using Our Hands

Option 1 (IG) Toddlers practice a pincer grasp in arranging toy animals in a line for a pretend parade.

Option 2 (IG) Toddlers practice using tongs to move small toys to a muffin pan.

Option 3 (IG) Toddlers interested in using scissors practice early cutting skills.

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



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

A toddler helps a caregiver tell a story from pictures in a wordless book.



Key Concepts

Pictures
Words
Story



Materials Needed

Good Dog, Carl by
Alexandra Day



Also Promotes

Cognitive

BEGIN: [Invite a toddler to help you tell a story about a dog and a baby. Sit next to the toddler for sharing the book. Show the book cover and point to the picture of the dog and the book's title when you describe each.]

Our book is about a dog and a baby. The dog's name is Carl. Here is a picture of Carl. Our book is called *Good Dog, Carl*.

This is a silly book. Carl and the baby do lots of things that a real dog and a real baby would not do.

EXPLAIN: [Point to text on the first and last pages as you describe each.]

Most books have words that tell a story. Our book is special.

Our book has words on the first page. Our book has words on the last page. There are no words on the other pages of our book!

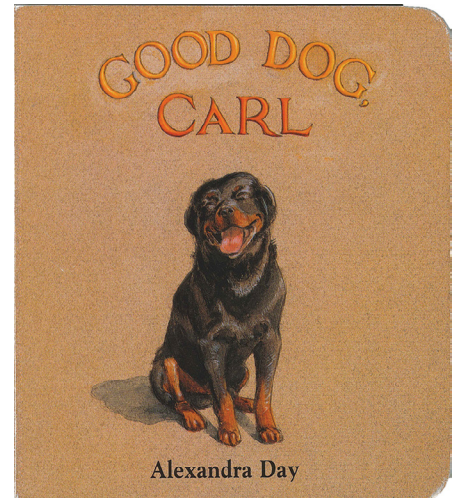
ASK: What can we do to learn about the story told in our book? (look at the pictures)

EXPLAIN: The pictures in our book can tell us a story. We can look at each picture and try to figure out what is happening.

ACT: [Open the book. Invite the toddler to hold the book or to hold the book with you and turn the pages.]

Read the first page and point to related features of the illustration, such as the mother wearing her coat and carrying her purse. Draw attention to the baby in the crib. On the next and subsequent pages, use the following strategies to support the toddler in telling a story:

- Invite the toddler to describe what is in a picture and what is happening. If appropriate, help the toddler focus on key aspects of a picture by asking "What is Carl doing?" "What is the baby doing?" Encourage remaining on a page long enough for the toddler to look at details in the illustrations.
- Repeat and extend the toddler's descriptions. Example: "Dancing. Carl and the baby are dancing."



**Option 1 continued**

- *Acknowledge a toddler's pointing and utterances, such as a laugh. Encourage the toddler to tell you what he/she is looking at in a picture.*
- *If a toddler seems interested in a picture but offers limited or no information, describe what you see and invite the toddler to expand on your description. Example: "Carl is turning on the water in a bathtub. What do you think is happening?"*
- *Describe scenes that may be unfamiliar to a toddler, such as the baby going down a laundry chute and ending up in the basement.*

It is not necessary to discuss each picture or situation. Follow the toddler's lead regarding what is of interest in the book.]

RECAP: Most books have words that tell a story. Our book has almost no words. We looked at pictures to tell a story about a dog and a baby. Carl and the baby did many silly things together.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Pay close attention to the toddler's reactions to the book's pictures so you know how much and what type of support to provide for helping the toddler contribute to the storytelling. Provide just enough assistance for the toddler to be a storyteller. With some pictures, it may be sufficient to simply name or describe an object. For example, explaining that a picture shows a large tank of water for fish may be all the information a toddler needs for describing how the baby is swimming in a tank with fish. Offer pauses that give a toddler time to look at a picture and an opportunity to talk. Anticipate different experiences across toddlers in this activity: some may eagerly embrace a storyteller role, others may enjoy sharing the storyteller role with you, and other toddlers may strongly prefer that you take the lead in telling the story.

Some other activities in the ELM Curriculum for older toddlers (24–36 months) offer opportunities for a child to tell a story. Usually the storytelling opportunity supports recall skills because it occurs after a toddler has heard a story read by a caregiver. The current activity promotes language use with a wordless book the toddler may not know.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Emphasize this is a silly book. Would a mother really have a dog take care of her baby while she went away? Could a baby really ride on the back of a dog?

Enrichment ■ Ask why the mother may have said "Good dog, Carl!" at the end of the story. What might the mother say if she knew about all of the things Carl and her baby did when she was away?

24–36 Months

Option 2 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Receptive language
Expressive language

A toddler helps a caregiver make up and tell a story from familiar items in a “story bag.”



Key Concepts

Story



Materials Needed

Cloth bag
Storytelling props (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Be Prepared: Secure up to 10 items available in your room that you anticipate will be of interest to the toddler who participates in this session. Include items that are familiar, and less familiar, to the toddler. Also, select items that do not necessarily go together in play or use. Example: a doll and a block. Place the items in the cloth bag, known as a “story bag” in this activity.

Invite a toddler to look at what’s inside a bag. Explain the bag is our “story bag” because we can use things in the bag to make up a story. We can use things we want to use for a story. We do not need to use everything that is in the bag. We can make up one story, or we can make up many stories. Encourage the toddler to remove items from the bag and say the name of each. Keep the items fully visible during the activity.



Begin the storytelling with one or two items that you hold or put in front of you and the toddler. Make up a simple story about the item(s) and invite the toddler to add to the story. Example: “Our kitten is drinking some milk. Slurp, slurp, slurp. Now the kitten is running. Run, run, run. The kitten is jumping over a fence (block). The kitten is chasing something. What do you think the kitten is chasing? What happens next?”

Do actions with the story items, such as moving the kitten figure in running and jumping actions. A toddler may or may not want to do actions with his/her story contributions.

Offer an opportunity for the toddler to begin a story. Example: “You’re looking at (or holding) a comb. What could the comb do with something else that you found in the story bag?” Suggest an item, such as a bowl, if the toddler seems uncertain. If the toddler makes up a story (which could be as simple as one sentence), add to the story or use questions to encourage the toddler to tell (make up) more.

If the toddler does not offer a story with the items, make up a story and invite the toddler to add to the story. Example: “I’m going to pretend I am a comb that sits in this bowl at the place where people get their hair cut. The person who cuts hair picks me up and moves me through a girl’s hair. The hair is long. I am getting tired being in the girl’s hair! Oh good, the girl’s hair is done. I am sitting in the bowl again. Now the person who cuts hair is cutting a boy’s hair.



Option 2 continued

I am being picked up so the boy's hair can be combed." Invite the toddler to add to the story. Example: "What will it be like to be a comb in the boy's hair?"

Initiate as many stories as toddler interest and time permit. Conclude the session by recalling highlights of the stories told during the session. Emphasize the toddler's contributions and/or reactions. Examples: "You said the kitten was chasing a dog. The dog got scared and ran home!" "You laughed when I pretended to be a comb getting tired in a girl's long hair."

What to Look For—Option 2

Each "story bag" session will be different because the items you select are tailored to a toddler's interests. No story is likely to be told more than once. Sessions also will be different across toddlers due to language skills and interest in making up and telling stories. Some toddlers may be reluctant to contribute verbally (see Extra Support tip), whereas other toddlers may create small pieces of a story or tell an entire story. It is fine if a toddler describes actual, not make-believe, use of an item in the "story bag." Exposure to and participation in language use are valuable aspects of the activity. Emphasize simple stories.

This activity option is more challenging than Option 1 because the props offer less information than the pictures in the Option 1 book. However, the props offer important storytelling advantages that you can accentuate in the session, including opportunities to manipulate actual object(s) in creative ways.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ If a toddler is reluctant to contribute verbally to a story, invite him/her to select 1–2 props for you to use in telling a story.

Enrichment ■ A toddler may wish to secure another item in your room to use in telling a story.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: familiar picture book, such as *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown; items that connect with the selected book (such as mittens and a cow figure for *Goodnight Moon*)

Place the book and items on a low table. Invite toddlers to look at the picture book and explore the related items. Encourage toddlers to select several of the items to tell a story. Toddlers may wish to talk about items as used in the story or create their own story. Some toddlers may enjoy engaging in pretend play with the props.

 Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Extend Option 2 by inviting older toddlers and preschool-age children to each select 1–2 objects in your setting to put in a “story bag.” After items are collected, encourage children to use some of the items to tell a story. Initiate and support storytelling with strategies suggested in Option 2. Some children may enjoy drawing a picture of a story told during the activity.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about big and little.



Key Concepts

Big
Little



Materials Needed

Big Little by Leslie Patricelli



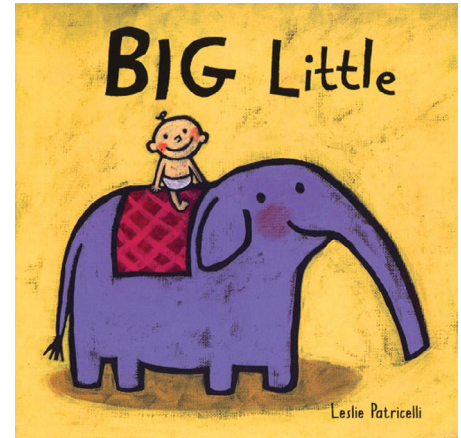
Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Invite 3–5 toddlers to join you in reading a book about things that are **big** and things that are **little**. Open the session by showing the book cover. Ask toddlers to describe what we see. Point to and name the elephant and the child sitting on the elephant. Ask toddlers to point to and say what is big (elephant) and what is little (child) on the book cover. Point to the book title when you say it.

In addition to reading the book text, use the following strategies to help toddlers strengthen their awareness of the opposites of big and little:

- Invite toddlers to point to their head and to their toes when described in the book.
- Point to and describe items in pictures that toddlers may not easily notice. Examples: whistle, ladybug, and dandelions.
- Describe items that may not be familiar to toddlers, such as dandelions.
- Positively acknowledge and elaborate on toddlers' comments and pointing.
- On the final two pages, point to, name, and describe big and little items that you anticipate will be of interest to toddlers.



Conclude the session by inviting toddlers to point to and describe things in our room that are big and things that are little.

What to Look For—Option 1

The concepts of big and small are of growing interest to many toddlers at this age, especially as they become aware of “big kids” and “little kids” in their child development center. Toddlers who are soon to move to preschool-age rooms may be particularly tuned into the idea of bigger and smaller children sharing the same room. The featured book’s colorful and often humorous illustrations provide repetitive yet engaging practice in applying the concepts of big and little to a range of items and people.

**Option 1 continued**

Illustrated items that are familiar to toddlers may prompt talk about experiences with the item. Actively support toddlers' interest in describing an item or event, and offer simple connections to the activity's focus on big and little. Example: If a toddler tells about an adult using a whistle at a big sibling's sports practice, ask whether the whistle is a little like the whistle shown in our book. Repeat that the toddler is talking about a big brother/sister.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

Extra support ■ In the opening segment of the session, ask toddlers whether they have a big brother or sister or a little brother or sister.

Enrichment ■ Point out the difference in the size of the words big and little on the book cover.

24–36 Months

Option 2
One-to-One

Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

A toddler touches and holds items hidden in a bag and says whether each item is hard or soft.



Key Concepts

Feel
Hold
Hard
Soft
Squeeze



Materials Needed

3 cloth bags
4 soft items (see Be Prepared)
4 hard items (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Opposites Board Book by Sandra Boynton
What's Up, Duck? by Tad Hills

Be Prepared: Gather small soft items, such as a rolled sock and foam ball, and small hard items, such as a wooden block and a stacking cup. Put one hard item and one soft item in each of the three bags. Close each bag in a way that makes it easy to open. The fourth set of hard and soft items is used for a brief demonstration at the beginning of the activity. Place the three closed bags near you for the activity. See Extra Support tips for modifying the activity for a toddler who is reluctant to put his/her hand in a bag.

BEGIN: [*Invite one toddler to play a game with you. Sit on the floor facing the toddler. Place in front of the toddler the two items (one hard, one soft) intended for use at the beginning of the activity. Explain that one of the items is hard and one of the items is soft. Invite the toddler to touch and/or pick up each item and say whether it is hard or soft.*]

EXPLAIN: [*Point to the three closed bags.*]

There are more hard things and soft things in our bags. It is fun to put our hand in a bag and feel what is inside the bag. There are two things in each bag. One thing is hard and the other is soft.

Our fingers and hands can tell what is hard and what is soft. Try not to peek inside the bag!

- ASK:**
- Are you ready to play the game?
 - Which bag do you want to start with?
 - Do you want to try to find a hard thing or a soft thing inside the bag?

ACT: [*If possible, hold a bag so the toddler can put his/her hand inside without first seeing the item. Some toddlers may have a strong desire to hold the bag and reach in without any assistance. Allow the toddler to lead the game of exploring the items.*]

Remind the toddler to use his/her hand to feel each of the things inside the bag. Encourage the toddler to then take out the item that is soft (or hard).

Communicate excitement about what the toddler removes from the bag. Affirm the toddler's selection of a hard or soft item. Say (or invite the toddler to say) the name of the item. Example: "Wow, look at what you found! You are holding something that is soft. What is it?"

Invite the toddler to take the second item from the bag and then feel/hold each item. Promote comparison of the two items by asking, "Which thing can you squeeze?" or "What happens when you try to squeeze the (name of hard item)?"

**Option 2 continued**

Continue the feeling/touching and comparison process with contents of the remaining two bags.]

RECAP: There was a hard thing and a soft thing in each of our bags. How did you figure out what was soft and what was hard?

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Adapt the game to meet the needs of each toddler. Some toddlers may hesitate to reach into the bag without first seeing the items. Some toddlers may dump items onto the floor or table without looking or putting a hand into a bag. A toddler's selection of a hard (or soft) item can easily move forward with items now fully visible. Some toddlers may prefer to feel the contents of the bag through the cloth bag. See Extra Support if a toddler shows strong resistance to putting a hand in the bag, even if items can be seen in the bag.

Other toddlers may be interested in watching a toddler play the game. This can be informative for toddlers. A toddler participating in or watching the game may tell you about other things that are soft or hard. At the same time, it is important to provide other inviting materials for toddlers to pursue while waiting for a chance to play the game.

There are simple and meaningful ways to extend this activity for toddlers who are interested in hard/soft contrasts. Examples:

- Invite a toddler to tell about or find items in the room that are hard or soft.
- A toddler might like a game of saying "soft" or "hard" in response to familiar items you describe, such as blanket, wagon, grass, and slide.
- Offer the extension activities with a different set of contrasts, such as telling about or finding things in the room that can make a sound (shakers) and things that are quiet (most books).

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ If a toddler does not want to put a hand in the bag, put the six (or fewer) items in a tub and invite the toddler to remove one item at a time per your request for a soft or hard item. ■ A toddler may enjoy placing his/her hand in the bag when you say "Ready. Set. Go!"

Enrichment ■ After all items are removed from the bags and discussed, invite the toddler to put the hard things and the soft things together, making two groups.



24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers move puppets up and down as part of participation in a nursery rhyme.



Key Concepts

Up
Down



Materials Needed

Hand puppets—2 per toddler
Carpet squares—1 per toddler



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Self-Regulation
Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Jack and Jill by Anthony Lewis

Be Prepared: Be familiar with the tune and first verse of the “Jack and Jill” nursery rhyme/song. Place a carpet square on the floor for each toddler. Provide larger finger puppets, if possible, because they will promote bigger movements. Suitable alternatives to finger puppets are small, soft toys or jumbo animal counters that toddlers can easily hold in one hand.

Invite toddlers to join you in pretending some puppets are going up and down a hill. Open the session by saying the first verse of “Jack and Jill” and then singing the first verse. Emphasize up and down verbally and with your arm movements. Repeat the first verse by singing again and inviting toddlers to join you.

Next, encourage toddlers to stand if they sitting. Give each toddler two puppets. Help toddlers get a puppet on each hand. Playfully lead the toddlers in moving the puppets up and down with their hands and arms. Practice a few times. Lead toddlers in moving their puppets up and down at appropriate times as you again sing the first verse of “Jack and Jill.” Move your puppets up over your head and then down to the floor.

What to Look For—Option 3

Young children are active learners who enjoy movement. Imagining a Jack or a Jill moving up and down a hill is a useful cognitive challenge, especially when combined with physical movement and song. Some toddlers may not sing or may partially sing the song.

Look for ways to promote the motor skill of controlling a puppet. Also look for ways to promote the self-regulation skills of returning a desirable item to an adult at the end of the activity and remaining reasonably calm. Some toddlers may be very excited to move a puppet and need help remaining calm. Allow a minute of puppet dancing or free movement. Move from child to child and speak calmly, as if you are talking to the puppets themselves. Ask the puppets to sit and rest on the child’s lap.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Provide one puppet only but encourage toddlers to hold it in one hand, not two at the same time. ■ The activity can be beneficial with up and down arm movements combined with the song if you anticipate the puppets will add too much excitement.

Enrichment ■ Toddlers may enjoy moving the puppets up fast and down slowly (or the reverse).



Interest Area

Materials Needed: for an outdoor activity: sand, small pails with handles, scoops; for an indoor activity: small pails with handles and an assortment of small toys

A caregiver-guided activity for promoting two sets of opposites (heavy and light, full and empty) can be offered at an outdoor sand area that has a good amount of sand and is free of other playthings. Provide two pails and one scoop for each toddler. Explain that the pails are empty. Encourage each toddler to sit where there is plenty of space to scoop sand into one of the two pails. Describe each toddler's actions. After one of a toddler's pails is full, or nearly full, talk with the toddler about which pail is empty and which pail is full. Remind the toddler that both pails were empty at the beginning of our activity, and now one pail is full. Then encourage the toddler to lift each of the pails, one at a time. Talk about how one pail is heavy and the other pail is light.

The activity described above can be adapted through use of small toys that can be put into one pail but not a second pail.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: colorful cushion for each toddler, paper strips

In addition to offering the activity options for toddlers, promote awareness of on and off by playing a silly game of pretending to be a honeybee. Place a colorful cushion on the floor for each toddler. Encourage toddlers to move around the room (flying) and then land on a pretend flower (cushion). Encourage the toddlers to get some food (nectar) from the flower and fly off the flower. Preschool-age children may enjoy the honeybee game, too.

Preschool-age and older children can strengthen their understanding of under and over by weaving paper strips under and over to create a woven design.

Play an opposites-related movement game with an infant by singing "Up, up, up. Down, down, down." Sit on the floor facing an infant who laying with his/her back on the floor. Gently move the infant's feet or hands up and down as you sing. Make up your own tune or use the "Frère Jacques" tune.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Executive function

Toddlers observe and help a caregiver play a game of *Sleeping*.



Key Concepts

Listen
Sleep
Words
Pay attention



Materials Needed

None



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: Arrange for another adult to sing as part of the activity. If you do not wish to lie down as part of demonstrating the game, lower and tilt your head with eyes closed to pretend you are sleeping while sitting.

BEGIN: [*Invite 4–6 toddlers to help you play a new game.*]

We are going to learn a new game today! Our game is called *Sleeping*. (name of helper) is going to help me show how the game works.

EXPLAIN: We pretend we are sleeping in this game. (name of helper) is going to sing while I pretend to sleep. I need to listen carefully to the words in the song that (name of helper) sings. The words in the song will tell me when to wake up!

ACT: I am going to lie down now and pretend I am sleeping.

[*Close your eyes and move into a sleeping position.*]

After a few moments, the adult helper sings the following song to a tune of his/her choice:

**Sleeping, sleeping, all the children are sleeping.
And when they woke up they were [pause] monkeys!**

Wake up and enthusiastically pretend you are a monkey.

- ASK:**
- Did I look like I was sleeping?
 - How did I know when to wake up? (words in song)
 - How did I know I was a monkey?

EXPLAIN: I listened carefully to the words in the song. The words told me when to wake up. The words told me I was a pretend monkey!

I am going to play our game one more time. Please help me make sure I hear the words in the song.

ASK: Do you think the song will tell me to be a monkey again or some other animal?

[*Encourage toddlers to talk about what the song may say.*]

ACT: Let's find out. I am going to pretend I am sleeping.

[*Once again, close your eyes and move into a sleeping position.*]

**Option 1 continued**

After a few moments, the adult helper sings the following song to a tune of his/her choice:

**Sleeping, sleeping, all the children are sleeping.
And when they woke up they were [pause] little birds!**

Do not respond to the "little birds" cue. Continue to pretend to sleep.

If toddlers say "It's time to wake up" or something similar, pretend to wake and ask what happened. Pretend to be a bird after toddlers tell you what the song said. Flap your wings and say "cheep, cheep."

If toddlers do not say anything while you continue to sleep, the adult helper should sing the words again. Then wake up and enthusiastically pretend you are a little bird by flapping your wings and saying "cheep, cheep."]

ASK: I forgot to listen carefully to the words. What happened when I did not pay attention to the words?

[Engage toddlers in a discussion of how you kept sleeping. Emphasize the importance of paying attention by listening.]

RECAP: Listening is one of the ways we can pay attention to what is happening. Our game called *Sleeping* can help us listen carefully to the words of a song. What do the words in the song tell us to do? (when to wake up, what animal to be)



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Executive function

Toddlers participate in a game of *Sleeping*.



Key Concepts

Listen

Words

Pay attention



Materials Needed

None



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Physical/Health

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who participated in Option 1 or are familiar with the *Sleeping* game. Arrange for another adult to sing as part of the activity. It is preferable, but not essential, for toddlers to lie on the floor when pretending to sleep. If you do not wish to lie down as part of demonstrating the game, lower and tilt your head with eyes closed to pretend you are sleeping while sitting.

Invite 4–6 toddlers to play the game of *Sleeping*. Invite toddlers to help you describe how the game works. Repeat and expand on their descriptions.

Emphasize the following key parts of the game:

- We pretend we are sleeping.
- We listen carefully to the words in the song.
- The words tell us when to wake up and what animal to be.

Offer a brief demonstration, with the other adult singing the following words to a tune of his/her choice:

**Sleeping, sleeping, all the children are sleeping.
And when they woke up they were [pause] little pigs.**

Pretend to wake up at the appropriate time and make the “oink, oink” sounds of a little pig. Invite toddlers to join you in pretending to make little pig sounds.

Ask toddlers how you knew (1) when to wake up, and (2) what animal to be. Again, emphasize the importance of paying attention by listening to the words of the song.

Invite toddlers to play the game. Select a familiar animal that is of interest to participants in the gathering. Offer verbal guidance as appropriate.

Offer another round of the game if toddlers’ interest and time permit. Select a different familiar animal. You may wish to select an animal that involves both physical movement and sounds, such as a frog that jumps and says “ribbit, ribbit.”

Conclude the session by asking toddlers why listening carefully is an important part of the game.

👁️ What to Look For—Options 1–2

This activity is one of several self-regulation games offered in the ELM Curriculum for older toddlers (24–36 months). Others include the games of *Freeze* (Block 9) and *Orange Circle* (Block 19). The games promote executive function skills, including paying attention and flexibly shifting focus. More



advanced versions of the games are offered in the ELM Curriculum's activities for children 3–5 years of age.

Watch for toddlers' attention to the words of the song. Toddlers hear and sing songs frequently in high-quality early childhood settings, but for many toddlers it may be a new experience to notice specific words that are sung. Are toddlers pretending to wake up in response to a key word or by noticing what their peers are doing? The suggested pause in the song's words is intended to build anticipation about the animal and to give a signal that an animal's name is about to be announced. Avoid telling toddlers when to pretend to wake or what animal to be; it is best if this information comes from the words of the song.

Although the game calls for toddlers to "wake up" at about the same time, there is no expectation that toddlers will pretend to be the animal in the same way. Enthusiastically accept different ways of pretending to be the animal named in the song.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

Extra support ■ Point to your ears when you talk about listening. ■ Enunciate the words of the song at a volume all toddlers can easily hear. ■ In Option 2, join toddlers in making the movements and sounds of the pretend animal. This serves as a demonstration and adds enjoyment to their experience. ■ Sit close to a toddler who has difficulty managing behavior during the game.

Enrichment ■ Invite toddlers to think of animals they would like to pretend to be when they wake up.

Interest Area

Materials Needed: none

Invite several toddlers who are experienced in playing the *Sleeping* game to take turns being the person who sings the song. Help the leader select animals that other toddlers will know. Enjoy being a participant in the game.

Family Child Care

Materials Needed: none

Preschool-age and older children will enjoy leading other children in the *Sleeping* game. Talk quietly with the game leader(s) about what animal to include. The game has limited appeal if children are not familiar with the animal. Infants and younger toddlers (12–24 months) will enjoy watching the game.

This activity is known as the *Sleeping, Sleeping, All the Children Are Sleeping* game in ELM Curriculum activities for children 3–5 years of age. The activity is an adaptation of the self-regulation game, *Sleeping, Sleeping, All the Children Are Sleeping* described in the following source: McClelland, M. M., & Tominey, S. L. (2016). *Stop, think, act: Integrating self-regulation in the early childhood classroom*. New York: Routledge.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Awareness of emotions

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about different types of feelings.



Key Concepts

Happy
Mad
Sad



Materials Needed

How Do You Feel? (Rookie Toddler) by Jodie Shepherd



Also Promotes

Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Limit participation to no more than three toddlers so all children can see pictures in the small board book.

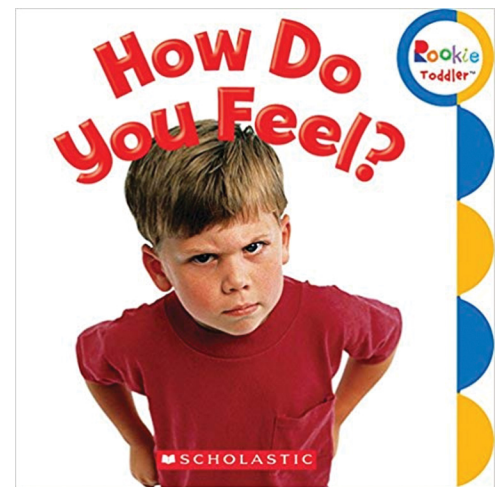
BEGIN: [*Invite up to three toddlers to join you in reading a book about feelings.*]

We are learning about how we might feel when something happens. Some things make us feel happy. Sometimes things happen that make us feel mad. Sometimes we feel sad.

ASK: [*Display book cover.*]

Look at the boy on the cover of our book. What do you think this boy is feeling? (mad, angry)

EXPLAIN: Our book has pictures of children who are feeling different things. Some children are feeling happy. Some children are feeling mad. Let's look inside our book. Maybe we will see the picture of this boy again.



[*Point to book title as you read it.*]

Our book is called, *How Do You Feel?*

ACT: [*Share two adjacent book pages at a time in the following ways:*

- *Read the text on the two pages, emphasizing rhyming words at the end of sentences.*
- *Then use your own words in the following ways:*
 - *Elaborate on the book text you just read. Some phrases and concepts, such as "might stir up that emotion" and "just isn't fair" may need explanation.*
 - *Help toddlers connect pictures to the book text, including the event(s) associated with the feeling. Example: On the two pages that focus on feeling embarrassed, point out how each of the children is covering her face ("hide from the world"). Invite toddlers to point to pictures you describe. Examples: Which child has a frown? Which child is getting a hug?*

**Option 1 continued**

- Define words that may be unfamiliar to toddlers, such as *unkind* (not nice).
- On the two pages focused on feeling *mad*, draw attention to the picture that is also shown on the book cover. The boy looks mad, maybe because someone gave him a “mean stare.” Ask toddlers whether they think the boy in this picture is also showing a mean stare.
- On the final two pages, emphasize that it is okay to have different feelings.
- Repeat and expand on toddler comments. Acknowledge pointing to pictures.]

RECAP: The children shown in our book had different kinds of feelings. Is it okay to have different kinds of feelings? Why?

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Sharing two adjacent pages at a time provides opportunities for toddlers to look carefully at the book’s colorful, informative pictures and consider how a facial expression represents a feeling. Focused discussion of the feelings covered in this book can help toddlers strengthen their awareness of specific feelings and perhaps broaden their understanding of circumstances associated with a feeling. Stay in tune with toddlers’ reactions to pictures or discussion so you can tailor your approach to each two-page segment in response to toddlers’ interests or concerns.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ If toddlers do not name a feeling when you ask what the boy on the book cover might be feeling, offer two options. Example: “Do you think this boy is feeling happy or mad?”

Enrichment ■ Support toddlers’ awareness of sounds in words by repeating words that sound alike in the book text: zoo, too; down, frown; stare, fair.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Awareness of emotions

Toddlers participate in a picture-focused discussion of events associated with different feelings and how feelings can change.



Key Concepts

Happy
Sad
Frown



Materials Needed

How Do You Feel? (Rookie Toddler) by Jodie Shepherd

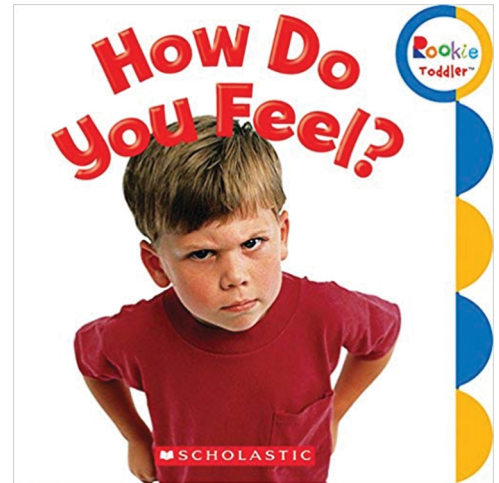


Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: This is a follow-up activity for toddlers who are familiar with the *How Do You Feel?* book through participation in Option 1 or a similar book sharing.

Invite 3–4 toddlers to join you in talking about pictures of children who are having different kinds of feelings. Open the session by showing the book cover and reminding toddlers that our book tells about different feelings. Explain that you will read the book again and then we can talk about some of the children shown in the book. Use the following approach:



- Read the book text with minimal or no elaboration. If a toddler offers a comment or question or points to a picture while you are reading, spend some time talking about the toddler's interest. Point to pictures associated with the book text.
- Return to the beginning of the book. For each emotion featured in the book, remind toddlers of why the pictured children are experiencing the feeling. Ask toddlers what else might make us feel the emotion. Example: "This little boy is happy because he is getting a nice hug. This little girl is happy because she is spending a day at the zoo. What are some other things that can make us feel happy?"
- After discussing events or situations that can cause us to feel a specific emotion, turn to the pages on feeling sad.
 - Remind toddlers that the pictured boy is feeling sad because he fell down. He had a happy smile that turned into a frown. Draw attention to the frown on his face.
 - Lead toddlers in making a big smile and then a frown.
 - Explain that after a while something good might happen that makes the boy smile again. Ask toddlers for ideas of what might happen that would help the boy feel happy again. (a parent comes to help the child, a friend asks the boy to play a game)
 - Lead toddlers in making a frown and then a big smile.

Conclude the session by recalling some of the events or circumstances (discussed in the session) that make us feel happy or sad or mad. Remind toddlers that there are many feelings we feel every day. Our feelings can change.

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

The small board book featured in this activity contains a lot of helpful information for toddlers, including colorful and realistic pictures of children. Opening the session by reading the book text without elaboration provides a reminder of the book's content. Reading all text at once is in contrast with the segmented reading of text in Option 1. The suggested strategies for approaching the current session are intended to unpack the book's information in two areas: events or circumstances associated with a specific feeling and how feelings (and their facial expressions) can change.

Toddlers may find it challenging to generate examples of a good thing that could happen to help the boy who is feeling sad (from a fall) to feel happy again. Offer one or two realistic possibilities that might prompt toddlers to think of others. See the Extra Support tip. Toddlers will likely enjoy making a big smile and then a frown. The experience of transitioning from a frown to a smile is a unique part of this activity.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

Extra support ■ Give less attention to discussing feeling embarrassed and excited if you anticipate these emotions will be challenging for toddlers to discuss. It is fine to give primary attention to happy, sad, and mad. ■ In the discussion of events or circumstances that might help us move from feeling sad to feeling happy, turn to the picture of a boy getting a hug (happy) and/or the picture of a girl greeting a grandma (excited) as examples of something good that might happen.

Enrichment ■ When you return to the beginning of the book to discuss each emotion, invite toddlers to tell what pictured children are feeling and why.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: *How Do You Feel?* (Rookie Toddler) by Jodie Shepherd, 3–4 nonbreakable handheld mirrors

Use the colorful pictures in this easy-to-handle board book to support toddlers in exploring facial expressions associated with different feelings. Invite toddlers to think about what his/her face might look like when experiencing an emotion featured in the book. Encourage toddlers to look at their facial expression in a handheld mirror and compare it to a facial expression shown in the book for the same emotion. Emphasize that happy faces can look different, sad faces can look different, and mad faces can look different. Example: The mad faces of the boy and girl are different.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Preschool-age children may enjoy participating in Options 1 and 2. Their experiences with feeling embarrassed or excited may be especially helpful to discussions in Option 2. Younger toddlers (12–24 months) may enjoy looking at the pictures of children in the *How Do You Feel?* board book.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers practice a pincer grasp in arranging toy animals in a line for a pretend parade.



Key Concepts

Parade
Line
Leader



Materials Needed

30 jumbo farm animal counters
5 small containers (see Be Prepared)
Sound-making item (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Self-Regulation



Optional Reading

Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae
Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr.

Be Prepared: Secure plastic storage containers or similar items for distributing the toy animals to toddlers and providing fine motor practice in grasping and removing small toys from a container. Distribute toy animals equally into the containers. One of the containers is for demonstration. Secure a tambourine, bell, or other type of sound-making item to provide a festive experience at the pretend parade. Offer the activity at a low table that provides adequate space for each toddler to form a line of toy animals.

BEGIN: [*Invite 3–4 toddlers to help toy animals get ready for a parade. Put containers with animals near you.*]

EXPLAIN: Let's help our toy animals get ready for a parade! People march or walk on a street or road for a parade.

- ASK:**
- Have you ever been in a parade or watched a parade?
 - What was it like?

[*Engage toddlers in discussion of a parade. Help toddlers describe a parade they may have shared, such as a parade in your community or maybe a parade of children on a special day in your center.*]

EXPLAIN: [*Point to the containers.*]

There are toy animals in these containers. Each of us will get a container. We can take the animals out of the container and put them in a line for our parade. Each of us can make our own line of animals for the parade.

I can show you one way to put the toy animals in a line for a parade.

[*Demonstrate and describe taking toy animals out of a container, one at a time. Use a pincer grasp by picking up each toy animal with your thumb and first or middle finger. Draw attention to your use of a thumb and a finger for picking up each toy animal.*]

Say the name and/or color of each animal. Put the toy animals in front of you for the purpose of deciding which animal will go first in your parade line. Explain the plan. Example: "I want to look at all of my animals. I want to



**Option 1 continued**

pick one animal to be at the beginning of my parade.” Explain that the animal at the beginning of the line is the leader of the parade.

Then move the toy animals into a line. Again emphasize your use of a thumb and finger to pick up each toy animal. Emphasize how you are putting the animals in a line. The line of animals is on a pretend road.

Example: “I think I will put the horse at the beginning of the line for my parade. The horse goes first. The horse is the leader of my parade. I am using my thumb and finger to pick up the horse.”]

ACT: [Give each toddler a container. Encourage toddlers to remove the toy animals, one at a time, with thumb and finger. Offer verbal support for removing one toy at a time, as appropriate.

After a toddler has removed all toy animals, ask him/her which animal he/she will put at the beginning of the line. Example: “Amber, which animal will be the leader of your parade?”

Encourage toddlers to place animals in a line. The direction of a line is a toddler’s choice. It is not necessary for toddlers to coordinate their lines.

Repeat and extend a toddler’s comments. Example: “Pig. The pig is the first one in your line. Pig is the leader!”

Offer parade music/excitement when each toddler has several or all animals lined up for a parade. Make up and sing a little song and use the sound maker! Use a tune to a song you know, or improvise using the “ABC” tune. Toddlers will not mind if the lyrics do not rhyme. The intent is to create a festive experience. Point to each line of animals as you sing. Clap. Say “hooray.” Encourage toddlers to join you in moving arms in the air.

If time and toddler interest permit, toddlers may wish to (1) move their animals so they walk or march in the opposite direction, and/or (2) move the position/direction of their line. Both of these actions provide more practice with a pincer grasp.]

RECAP: Parades are fun! Each of us took toy animals out of a container and decided which animal should lead our parade. Then we put our animals in a line and sang about our parade.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

In the opening segment’s discussion of a parade, look for whether each toddler seems familiar with a parade. Toddlers will be more likely to engage and enjoy the activity if they have a concrete image of a parade.

The activity provides opportunities for at least two experiences with a pincer grasp. The size of the toy animals will naturally foster a pincer grasp. Support each toddler’s existing skill. Some toddlers may grasp an animal with their entire hand. Some may find it challenging to put the animals in a line (see Extra Support tip). Be flexible about toddlers’ fine motor approaches to the activity while also taking note of toddlers who may need more opportunities to practice fine motor skills.

Option 1 continued

Some toddlers may be more interested in color than type of animal. A red animal may be their choice to lead their parade, for example. Toddlers may need help naming types of animals.

It takes time to develop fine motor skills and toddlers will differ in their current abilities, as suggested above. Maintain a focus on the fine motor aspects of the current activity without imposing pressure or creating stress. Coordination of small muscles in the hands and fingers is important for many daily tasks, such as using a fork or spoon, stringing beads, moving puzzle pieces, writing, and cutting. Fine motor skills are one key to independence because they are needed for getting dressed, opening containers, and manipulating small toys.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Provide a thick, dark line on paper for a toddler to use in lining up toy animals. A line that is approximately 3" x 18" should be sufficient. ■ If a toddler uses a whole hand to grasp a toy animal, kneel next to him/her to demonstrate and gently suggest use of a pincer grasp. Example: "Here's another way to pick up an animal. Let's try it!"

Enrichment ■ A toddler may wish to shake the sound-making item during the parade celebration. ■ If a toddler reverses the direction of his/her parade by turning around each animal, ask what animal is now leading his/her parade. ■ Enhance fine motor practice in the opening segment of the activity by using containers with lids that a toddler removes. A nonbreakable jar with a lid that turns is one possibility. Demonstrate and describe how to remove the lid. Example: "One hand holds the jar tightly. The other hand turns the lid."



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers practice using tongs to move small toys to a muffin pan.



Key Concepts

Tongs
Muffin pan
Pick up
Let go



Materials Needed

Tongs—1 per toddler (see Be Prepared)
Muffin pan—1 per toddler (see Be Prepared)
Jumbo farm animal counters—6–8 per toddler



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Communication/Language

Be Prepared: Secure toddler-size tongs (sometimes called jumbo tweezers) that work best by using a whole hand, not fingers only. A tong that is less than four inches in length may be too small for whole hand use. Some toddlers may be ready to manipulate larger-size tongs. It is helpful for tongs to be the same size. Secure muffin pans with 6–8 openings. Provide each toddler with as many counters as muffin openings. Offer the activity at a low table.

Invite up to four toddlers to join you in playing with tongs and jumbo animal counters. Give each toddler a set of counters, tongs, and a muffin pan. Explain each item, including how to hold and use tongs. The challenge is to use the tongs to pick up jumbo



animal counters, one at a time, and place each counter in one muffin opening. Demonstrate and describe the activity. Draw attention to separate actions in using the tongs to pick up and then let go of a counter. Encourage toddlers to move their counters to the muffin pan, one at a time. Provide verbal support for each action as appropriate. Emphasize that we put one counter in one muffin opening. Toddlers may also enjoy taking the animals out of the muffin tin with the tongs.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Transferring items into the muffin cups will be enjoyable for toddlers and may provide a sense of self-satisfaction. Some toddlers may complete the activity once and show no interest in more use of the tongs. Other toddlers may prefer to repeat the activity. Use of tongs can strengthen hand muscles and eye-hand coordination. The current activity also supports early awareness of one-to-one correspondence, an important cognitive skill that is part of later competence in math. If a toddler places more than one counter in a muffin opening, gently remind the toddler that we put one counter in one opening; we want to fill all the openings in the muffin pan.

A toddler may use two hands to manipulate the tongs. This approach can support practice in eye-hand coordination and in figuring out how much pressure to use in picking up and moving a toy with tongs. A toddler may move one of the arms of the tongs while holding the other arm still, for example. With repeated practice and opportunity to watch use of tongs with one hand, a toddler is likely to begin using one hand.

**Option 2 continued**

Generally small tongs work well for toddlers. See Extra Support tips if use of tongs is challenging. This activity extends a Block 20 (Physical/Health) activity that involves use of tongs.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Provide fewer counters or put some counters in each muffin pan and encourage toddlers to move the remaining counters so the muffin pan is full. ■ Tongs with finger and thumb holes may work best for a toddler who needs extra support. ■ If use of tongs is too challenging, encourage a toddler to use a thumb and finger (pincer grasp) to pick up each toy and move it to the muffin pan.

Enrichment ■ Prepare and place colored circles at the bottom of each muffin opening to encourage color matching. ■ Provide a variety of tongs for children to try.

24–36 Months

Option 3
Informal Gathering

Skill and Goal

Fine motor development

Toddlers interested in using scissors practice early cutting skills.



Key Concepts

Open
Close
Snip
Cut



Materials Needed

Colored paper (see Be Prepared)
2 toddler-size scissors
Drawing paper
Crayons (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who show interest in using scissors. Limit the activity to two toddlers so individualized support can be offered to each participant. Cut the colored paper into three-inch squares and also strips about an inch wide or less. Triangle-shaped crayons foster a good pincer grip. Set up a table activity with crayons and drawing paper. Keep the scissors and strips of paper near you for introduction at an appropriate time during the activity.

Invite 1–2 toddlers to the table to make marks or scribbles on drawing paper or the colored squares. Sit or kneel at eye level and talk with each toddler about his/her scribbles and lines. Encourage toddlers to make any type of mark or scribble.

As toddlers seem to be nearing the end of marking marks with a crayon(s), offer to help each child use scissors. If a toddler(s) shows interest, demonstrate use of toddler-size scissors. Begin snipping the edges of a small paper square with the scissors. Grasp the scissors with your thumb in the upper hole and your first two fingers in the larger, lower hold. Say “thumb up to cut.” Describe your actions to create interest in the scissors. Example: “I am cutting some lines in this paper. I open and close the scissors. My scissors go snip, snip, snip.”

If a toddler is ready to try using the scissors, provide a pair of scissors and encourage the toddler to hold the scissors in a hand of his/her choice. Support first use of scissors with one toddler at a time. A second toddler at the table can continue to color or watch you support the other toddler in using scissors. One-to-one support is necessary for most toddlers to develop hand/finger movement and coordination with scissors.

Encourage a toddler to try to open and close the scissor blades. The challenge is to control the scissors with the right amount of pressure on the handles. If the toddler is able to open and close the scissors, hold a small paper square rigid with both hands at a good level for the toddler. Encourage the toddler to make snips along one edge of the paper.

If a toddler holds the scissors with a rotated wrist, ask if you may turn his/her hand. Gently turn the toddler’s hand so the thumb is upward and the fingers are downward. Help a toddler remember the correct hand position by saying “thumb up to cut.”





Option 3 continued

Provide the thin strips of paper to a toddler who can snip with one hand. Encourage the toddler to hold scissors in one hand and hold the paper strip with the opposite hand. Toddlers will enjoy the process of making a pile of tiny paper pieces.

What to Look For—Option 3

Toddlers with interest in using scissors generally enjoy cutting strips or small pieces about the size of their palm. Toddlers are not expected to cut across a sheet or paper or to cut any particular shape. If cutting with scissors is difficult for a toddler, provide a simple hand paper punch and demonstrate how to punch holes. Using the punch can strengthen a toddler's hand and offer the feeling of a cutting motion.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 3

Extra support ■ Review your room's rules about use of scissors. ■ Scissors that provide hand holds for a toddler and for an adult can help a toddler get the feel of scissors and how they work. ■ Mark the small thumb hole of scissors with colored tape as a reminder of where the thumb goes.

Enrichment ■ Provide additional appealing items to cut, such as scraps of gift wrapping paper, paint color samples, and soft play dough cut into thin rolls. Make sure each is an appropriate size for a toddler to manage. ■ If a toddler can cut narrow strips, encourage him/her to glue them on paper or collect them in an envelope. This provides additional interest plus fine motor experiences. ■ Toddlers often enjoy snipping around the edges of a circle. If a toddler can cut narrow strips, give him/her a precut circle and a glue stick. Show the toddler how to fasten the strips around the edge of the circle. Some toddlers enjoy making a paper spider or sun.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: toddler-size tongs, shredded paper or tissue paper, block area props, jumbo farm animals, books about farm animals such as *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown

Extend Option 2 by setting up a make-believe farm in the sensory table with shredded paper or tissue paper, and other materials from the block area. Encourage toddlers to use tongs to pick up animals. Share with toddlers books related to animals that might be found on a farm, such as *Big Red Barn* by Margaret Wise Brown.

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

Family Child Care

Materials Needed: scissors, plastic bowl, shoelace, strips of paper, books, small toys, squirting bath toys and bottles

In addition to offering the activity options, consider creating a cutting station for toddlers and preschool-age children who have scissor skills. Use small, blunt, toddler-size scissors. Attach scissors to a plastic bowl with a shoelace. The bowl provides a place for “catching” small pieces of paper a child cuts from a somewhat larger piece of paper.

Toddlers and preschool-age children will enjoy squirting bath toys in a sensory table or bin. A pincer grasp and release will fill the squirt toy with water; a second pincer squeeze squirts water out. Squirting bottles in water fosters hand strength and dexterity.

Foster fine motor development for mobile infants by encouraging them to point to pictures in books and to grasp small toys.