



**Communication/
Language**

Exploring Sounds

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about sounds made by people, animals, and objects.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers identify sounds heard while sitting quietly in their room and talking about their sources.



Cognitive

Sorting and Matching

- Option 1** (OO) A toddler sorts animal- and people-figure toys according to where they sleep.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers put together a group of animal counters of the same color and then sort counters by type of animal.



Self-Regulation

Getting Calm

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers watch a caregiver calm down by pretending to be a tree moving slowly in the wind when music is playing, and standing still when the music stops.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in guided practice calming down by pretending to be a tree moving slowly in the wind when music is playing and standing still when the music stops.



Social-Emotional

Interacting with Others

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about loud and quiet voices.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about being quiet.



Physical/Health

Moving Our Bodies

- Option 1** (IG) Toddlers practice standing or walking on a balance beam.
- Option 2** (IG) Toddlers practice balancing their bodies while walking on a path that includes a bridge (balance beam) over a pretend pond.

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



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal
Awareness of differences in sounds
Expressive language
Toddlers participate in a book sharing about sounds made by people, animals, and objects.



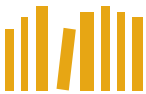
Key Concepts
Sounds



Materials Needed
The Sounds Around Town by Maria Carluccio



Also Promotes
Cognitive



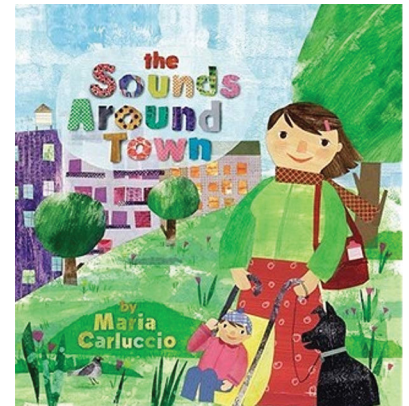
Optional Reading
My Truck is Stuck by Kevin Lewis
Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy Shaw

BEGIN: [*Invite 3–4 toddlers to read a book about sounds we hear. Show the book cover.*]

ASK: What do we see on the cover of our book?

[*Point to the baby and mother when each is mentioned by toddlers. Explain that the baby is in a stroller and seems to be ready to go somewhere.*]

EXPLAIN: Our book tells about the different sounds heard by the baby we see on the cover of our book. We get to follow the baby all day.



We hear sounds wherever we are.

We hear sounds in our room, on our play yard, and at our home.

Let's find out where the baby goes and what sounds the baby hears.

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

- *On each page, point to and describe the person, animal, or object that makes a sound. Some items and their sounds, such as a coffee maker and tea kettle, may be unfamiliar to some toddlers.*
- *Say the sound made by the person, animal, or object. Encourage toddlers to repeat the sound you make.*
- *Explain the source of a sound when it is not obvious or may not be familiar to toddlers. Example: the "snap, snap, snap" sound of coat buttons.*
- *Ask toddlers to tell about sounds they are likely to know. Example: "Our book says the dog is making a 'crunch, crunch, crunch' sound. What is the dog doing that makes a 'crunch, crunch' sound?"*

RECAP: The baby in our book heard many different sounds, all on one day! We made the sounds the baby heard. What sound was the most fun to make?

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

Awareness of differences in sounds is a building block of later reading skills. The current activity promotes the beginnings of sound awareness by helping toddlers recognize, and also make, different sounds. It is beneficial for toddlers to explore sounds made by animals and objects as well as by people. Look for opportunities to help toddlers imagine they are the baby hearing the sounds. Example: "Let's pretend we are the baby in the bathtub. We hear 'pop, pop.'" Also, look for facial expressions or other signs that a toddler may not be familiar with an animal or item featured in the book. Offer explanations as appropriate.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ In the opening segment of the activity, ask toddlers what part of our body helps us hear sounds. Point to your ears when toddlers respond.

Enrichment ■ Invite toddlers to tell about similar sounds they hear at home or elsewhere.

24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Awareness of differences in sounds

Expressive language

Toddlers identify sounds heard while sitting quietly in their room and talking about their sources.



Key Concepts

Sounds



Materials Needed

The Sounds Around Town by Maria Carluccio (see Extra Support tip)



Also Promotes

Cognitive

Invite 4–6 toddlers to join you in listening for sounds in our room. Offer the activity in a quieter area of your room.

Open the session by explaining that we hear sounds all the time. Let's find out what kinds of sounds we can hear in our room. Encourage toddlers to sit quietly and listen for sounds. When we hear a sound, we can use our hands to point to our ears. Then we can take turns telling about the sound we hear. Explain that we may hear sounds that happen outside our room while sitting in our room.

Support 2–4 different “time to listen” periods, each followed by discussion of sounds heard. This enables about 2–3 different sounds to be discussed at one time. Discussing all sounds at one time can present a recall challenge for toddlers. Invite one toddler at a time to talk about the sound he/she heard. Encourage the toddler to describe what he/she heard and maybe try to make the sound. Encourage other toddlers who heard the sound to talk about what they heard.

Provide opportunity for all toddlers to talk about a sound they heard. Conclude the session by asking toddlers to help you tell again all the sounds we heard.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Toddlers' sound identifications are likely to focus on the source of the sound, such as hearing a door close or peers talking or playing. Gently encourage a toddler to tell some specifics of a sound. Example: If a toddler says he/she heard “kids playing,” ask what kinds of sounds children were making while playing. Offer some suggestions, if appropriate. Example: “Did you hear kids talking or laughing?”

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ In the opening segment, remind toddlers that we made and talked about sounds heard by a baby in *The Sounds Around Town* book (Option 1). Show the book cover.

Enrichment ■ Invite toddlers to listen for two sounds that happen at the same time. Example: a door closing and an adult talking.





Interest Area

Materials Needed: several familiar wordless books, such as *A Ball for Daisy* and *Good Dog, Carl*

Provide several wordless books shared recently with toddlers. Invite several toddlers to look at pictures in the book, and think and talk about the sounds that a character in the book might hear. Examples: What would Daisy hear when the ball lost its air? What would Carl hear when the baby was swimming in the fish tank?



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Invite preschool-age children to join the Option 2 activity and participate in the Interest Area activity. School-age children may enjoy making a written or illustrated list of sounds heard in Option 2.



24–36 Months

Option 1 One-to-One



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Problem-solving

A toddler sorts animal- and people-figure toys according to where they sleep.



Key Concepts

People
House
Animals
Barn



Materials Needed

Blocks (see Be Prepared)
4–6 people figures
4–6 animal figures



Also Promotes

Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Big Red Barn by Margaret Wise Brown

Be Prepared: Select blocks that you and a toddler can use to build a simple house and a simple barn. Using a different color of blocks for each structure (without roofs) will help a toddler remember which building is a house (for people figures) and which building is a barn (for animal figures). Put the animal and people figures in a random arrangement on the table and the blocks in the middle of the table.

BEGIN: [*Invite one toddler to play a sorting game with you at a low table. Sit facing the toddler. Point to people and animal figures and blocks when you name each.*]

EXPLAIN: Today we can play a game called *Where Do You Sleep?* We have some little toys that look like people. We have some little toys that look like animals.

We also have blocks so we can build a house for people and a barn for animals. After we build a house and barn, we can put our people and animal toys where they live.

ACT: Will you help me build a house and a barn with our blocks?

[*Support the toddler in constructing two simple structures that represent a house and a barn. Use different color blocks or noticeably different block arrangements for each, so it is easy for the toddler to tell which building is a house and which building is a barn. Do not put on roofs. Put the two structures near the toddler, leaving space for animal and people figures to be on the table near the two structures.*]

EXPLAIN: Let's pretend it is bedtime. It is time for our animal toys and our people toys to go to sleep. Our animal toys will sleep in the barn. Our people toys will sleep in the house.

[*Put animal and people figures in a random arrangement near the barn and house structures, in front of the toddler so he/she can look at each one. It may be helpful for the toddler to change position at the table so there is easy access to the toy figures and the structures.*]

Remember, our game is called *Where Do You Sleep?* For our game, you can look at each of our toys. Then you can put the toy where it goes to sleep.

ASK: [*Pick up a people toy without identifying it. Put the people toy near your face and ask the toy "Where do you sleep?"*]

[*Hand the people toy to the toddler. Point to the house and barn when you mention each.*]

Option 1 continued

- Our toy didn't answer my question! Please help me figure out where our toy sleeps. Is this an animal toy or a people toy?
- Does our people toy sleep in a house or in a barn?

[Encourage the toddler to put the people toy inside the house.]

ACT: *[Invite the toddler to pick up one toy at a time, look closely at the toy, and ask the toy "Where do you sleep?" Then encourage the toddler to put the toy in its appropriate structure.]*

Offer verbal support as appropriate, such as a reminder "People sleep in the house. Animals sleep in the barn."

Continue the game until all toy figures are sorted or the toddler loses interest.]

RECAP: You did a lot of things! You helped build a house and a barn with our blocks. Then you looked closely at our toys. You asked "Where do you sleep?" but none of our toys answered you! You figured out whether a toy was a people toy or an animal toy. Where did you put the animal toys? Where did you put the people-figure toys?



What to Look For—Option 1

Some toddlers may be more interested in the toy figures than in the sorting process. If this occurs, encourage the toddler to notice characteristics that are the same and different among the figures. Consider limiting the number of figures that you invite the toddler to sort.

A toddler may display humor in the game by placing an animal figure in the house for fun, knowing it is in the wrong place! Offer a comment that shows you appreciate the joke! Example: "Oh my, a cow in the house! Where would it sleep?" Playfully suggest the toddler move the animal to the barn.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Offer an additional demonstration of the sorting process by taking a turn placing a toy figure in the correct dwelling. Describe the process. "This is a little girl. Children sleep in a house, so I will put her in the house."

Enrichment ■ Encourage the toddler to make the noise of each animal he/she places in the barn. ■ Use adult and baby animal figures so a toddler can match a cow and calf, for example, after placing them in the barn.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Object inquiry skills

Toddlers put together a group of animal counters of the same color and then sort counters by type of animal.



Key Concepts

Pay attention
Group
Same
Different



Materials Needed

30 jumbo farm animal counters



Also Promotes

Physical/Health
Self-Regulation
Communication/Language



Optional Reading

Red Truck, Yellow Bus: A Book of Colors by Children's Press
Colors by Roger Priddy
My First Colors: Let's Learn Them All by DK Publishing

Be Prepared: Offer the activity at a low table that provides sufficient work space for each of four toddlers. Put the counters in a random arrangement in the middle of the table.

Invite four toddlers to help you put together animal counters that are the same color. Open the session by naming each of the colors represented among the counters. Also, name the types of animals in the collection of counters. Explain that today we will look at the color of our counters. We will not pay attention to the types of animals.

Explain that you are going to put together a group of counters that are the same color. Pick up four counters of the same color, one at a time, and put them in a small group in front of you or where all toddlers can easily see them. Explain your actions. Example: "Here is a red counter. I am going to put this red counter in my group. Here is another red counter. I am going to add this to my group of red counters."

Pick up a fifth counter of a contrasting color that represents an animal already in your group. Add the different-color counter to your group of four counters of the same color. Ask toddlers "Is something wrong with this group of counters?" Assuming toddlers say "yes," ask what is wrong. Build on toddlers' responses to emphasize that the color of one counter is different from the color of the other counters. We want to put together a group of counters of the same color. Remove the different-color counter from your group and explain that now there is a group of counters of the same color.

Invite toddlers to put together their own group of counters of the same color. Help toddlers choose a color. Each toddler needs a different color. Encourage toddlers to pick up one counter of their designated color and put the counter in front of them. Describe (with pointing) what color each toddler is looking for. Then encourage toddlers to find more counters in the middle of the table that are the same color and put the counters in their group. Encourage toddlers to pick up one counter at a time. Explain that we are not in a hurry. We may need to wait for someone to take a counter from the middle of the table before we pick up a counter.

After toddlers have formed groups of counters of the same color, invite toddlers to put together the same types of animals in their group. This will lead to mostly groups of two counters of the same animal (and also same color). Offer a demonstration, if appropriate. Example: two pigs, two cows.

If toddler interest and time permit, encourage toddlers to put together another set of counters, this time with a color that was not the focus of their first round of sorting. Invite toddlers to put their counters in the middle of the table. Mix up the colors of counters in the arrangement.

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

Color is a strong interest of many toddlers at this age, and extending this interest to a simple sorting task is an achievable challenge for most toddlers. Finding a specific color in the collection of counters in the middle of the table will be most challenging at the beginning of the activity, when a relatively large collection of counters is available. You can impact this challenge by providing more or less space between counters in the middle of the table.

Look for opportunities to support toddlers in making the transition to putting together counters that represent the same animal (within each toddler's group of the same color). This task requires toddlers to look more carefully at counter characteristics. The task also involves the self-regulation skill of shifting attention.

It may be helpful or necessary for you to facilitate turn-taking as toddlers wait for a peer to pick up a counter. Verbal support for picking up one counter at a time may be beneficial. See Extra Support tips.

Avoid asking toddlers how many counters they have in their group; numbers and counting are more appropriately introduced in the preschool years. Color names are an important part of the activity, but a toddler can readily participate without knowing all colors represented by the counters. Focus on the concepts of same and different in relation to color.

A Block 4 (Cognitive) activity involved sorting animal counters by color (Option 1) and type of animal (Option 3) in one-to-one settings. The current activity is slightly more challenging because it occurs in an informal gathering and involves the selection of counters from a larger collection of counters.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Remind toddlers to pick up one counter at a time. Explain that it is hard to pick up two or more counters with one hand at the same time. ■ Demonstrate using a thumb and first finger (pincer grasp) to pick up a counter.

Enrichment ■ When toddlers tell why the different-color counter does not belong in your group of counters of the same color, respond by saying that the different-color counter is the same type of animal as another animal(s) in your existing group of four counters. Ask "What's wrong with that?" Help toddlers explain that we are not paying attention to type of animal. We are paying attention to color.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: jumbo animal counters, bowls the color of animal counters

Extend Option 2 by putting the animal counters in a random arrangement in the center of a low table and placing the bowls in a circle around the counters. Invite several toddlers to put animal counters in the bowl that matches their color. Example: all red counters in the red bowl. Toddlers may want to choose one or two colors of counters they are responsible for matching to bowls. If you do not have an appropriately-colored bowl for each of the colors of counters, use bowls of the same color and place a small piece of cardstock inside each bowl that represents one of the colors (made by a marker or crayon). Invite several toddlers to help you make the colored pieces of cardstock.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: clean food cartons, baby toys, building toys, wallets, purses, keys, beads, muffin pans, plastic alphabet letters

In addition to offering Options 1 and 2, provide additional opportunities for toddlers to sort toys in your setting. One possibility is to help toddlers make a parking lot for toy vehicles and arrange vehicles in groups, such as toy trucks together and toy cars together. Also, when toddlers help put away toys, talk about what goes together. Focus on one area at a time. Example: "Our star builders go in the big container. Our soft blocks go together on the shelf."

Preschool-age children may enjoy making a pretend store and organizing various items in groups, such as things for infants, things for parents, and things for older children. Provide clean food cartons, baby toys, books, building toys, wallets, purses, and keys.

Preschool-age and older children enjoy stringing beads. Provide a tray of assorted beads and talk with children about how the beads are the same and different. Some children may be interested in finding flower beads or sparkle beads for a necklace. On another day, provide a sorting activity with a bead tray and a muffin pan. Older children may enjoy sorting plastic alphabet letters into groups of uppercase and lowercase.

Present two identical toys to an infant who sits on his/her own. Talk with the infant about how the two toys are the same as he/she explores the toys.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal Self-control

Toddlers watch a caregiver calm down by pretending to be a tree moving slowly in the wind when music is playing, and standing still when the music stops.



Key Concepts

Tree
Calm
Focus
Stand still



Materials Needed

Recorded music (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Social-Emotional
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: Secure calm music, such as nature sounds, and a device for playing the music. You may wish to review the activity plan for pretending to be a tree moving in the wind (Block 22, Self-Regulation). Arrange for an adult to help you with the activity by managing the music and demonstrating the pretend tree movements, if you do not wish to do so. Manage the music if the adult helper offers the demonstrations.

BEGIN: [*Invite 3–5 toddlers to help you pretend to be a tree.*]

We know how to pretend we are a tree moving in the wind. Pretending to be a tree is a good way to calm down.

ASK: How do we pretend to be a tree?

[*Build on toddlers' descriptions, emphasizing the following:*

- *We stand tall and pretend our feet are the roots of the tree, buried in the ground.*
- *Our feet do not move or lift off the floor.*
- *We pretend our arms are the branches of the tree, and our fingers are the leaves of the tree.*
- *We move our arms and fingers in pretend wind.*]

EXPLAIN: I am going to pretend to be a tree moving in the wind. This time, I am going to move slowly to music. The wind is soft and quiet. The music is gentle.

I will stop moving when the music stops. I will stand still. I will pretend the slow wind stopped when the music stopped. I will pretend to be a tree when the wind is not blowing. There is no wind to move my branches.

ACT: [*Ask the helper to begin the music. Demonstrate the tree movements as described in this plan. Move your arms and fingers slowly. Maintain a steady movement. After about a minute, the helper should turn off the music. Stand still with your arms stretched out as pretend branches. Try not to move your arms and fingers. Then put your arms at the side of your body and relax.*]

- ASK:**
- Did my pretend tree move slowly?
 - Did I look at other things when I was pretending to be a tree?
 - What happened when the music stopped?
 - Do I look calm?

**Option 1 continued**

EXPLAIN: I focused on moving my arms and fingers slowly. I focused on keeping my feet in the same place. The calm music helped me move slowly. Listening to the music told me when to stand still.

RECAP: We can calm our bodies by pretending to be a tree moving in the wind. Today I moved slowly to quiet music. I paid attention to my body and the music. I stood still when the music stopped. I pretended the wind stopped blowing. The soft wind was no longer moving the branches and leaves of my tree.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Self-control

Toddlers participate in guided practice calming down by pretending to be a tree moving slowly in the wind when music is playing and standing still when the music stops.



Key Concepts

Tree
Calm
Focus
Stand still



Materials Needed

Recorded music (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Social-Emotional
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who participated in Option 1. Secure calm music, such as nature sounds, and a device for playing the music. Arrange for an adult to demonstrate the tree movements if you do not wish to do so. The activity works best when one adult leads toddlers in the tree movement and the other adult manages the music.

Invite 3–5 toddlers to practice getting calm by pretending to be a tree moving in the wind. Use Option 1 strategies to provide a brief description of a tree and the activity. Remind toddlers that our branches and leaves move slowly to music. We stand still when the music stops. We pretend the slow wind has stopped. We are a tree without any wind blowing near us when we stand still. Then we relax our body.

Lead toddlers in pretending their body is a tree moving in slow wind. Encourage toddlers to move their arms (pretend branches) and fingers (pretend leaves) slowly. Encourage toddlers to focus on the music and what their body is doing, and not on other things.

Stop the music and, if appropriate, remind toddlers to stand still with arms (branches) out. After several moments, encourage toddlers to relax.

Describe toddlers' efforts. Offer supportive reminders of parts of the activity that may need more attention, such as keeping feet in place and not paying attention to other things.

Then lead toddlers in another round of practice. Conclude the activity by encouraging toddlers to talk about what it's like to pretend to be a tree moving in the wind and then standing still.



24–36 Months

Option 3 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Self-control

Toddlers practice calming down by pretending to be a tree moving slowly in the wind when music is playing, and standing still when the music stops, with minimal caregiver guidance.



Key Concepts

Tree
Calm
Focus
Stand still



Materials Needed

Recorded music (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Cognitive
Social-Emotional
Physical/Health

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with the tree movement activity demonstrated in Option 1 and practiced in Option 2. Secure recorded calm music and a device for playing it. You may wish to secure calm music not offered in Options 1 and 2. Arrange for another adult to briefly demonstrate the tree movements if you do not wish to do so.

Invite 3–5 toddlers to practice getting calm by pretending to be a tree moving in the wind while music is playing. Remind toddlers that we move our arms (branches) and fingers (leaves) slowly to the quiet music. We stand still when the music stops. Our soft, slow wind stops when the music stops. Offer a brief demonstration. Offer two rounds of practice, with a pause between each practice to briefly talk about the experience. Emphasize the importance of focusing on our bodies and not looking at what else is happening around us.

What to Look For—Options 1–3

The pretend tree movement activity was offered in Block 22 as the third of three mindfulness activities in the ELM Curriculum for older toddlers (24–36 months). The current activity is an adaptation of the Block 22 approach. Three aspects of the current activity are different than the Block 22 version: slow movements are emphasized, rather than slower and faster movements; calm music is provided; and toddlers are encouraged to stand still when the music stops.

Toddlers generally enjoy moving their bodies while pretending to be a tree. The standing still part of the activity may be somewhat challenging for some toddlers. Offering an image to think about—a tree with no wind moving it—may be helpful. Toddlers who enjoyed moving quickly and slowly in the Block 22 version of the tree movement activity may need some verbal support for remembering to move slowly in the current activity.

More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–3

Extra support ■ Incorporate parts of the Option 1 demonstration into Option 2 if it appears toddlers need reminders of how to move their bodies. Invite several toddlers to lead others in Option 3.

Enrichment ■ Invite several toddlers to lead others in Option 3.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: see activity description

Extend and adapt the Options 2 and 3 activities by encouraging toddlers to pretend they are a flower or tall grass moving in slow wind. Toddlers may want to put their hands above their heads when pretending to be a flower and next to the sides of their body when pretending to be tall grass. Omit the standing still part of the activity if music is not available.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Preschool-age and older children may enjoy taking turns turning the music on and off for Options 2 or 3. Preschool-age children also may want to participate in Options 2 and 3.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills
Awareness of emotions

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about loud and quiet voices.



Key Concepts

Inside
Outside
Excited
Mad



Materials Needed

Voices Are Not for Yelling
(Board Book) by Elizabeth Verdick



Also Promotes

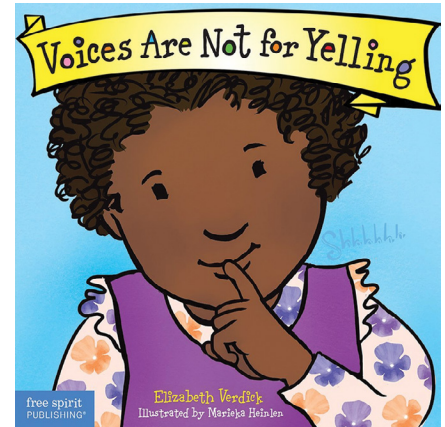
Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

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

BEGIN: [Invite up to three toddlers to join you in reading a book about our voices.

Display book cover. Point to book title as you read it.]

Here is the cover of the book we will look at together. Our book is called *Voices Are Not for Yelling*.



ASK: Please look at the girl on the cover of our book.

- What is the girl doing with her finger? (putting finger over her lips)
- What does it mean when people put a finger over their lips? (they want someone to be quiet or speak with a quiet voice)

EXPLAIN: Our book tells us about being inside and being outside. Inside means we are inside a building. We might be in a room like our room or the hallway of our building. We might be in our home or an office or store. These are inside places.

Let's all point to where we go when we go outside.

[Lead toddlers in pointing to an outside area.]

ACT: [Read the book's text and use your own words to describe pictures and elaborate on text you wish to emphasize, such as the following:

- the facial expressions of children who are excited and children who are mad
- what is happening in the pictures that show children feeling excited and/or mad
- people can hear our words better when we use a quieter voice
- how a boy in our book used a quieter voice to tell an adult that he was feeling mad

Describe (or encourage toddlers to describe) how we take slow and deep breaths to calm down when we are excited or mad. Lead toddlers in breathing slowly and deeply.]

**Option 1 continued**

RECAP: All of us have an inside voice and an outside voice. An inside voice is quiet. An outside voice is loud. Sometimes our voice is really loud when we get excited or mad. People may have a hard time hearing our words when we use a really loud voice or we yell. It is easier for people to hear our words when we use a quieter voice.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

Feeling excited and mad are explored in prior ELM activities. The current activity can help toddlers connect quieter and louder voices to feeling excited or mad. The activity also emphasizes benefits of getting calm: (1) we can use a quieter voice, and (2) other people can hear our words better when we use a quieter voice. Our words are hard to hear when we use a really loud voice or we yell.

The activity description suggests that toddlers briefly practice breathing deeply and slowly as a way to calm down. This technique is introduced early in ELM Curriculum activities for older toddlers (Block 2, Self-Regulation) and regularly included in other activities (example: Block 21, Social-Emotional). Watching toddlers' efforts during a brief practice in the current activity can help you identify toddlers who may benefit from further support for calming their minds and bodies.

📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ Explain that shouting and yelling mean the same thing. (Shouting is a focus of the Block 21 Social-Emotional activity.)

Enrichment ■ In the picture of fish in a tank, draw attention to the bubbles made by the fish when breathing out slowly. ■ When the book text describes talking and laughing as ways to use our voice, explain that singing is another way we use our voice.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Social interaction skills
Awareness of emotions

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about being quiet.



Key Concepts

Quiet
Still



Materials Needed

Quiet by Tomie dePaola



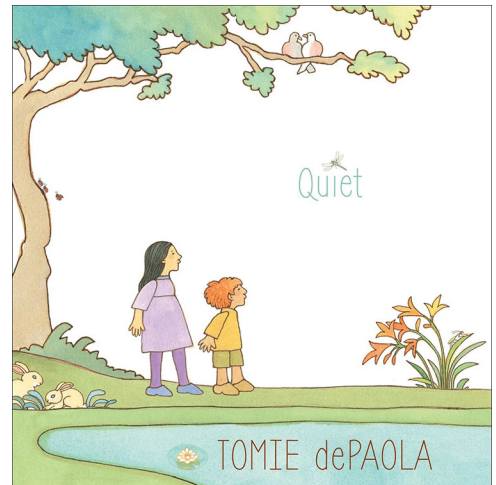
Also Promotes

Communication/Language
Self-Regulation

Invite 3–4 toddlers to join you to share a book about being quiet. Show and describe the book cover. Emphasize that the two children are taking time to look at something, maybe the dragonfly that is just above the book title. Explain that our story tells about the two children, dog, and older man shown opposite the title page inside the book (also shown on first text page).

Read the book’s text and pause on each page so toddlers have time to look carefully at the rich illustrations. Respond to toddler comments or pointing. Emphasize the following:

- On the page that describes and shows “trees waving their leaves,” remind toddlers of how we can pretend to be a tree with leaves moving in the wind.
- On the page about being “quiet, like all our friends,” ask toddlers to tell about the eyes of the older man, two children, and dog (they are closed). Also, explain that still means something is not moving. Remind toddlers that we did not move our arms or fingers (branches and leaves) when we pretended to be a tree. We stood still. (Self-Regulation activity, current block)



Conclude the book discussion by engaging toddlers in a brief discussion of why it is special to be quiet and still. Ask why we can think better when we are quiet and see better when we are still. Show the pertinent pages of the book (girl thinking, boy seeing) to support toddlers’ exploration of these questions.

👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

The book featured in this activity extends ideas offered in prior activities, especially good things that can happen when we are calm. Option 1 promotes the idea that people can better hear our words when we use a quieter voice. The *Quiet* book used in the current activity emphasizes more benefits: we can think better and we can see better when we are calm. The engaging illustrations and quiet quality of the book will appeal to many toddlers. Look for ways to help toddlers connect the book’s description of trees “waving their leaves” and being still to the experience of pretending to be a tree (Self-Regulation activities in current block and Block 22).

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

Extra support ■ On the page that tells about the dog “rushing after the ball,” explain that rushing is like running. ■ Explain that the older man is using a stick to help him walk. The stick is sometimes called a walking stick.

Enrichment ■ After the book sharing, show the page with birds flying and then the page of birds “taking a rest, singing their song.” Invite toddlers to tell what is different about the birds on these two pages. ■ Ask toddlers whether we need to be still (not moving) in order to be quiet.



Interest Area

Materials Needed: *Voices Are Not for Yelling* (Board Book) by Elizabeth Verdick, *Quiet* by Tomie dePaola

Offer a calm activity for toddlers by making the two books available in a quiet area of the room and encouraging toddlers to look at smaller things shown in each book’s pictures. As examples, point to small letter blocks and fish on the first page of the *Voices Are Not for Yelling* book, and the variety of insects and the animal family shown on the first page of the *Quiet* book. Explain that being calm can help us look carefully. Encourage toddlers to talk about features of book illustrations they did not notice when the book was shared in a small gathering of friends. It is not necessary for toddlers to know the names of things they see in illustrations. What’s important is noticing the smaller aspects of pictures.



Family Child Care

Materials Needed: see activity description

Preschool-age children may enjoy participating in Options 1 and 2. The illustrations of the *Quiet* book in Option 2 are likely to appeal to younger toddlers (12–24 months) and mobile infants. Mobile infants may enjoy manipulating and looking at the board book used in Option 1.



24–36 Months

Option 1 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

Toddlers practice standing or walking on a balance beam.



Key Concepts

Balance
Take turns



Materials Needed

Low balance beam (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

Self-Regulation
Social-Emotional

Be Prepared: A balance beam for toddlers is typically the following size: height 2–3 inches, width 4–6 inches, and length 4–6 feet. Remove all items, such as toys and furnishings, within three feet of all sides of the beam.

BEGIN: [*Invite 2–3 toddlers to join you for a balance activity. Sit facing the toddlers.*]

EXPLAIN: Standing and walking on a balance beam feels very different than standing and walking on the floor or ground. We need to focus on keeping our body balanced. Sometimes it helps to put our arms out to the sides of our body.

[*Demonstrate extending your arms while standing still and then walking slowly with arms out to the sides. Invite toddlers to put their arms out to their sides while standing.*]

It is okay if you want to stand on the balance beam but not walk today. Maybe you will want to walk on the balance beam some other time.

We want to keep safe when we use the balance beam. We do not make a lot of noise or get near the beam when someone is on the beam. We take turns on the balance beam.

[*Describe the following rules for safe play on the balance beam. Include additional rules your room may have.*]

- *Just one friend on the balance beam.*
- *Every friend gets a turn.*
- *We wait for a turn. I will tell you when it is your turn. I will help you remember.*]

ACT: [*Invite one toddler to stand at the end of the balance beam. Offer your hand as support as the toddler gains balance. Holding or providing physical support is not recommended. Encourage the toddler to stand for a moment on the beam (to get balanced) and then walk on the beam if he/she wishes. Explain that we are not in a hurry. Encourage the toddler to take his/her time. A toddler may prefer to stand only on the beam.*]

**Option 1 continued**

Encourage a toddler to hold his/her arms out to the side for improved balance. Kneel next to the balance beam to provide a hand of support or a brief, gentle word of encouragement. Encourage and praise patience for toddlers who are waiting.

Provide each toddler with 2–3 turns on the balance beam if toddler interest and time permit.]

RECAP: We practiced standing or walking on the balance beam. Standing and walking on a balance beam is very different than standing or walking on a floor. Practice on a balance beam can help us balance our body when we stand and move. What is one way we can balance our body? (put out our arms) We also practiced waiting for our turn.

[Offer comments on each toddler's participation. Examples: "You are learning how it feels to move on the balance beam, David. Your feet slipped, but you got back on the beam and tried again." "Bree, you waited for your turn. You walked right across the balance beam. You balanced your body!"]

👁️ What to Look For—Option 1

You will notice a range of ability and levels of interest in using the balance beam. Some toddlers will be at ease walking along the beam. If toddlers are not accustomed to physical challenges, it may take time to develop confidence and skill. For a toddler who is new to the balance activity, he/she may want to begin by simply stepping onto the beam and then returning to the floor. Encourage toddlers to set their own pace for learning to balance. If a toddler falls, ensure he/she is okay and encourage him to return to standing or walking on the beam.

Taking turns is essential to the safety of this activity. In general, children of this age have a limited understanding of how and why we take turns. Often toddlers say "my turn" without understanding its meaning. This self-regulation skill takes time to develop. Adult guidance in structuring turn-taking is typically needed. Facilitate turn-taking by announcing each turn. Offer advance notice. Example: "There are three friends for the balance beam. We take turns. First Jacob, next David, and then Bree." Also, consider placing carpet squares in a line where waiting toddlers may stand.

Consider providing opportunities for toddlers who are interested in but reluctant to walk on a balance beam. If a toddler tends to arrive at your room before most others, put out the low balance beam at arrival time for practice. Another possibility is to place an aerobic step in an open area of the room and encourage a toddler to step up and walk on the step.

📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

Extra support ■ If a toddler is not ready to try the balance beam, use nonslip place mats or carpet squares to create a path on the floor for the toddler to follow.

Enrichment ■ For a toddler ready for additional balance experience, suggest he/she turn around on the beam and walk the opposite direction.



24–36 Months

Option 2 Informal Gathering



Skill and Goal

Gross motor development

Toddlers practice balancing their bodies while walking on a path that includes a bridge (balance beam) over a pretend pond.



Key Concepts

Balance



Materials Needed

- 8 carpet squares
- Low balance beam (see Be Prepared)
- Toy fish (see Be Prepared)



Also Promotes

- Self-Regulation
- Communication/Language
- Social-Emotional

Be Prepared: This activity is for toddlers who readily walked on the balance beam in Option 1 or a similar activity. Create a path and bridge over a pretend pond by placing four carpet squares that lead to the balance beam (bridge) and four carpet squares on the other side of the beam. Leave 4–6-inch spaces between the squares. Put toy fish and/or small water-related props on either side of the beam to help toddlers pretend they are walking on a bridge over a pond. Ensure there are no other items within three feet of all sides of the arrangement. Arrange for another adult to help with the activity.

Invite 3–4 toddlers to practice walking on a bridge over a pond. Describe the carpet square and balance beam arrangement as steps that lead to a bridge over a pond and more steps to follow after we get off our make-believe bridge. Draw attention to the pond props. Remind toddlers that we can put out our arms to help us balance our bodies when we walk on the balance beam. Lead toddlers in extending their arms in a standing position.

Explain that we pay attention to important rules so everyone is safe. The rules include only one toddler on the bridge at a time, and everyone gets a turn. Explain that (name of other adult) will help stand near the beginning of our path to help us know when it is our turn.

Invite toddlers to take turns walking along the path to the pretend bridge, walking across the bridge, and walking on the path on the other side of the bridge. The adult helper's role is to let toddlers know when it is their turn to begin the walk. Avoid using the carpet squares as places for toddlers to stand while waiting to cross the bridge. It is useful locomotor practice for toddlers to move from carpet squares to balance beam and back to carpet squares without significant pause along the way.

Position yourself near the balance beam to offer encouragement and a hand if a toddler seems to be losing balance. Remind toddlers that we are not in a hurry to cross the pond. It is a beautiful pretend pond and we want to enjoy the walk.

Repeat the walk for each interested toddler. Conclude the activity by describing what happened and talking with toddlers about what it is like to walk on carpet squares and on the balance beam. Example: "How do we use our feet to walk on the balance beam? How do we use our feet to walk on a carpet square?"

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

This activity combines additional practice in walking on a balance beam with experiences walking on a different surface (carpet squares) prior to and after the beam. Toddlers may find it difficult to talk about the differences, as suggested in the Recap. But most likely, toddlers will notice the transition from carpet square to beam in terms of soft/hard surface, amount of space for feet, and the need to move carefully to balance their bodies on the beam.

More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

Extra support ■ Remind toddlers to step up when they reach the balance beam. ■ Encourage toddlers to stand on the balance beam for a little while before starting to walk across the beam.

Enrichment ■ Arrange one or both sets of carpet squares in a curve.

**Interest Area**

Materials Needed: footprints or carpet squares, animal figures, blocks, sturdy branch or short board, sensory table and water

Toddlers will enjoy following a path around the room. Attach footprints to the floor or lay carpet squares end to end to make a pretend bridge.

Invite toddlers to create a bridge for animal figures by placing blocks end-to-end in the building area. Arrange animal figures on the floor and suggest the toddlers help the animals cross the bridge. On another day, create a bridge in the sensory table using a sturdy branch or a short board. Add a few inches of water and animal figures toddlers can move along the bridge.

**Family Child Care**

Materials Needed: folded bedsheet

Preschool-age and school-age children will enjoy participating in Option 2. Offer achievable challenges, such as turning around and going the opposite direction, balancing on one foot, and taking 1–2 steps backward. Crawling infants and younger toddlers (12–24 months) will enjoy crawling or walking the length of a folded bedsheet.