

Blow Things

*You're blowing
a bubble!*



Let your child discover that she can move light objects by blowing on them.

You will be introducing your child to a new way to experiment with cause and effect.



Why this is important

Blowing an object produces an unusual result that your child may not be used to. She will see that different objects react in different ways to the same action. Your child will enjoy the control she has over an object, such as a bubble wand or a straw, through this simple cause-and-effect game.

What you do

- Introduce your child to purposeful blowing by saying, *Blow* and then gently blowing against her cheek or hair.
- Pucker your mouth and blow through a bubble wand so she can see the bubbles forming. Let her try. At first, she may suck in air instead of blowing out.
- Provide many opportunities for her to practice blowing until she masters the skill.
- Offer her simple items to blow against such as a feather, water, plastic ball, or bits of paper. Tell her about the effect of her actions. *You made ripples in the water! You are blowing the ball across the table!* **Only allow your child to use whistles, straws, and other small things while you are watching. When you are not directly supervising your child's play, remove anything that is small enough for your child to swallow or long enough to injure the back of your child's throat.**

Another idea

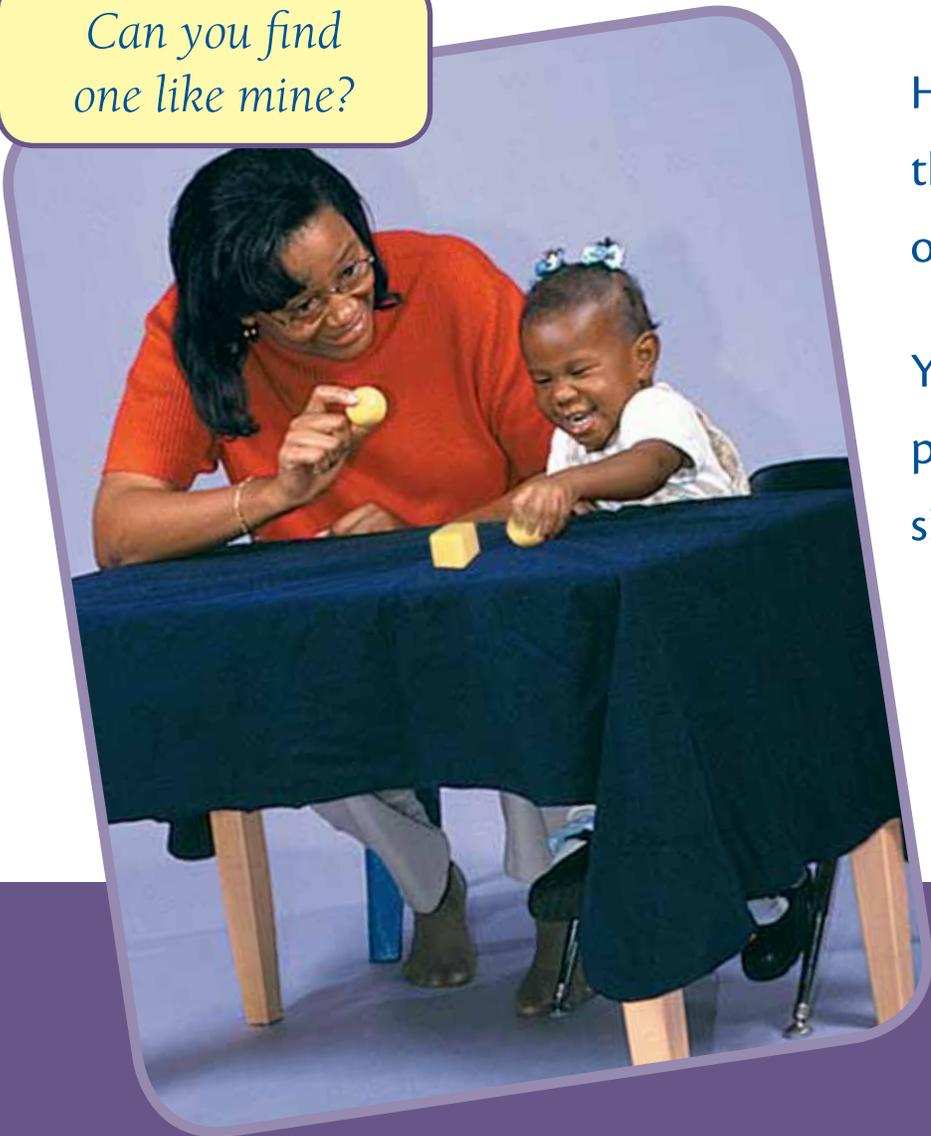
Offer her noise-making objects to practice with. A horn, whistle, or party blower will produce a loud noise that will delight your child. Puff out your cheeks to blow through the noisemaker and then let your child try. *You blew into the horn and it made a loud sound!*

Let's read together!

Bubbles, Bubbles
by Kathi Appelt

Matching Shapes and Sizes

Can you find one like mine?



Help your child notice two things that match in a set of three items.

Your child may begin to pay closer attention to similarities and differences.



Why this is important

This game will help your child notice the similarities and differences in objects. When asked to choose or identify an object, she must focus on an item's identifying features (hard, soft, round, straight, big, small, etc.). Noticing these special features helps your child recognize new objects and compare them to things she has seen before. Practicing with three-dimensional objects that she can hold and explore will also help prepare her to notice the distinctive features of two-dimensional items such as letters on a page.

What you do

- Offer your toddler three objects of the same size and color. Two of them should be the same shape, such as two yellow balls and a yellow block. Talk about each object she picks up. *That is a smooth, round ball. It's yellow.* Point out the two similar objects.
- Pick up one of the two similar objects and hold it up for her to see. Ask her to find the other one. *Can you find one like this?* When she finds it, hold your hand next to hers so that she can see the objects together.
- Provide encouragement if she chooses the different object. *You found the one that is different. This other one is like mine. See, it's round.*
- Speak lovingly each time she chooses, even if she chooses the object that doesn't match. At first she may choose randomly until she understands the game. Give her many opportunities to play.

Another idea

Some items that work well for matching shapes are: spoons and forks, balls and blocks, or round and square plastic lids. To practice with items of varying sizes, try big and little spoons, plastic cups, or socks.

Let's read together!

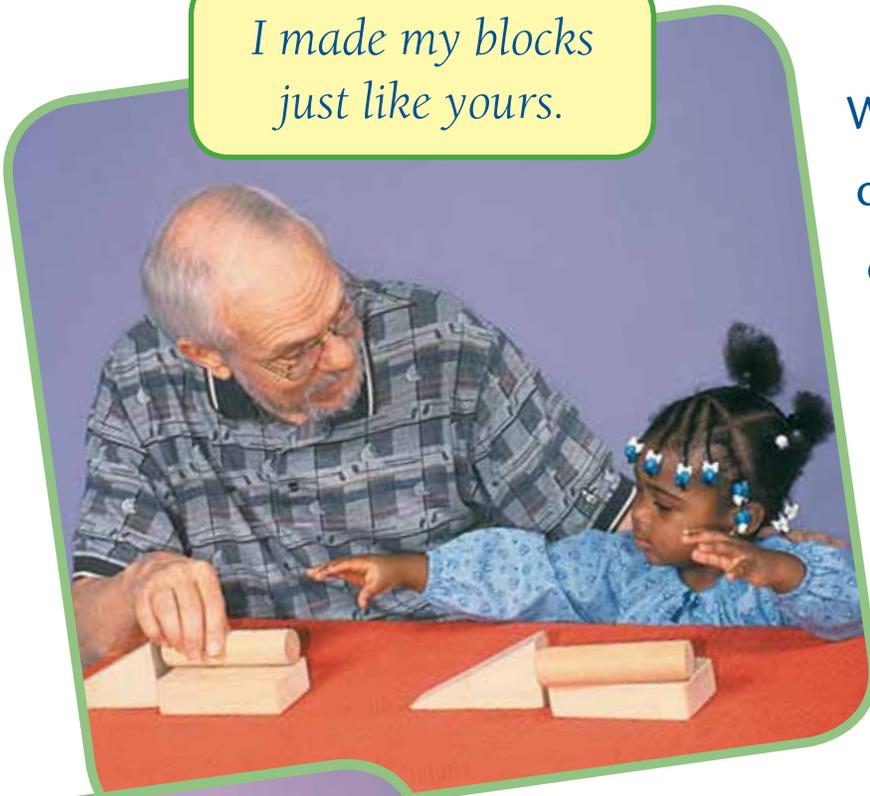
Mouse Shapes
by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Build Together

I made my blocks just like yours.

While building with blocks and other materials, copy what your child builds and later invite her to follow your lead.

Your child may become more aware of patterns and learn that patterns can be repeated or varied.



Here are some other things we can build with.



Why this is important

When you copy something your child builds, you help her notice and learn about patterns. Describing what you are doing as you copy her gives her language to describe her actions. If she wants to use the blocks to build what you are building, she will need to listen to words that give directions. Gaining directions from words is an important skill that she will use throughout her life.

What you do

- Sit with your child and invite her to join you in playing with blocks. Arrange the blocks so that you both have a few to play with. Make sure your blocks are similar to hers.
- Encourage your child to begin building with her blocks, and then copy her movements. Talk about what you are doing. *I'm putting my long block on its side, just like you did.*
- Point out similarities between the two finished structures.
- Let your child choose her blocks, and do not insist that she imitate you or build in a particular way. At first, she may not sit still for the game or fully understand what you are asking her to do.
- Invite her to be the leader again, and this time ask for direction as you play. *What block should I use next?*
- Make the game challenging by giving her directions to follow as you build a specific object such as a train. *Let's each make a train.* Build your structure slowly from left to right, and ask her to find each block that you use. *Find your big green block and that will be the engine.*

Another idea

Look for other materials to use for a shared activity. You could string a necklace together or build a fence with sticks. Any matched set of items will work.

Let's read together!

Hands Can
by Cheryl Willis Hudson

Cardboard Boxes

What a cozy house you have!



Observe your child as she plays with boxes, and occasionally describe what she is doing.

Allowing your child to play freely gives her the chance to plan her own experience and use her imagination.



Why this is important

Your child needs opportunities to plan her play and create her own spaces. A cardboard box provides a place for active and quiet play. When she can make choices about her play she will feel good about herself and her ability to make decisions. She may also benefit from the secluded space the box provides.

What you do

- Give your child a box in a place where she has plenty of room to play with it. Before play, examine the boxes. **Don't use boxes with staples. Remove any small, loose pieces of paper, cardboard, or other packing materials. During play, watch to be sure that your child doesn't tear off anything that she might put in her mouth and choke on.**
- Lay the box on its side if it is too tall for her to step into. If she gets in the box but cannot get out, gently tip it over so she can crawl out.
- Notice how she manipulates a small box by putting it on her head or filling it with toys. With a large box, she may enjoy sitting peacefully inside, tipping it over, or climbing on it.
- Talk to her about her movements using the words *in*, *under*, *on*, or *out*.
- Allow her to explore without direction, but offer help if needed.

Another idea

Look for boxes with words printed on them. If she notices the letters, trace them with your finger and talk to her about what the letters say. *This says bananas because bananas were in this box.*

Let's read together!

The Birthday Box
by Leslie Patricelli

Talking Throughout the Day

See the pretty flower?



Talk to your child frequently throughout the day, naming objects and describing his actions.

Your child will learn many words and may notice the many ways that words are used.



Why this is important

Letting your child hear specific words for objects and actions helps him understand the purpose of language. He will better understand simple words that are directly related to his actions. He is less likely to understand when given a long sentence. Offering a word or two to describe his actions will help him link the word to its meaning. When he knows what certain words mean, he will begin to practice saying them.

What you do

- Speak to your child with simple sentences and specific language. Instead of saying, *Bring me your things, please*, try saying, *Please bring me your shoes*.
- Offer verbal feedback as he completes the task. *You brought your blue shoes*. Talk about what you expect him to do and what he has just done.
- Replace phrases such as *Let's go* with more specific language. *Let's take a ride in the car*. Use the same specific language when offering encouragement. *You climbed in the car all by yourself!*
- Repeat his own words back to him in simple sentences to give him a pattern for speech. When he says, *Flower*, try to understand what he is trying to say, and expand on his words. *Yes. I see the pretty, yellow flower*.

Ready to move on?

As he understands more words, offer more complex instructions such as: *Please put your blue ball in the toy box*.

Let's read together!

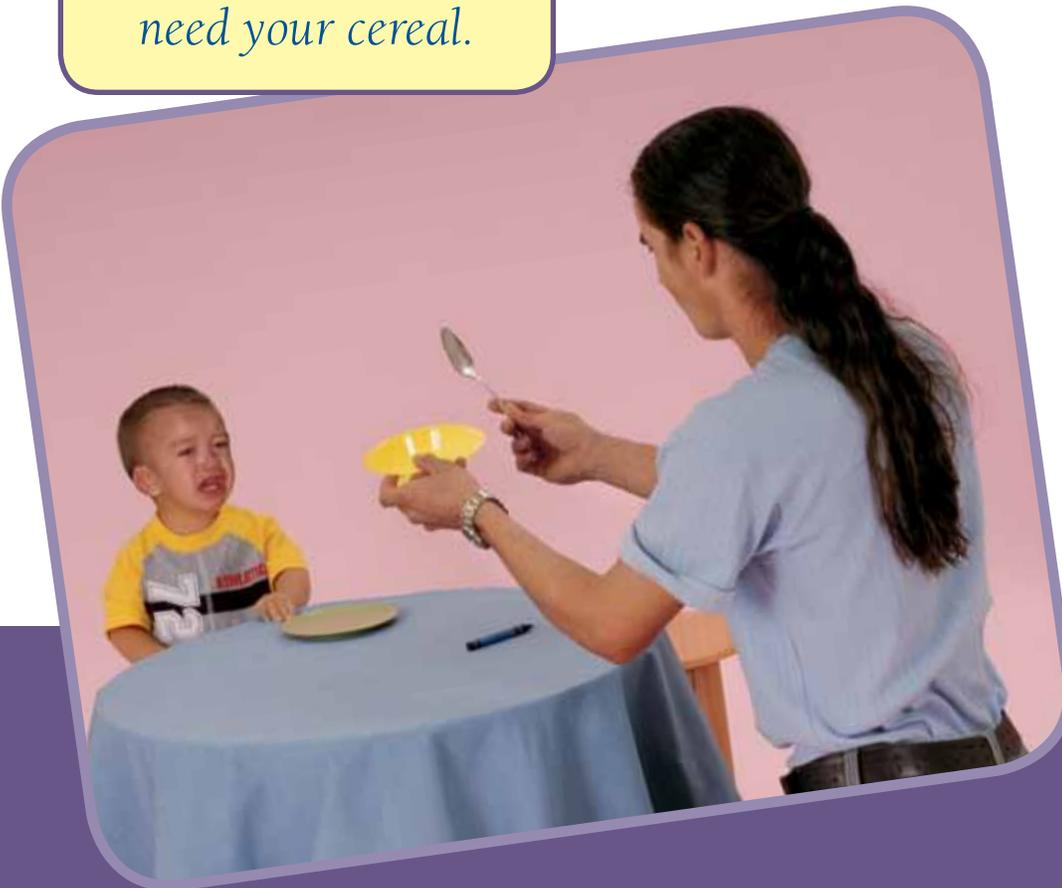
My Love For You
by Susan L. Roth

Expressing Needs

Talk to your child about what he needs.

Giving him words to express his needs gradually develops his ability to tell you what he needs and wants.

You're hungry. You need your cereal.





Why this is important

By giving your child the words to express his needs, you help him begin to understand that he needs certain things in certain situations. When you ask him about his needs, he has the opportunity to use gestures and simple words to express himself. The more words he can use to clearly express his needs, the more likely his needs will be met.

What you do

- Give your child words to describe his needs. Help your child talk about what he sees and experiences. Here are a few examples:

You need a spoon for your cereal. I'll get it for you.

You need a bath before bedtime. Can you find your rubber boat?

You need a warm coat to go out today. It's cold outside.

- Guess what his needs are by observing his gestures and body language. When he looks or points at an object, try to put his action into words to show him you are trying to understand. *Do you need the doll?* He will appreciate your effort to understand and help him.
- Notice when he begins to use simple words such as *cold* or *hungry* to let you know what he needs. Respond to him quickly to let him know you understand.

Ready to move on?

You can encourage your child to talk about his own needs by asking questions. *Do you have something to put your sand in? How can you reach that high shelf? Would you like me to hold you?*

Let's read together!

Big Dog & Little Dog
by Dav Pilkey

Sorting Shapes

You're putting the ball in the round hole.



Talk to your child about shapes as she sorts objects into containers.

Your child will begin to recognize and understand the similarities and differences between objects.



Why this is important

When your child practices picking up and sorting objects, she gains hand-eye coordination by manipulating the toys and judging each characteristic she sees. As she plays and you describe the objects she sorts, she gains an understanding of basic shapes. As she gets older, that understanding will help her recognize the straight and curved lines of letters in reading and writing.

What you do

- Give your child one or two balls to drop into a wide-mouthed container such as an oatmeal box. Keep the game very simple to start. Notice how she drops a ball in, listens for the *clunk* of it hitting the bottom, and then dumps it out again.
- Offer her two containers when she seems ready for more variety. Prepare each container with a different-shaped hole in the lid, such as a square opening and a round opening. Give her a few blocks to go with the balls she already has.
- Show your child how the block fits in the square hole and the ball fits in the round hole, or wait to see if she tries it herself.
- Encourage her to continue when she successfully drops in a block.
You fit the block into the square hole! Now can you put the ball in the round hole?
- Offer help if your child appears frustrated. Add more shapes to the game only after she becomes skilled at sorting one or two shapes.

Another idea

Offer your child only the lids and containers to play with. Help her use her finger to trace the holes on each lid as you talk about the shape. *This lid has a square hole with straight sides and corners.*

Let's read together!

Bear in a Square
by Stella Blackstone

Choosing Lids

*You found a lid
that fits just right!*



Offer your child a variety of jars with screw-on lids and talk about what he's doing as he experiments with them.

Your child will practice turning the lids to open and close them and may begin to make thoughtful choices about which lid to use for each jar.



Why this is important

Giving your child the opportunity to experiment with containers and screw-on lids encourages him to use a trial-and-error approach to solving a problem. When given choices, your child may choose randomly at first. However, through repetition, he will begin to develop problem-solving skills and make more selective choices. This activity also encourages him to coordinate his hands to help him select and screw on the lids.

What you do

- Show your child a plastic container with a screw-on lid. Slowly unscrew the lid so that he can see the motion.
- Drop a toy in the jar and replace the lid so that it will open easily.
- Encourage him to get the toy out of the container. If he does not try to unscrew the lid, place your hand over his and open it together. *We use our hands to turn the lid. Now it's open.*
- Notice how he tries to screw the lid back on. He may just push the lid onto the container. With practice, he will be able to use his hand to successfully turn and close the lid.
- Talk about what he is doing. *You're turning the lid to close it.*
- Provide time for him to play with the containers, lids, and toys while he practices his new skill.

Ready to move on?

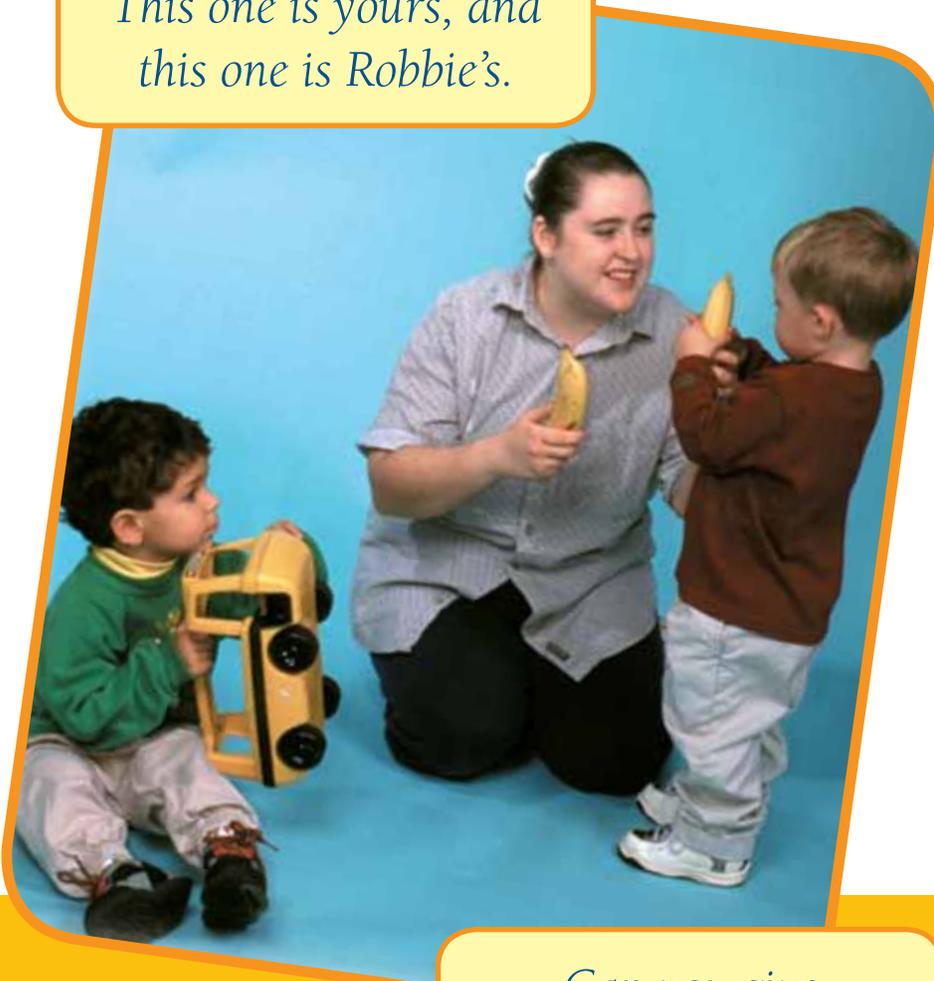
Give your child several small containers with various kinds of lids. Give him small objects to put in the containers. Offer direction when needed, but let him choose how to play with the objects. Talk to him about the choices he is making. *You put the small lid on the small jar and the big lid on the big jar!*

Let's read together!

Elephants on Board
by Suse MacDonald

Beginning to Share

*This one is yours, and
this one is Robbie's.*



Notice and talk about all the ways your child is beginning to share.

Your talk will give him ideas and words to use later when he begins to form friendships with other children.

*Can you give
Robbie his banana?*



Why this is important

A toddler does not know how to take turns, divide snacks, or give away toys he wants. He must learn that sharing means giving freely by choice. He may not consistently behave generously for many years, but with practice he will learn early that sharing can be a pleasant experience. Encouraging your child to share feelings and objects with you provides your child with a pattern for later sharing ideas and materials with friends.

What you do

- Model sharing by being physically near when your child plays. Offer to let him park his small car on your knee, or let him hide a block in your pocket.
- Encourage him to share his toys with you by asking questions about them and touching them. If he offers it to you, thank him and hold the toy briefly before returning it to him.
- Help him practice sharing with others by giving him two of something. Tell him one is for him and the other is for a friend or family member. *This graham cracker is yours and this one is for Daddy. Can you give it to him?*
- Make each sharing experience a positive one by focusing on the generosity he shows and describing why it was good to share. *Thank you for sharing the graham crackers with Daddy. He was hungry, too, just like you.*

Another idea

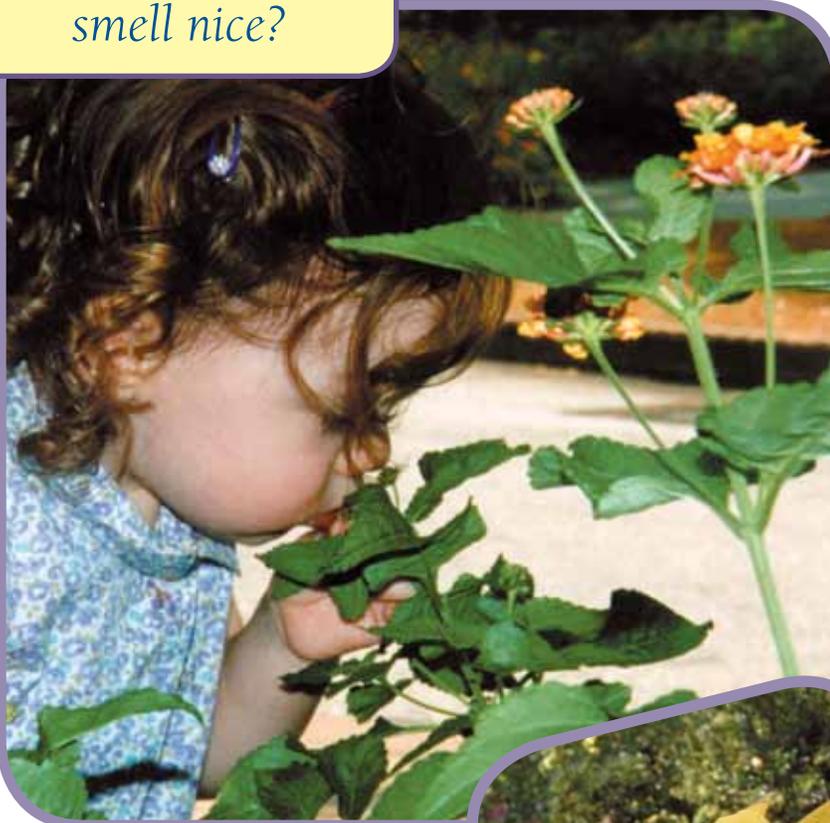
Look for opportunities to share throughout your day together. Your child can pick wildflowers for a neighbor or offer a toy to a pet.

Let's read together!

How Kind!
by Mary Murphy

Exploring Outdoors

*Do those flowers
smell nice?*



Describe the things your child points to or picks up while you play with her outside.

This helps your child to understand the world and learn new words to use as she talks about her experiences.

*Here's a yellow
leaf. Do you
want to hold it?*





Why this is important

Playing outdoors gives your child endless ideas for play. Walking and talking with her while outdoors encourages her to explore with confidence. As you describe the things she points to or picks up, you are teaching her words she can use later to talk about her experiences. You are also helping her understand the world around her.

What you do

- Walk outside with your child and encourage her to explore and investigate. Help her feel confident by making sure she is safe while outside.
- Talk about what she sees and touches. *The grass feels cool. That's a prickly bush!*
- Look for any interesting object to share and talk about with your child. *Look at that yellow dandelion.*
- Invite her to safely touch and examine leaves, flowers, sticks, sand, or rocks. She may want you to carry a few items she collects. If she smells a flower, ask her how it smells. When in the sandbox, allow her to play freely as you sit nearby to watch.
- Describe her play using words such as *gritty, sweet, slippery, rough, smooth, scoop, dig, between your fingers*, etc.

Another idea

Add variety to her outdoor play by exploring different places. Simply crossing the street offers new opportunities for your child to explore.

Let's read together!

Pie in the Sky
by Lois Ehlert