

How Does It Feel?

*Does that sandpaper
feel scratchy?*



Invite your child to feel a few objects and then find them by touch when they are out of sight.



Your child will begin to connect the words you say with the textures he touches.

*You found a smooth
ball in the bag!*



Why this is important

Your child will enjoy touching objects with different textures. When he learns the words that describe the way an object feels, he will develop a better understanding of that object. Asking him to use his sense of touch to find an object gives him practice with following directions.

What you do

- Place three or four objects of varying textures in a box. A few examples are: a cotton ball, a pinecone, a hairbrush, a ball, sandpaper, and a crayon.
- Encourage your child to open the box and feel the objects.
- Talk about each item as he explores it. *That's a cotton ball. It's very soft.* Always use the same word to describe the same texture. Use more than one object of a particular texture so that your child understands that *soft* is not the name of the object but a word to describe an object.
- Give him plenty of time to explore the objects. Then, place two of the objects in a bag so that your child can no longer see them.
- Ask him to find one of the objects by reaching in to look for it using only his fingers. He may try to use his eyes to find the object. Encourage him to try again with his hands. *Let's see if you can find it with your fingers. Find a ball that's round and smooth.*
- Repeat the game using the same objects until he can intentionally choose the one you ask for.
- Add another object to the bag. If he is having success, work up to three or four items at a time.

Another idea

Ask him to locate an object by only giving him a description of the object, not the name. *Can you find something scratchy? Can you find something hard?*

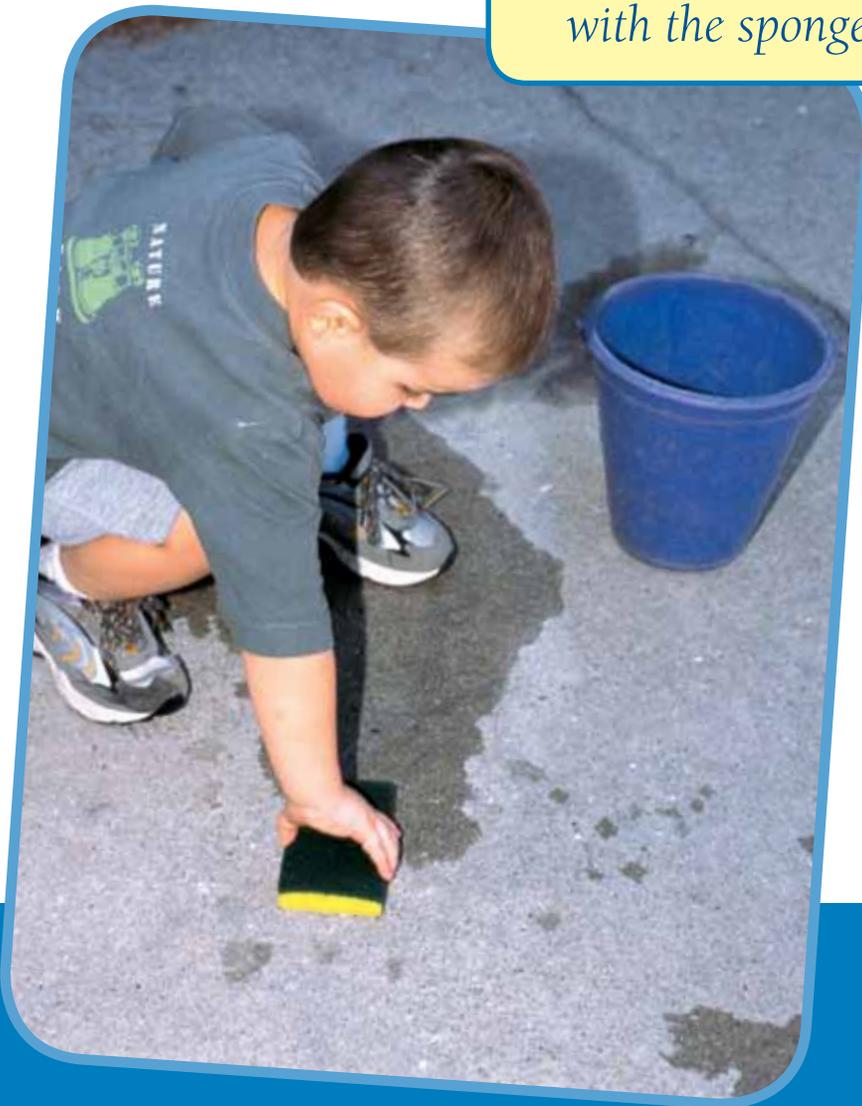
Let's read together!

Dog

by Matthew Van Fleet and Brian Stanton

Painting With Water

*You made a mark
with the sponge!*



Encourage your child to explore what happens when he rubs a wet sponge on different surfaces.

You will be giving your child a chance to direct his own play and discover that he has the ability to change his environment.



Why this is important

For young children, each new activity provides chances for decision making and creativity. By experimenting with water and sponges, he will begin to notice changes his actions make to the environment. Self-directed play helps your child develop confidence in his ability to make decisions. Holding the sponge and moving his hand and arm in a purposeful way to make marks are good practice for later when he will hold a pencil for writing.

What you do

- Find a place where your child can paint with water and you will not have to worry about the mess. An outside wall or sidewalk work well.
- Fill a bucket, no more than halfway, with water, and find a sponge that your child can easily hold in his hand.
- Show him how to dip the sponge into the water and squeeze before he begins painting.
- Point out the wet surface he creates. *You made a line on the wall!* Allow him to decide what to paint next.
- Notice how your child begins to control his movements in order to direct the sponge in a specific way. He may try different arm movements to create different strokes with the sponge. He might also become more interested in the sponge and practice dipping it in the bucket and squeezing out the excess water. Let him direct the activity.

Another idea

If your child needs a few suggestions of what to paint on, let him try steps, tree trunks, or rocks. In the house, the kitchen floor is a good surface. You can offer him a paintbrush with a bowl of water and let him paint a few toys and plastic dishes.

Let's read together!

Olivia
by Ian Falconer

*You made a blue circle
with your crayon.*

Scribbling



Talk to your child about his actions, the marks he makes, and the feelings he shows as he uses a crayon.

Your child will explore the hand and finger control that will help him repeat or vary the marks he makes on the paper.



Why this is important

As your toddler experiments with making simple strokes and scribbles with crayons, he is learning to control his hand and make deliberate marks. As his ability to control the crayon grows, he is able to repeat his marks and change them. Gaining control of hand and finger motions is a necessary step in getting ready for writing. Allowing him to decide how to draw develops creativity and imagination.

What you do

- Sit with your child at a table with crayons and a large piece of paper taped to the table. Invite him to choose a crayon and begin marking the paper. Watch quietly until he finishes, then comment on his work. *You made a straight blue line!*
- Recreate a line he has drawn using your own piece of paper. *You made a red, curvy line. I think I will try to make one like you did.*
- Talk about any broad movements he makes with his arm. If he draws a spiral, point out how his arm goes around and around. Imitate his movement as you draw your own spiral.
- Notice your child making smaller, more controlled lines. *You put that line just where you wanted it.*
- Keep the sessions short, but keep drawing materials handy so that he can return to them frequently.

Ready to move on?

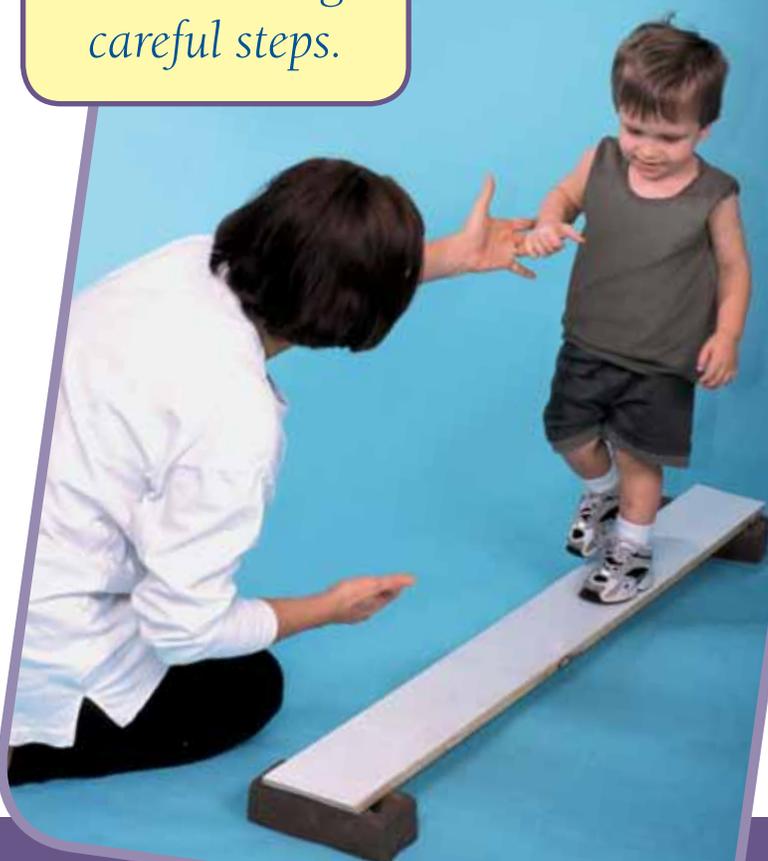
Point out any marks that resemble letters. *This line curves like the letter C.*

Let's read together!

Harold and the Purple Crayon
by Crockett Johnson

Trying New Motions

You're taking careful steps.



Show your child how to walk sideways, backward, or across a low bridge.

Your child's skill level and confidence will increase as he learns to control his body while moving in challenging ways.



Why this is important

Your toddler is now able to take on several new physical skills. He will learn that he can move his body in new ways. Learning how to coordinate different motions will help him with activities such as riding a tricycle or swinging.

What you do

- Walk a few steps backward while your toddler watches you. Talk about the movement. *I'm walking backward. Would you like to hold my hand and walk backward, too?*
- Try walking sideways together, or crawling on your hands and knees.
- Make a bridge from a wide board and two bricks. Help him stand on one end, then go to the other end and encourage him to walk to you. Hold his hand if needed, and offer positive feedback when he reaches the other end. *You made it to the other side!*

Another idea

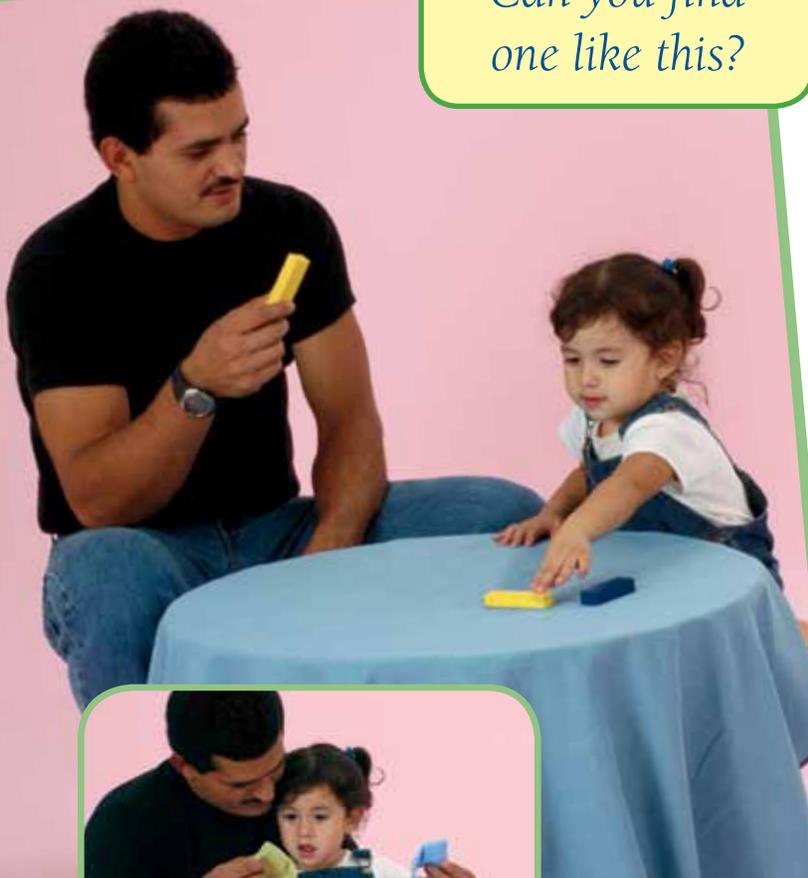
Sing songs to offer another way for your child to try new movements. *If you're happy and you know it turn around.*

Let's read together!

If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands!
by David Carter

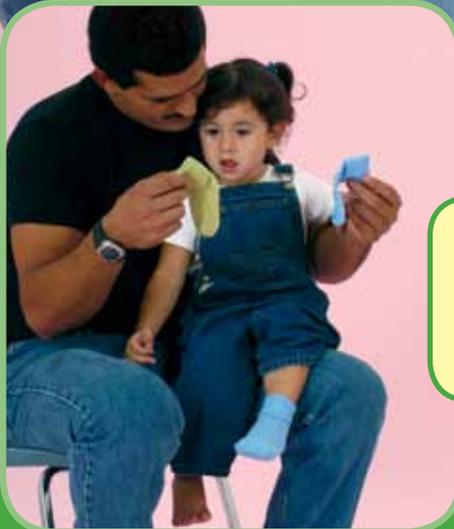
Matching Colors

Can you find one like this?



Help your child match two like-colored objects in a group of three.

Hearing you say the names of colors as she selects them helps her to later identify and sort objects by color.



Which sock looks the same as the one on your foot?



Why this is important

Drawing your child's attention to colors helps her learn the names of each one, match and group items of identical color, and notice the differences between colors. Your child may find it easier to understand and remember an object if she can place it in a category such as color.

What you do

- Draw your child's attention to the colors of objects as she plays with them. *Find three objects with two being the same color. Use the words like and same.*
- Show her the three objects. Choose one, show it to her, and ask her to find the other one that is the same color. *I have a yellow block. Look at the colors. Can you find one like mine?*
- Describe her choice and offer her another try if she chooses the wrong color. *That block is red. My block is yellow. Can you find another yellow block?*
- Give her time to find the matching item. If she still does not, then place your object next to the correct one. *Look at the yellow blocks. They are the same.* Stop playing if she appears frustrated.
- Move the objects on the table as you play, so that she has to look in a new spot each time. When she finds the matching object, even accidentally, offer her encouragement. *You found the yellow block just like mine!*
- Invite her to lead the game and ask you to choose a block. She may vary the game by stacking the blocks or hiding them.

Ready to move on?

Add more blocks, and more colors, to the game once your child can easily choose between two or three colors. Encourage her to group objects by color. Offer her a tray or box to help separate the objects by color.

Let's read together!

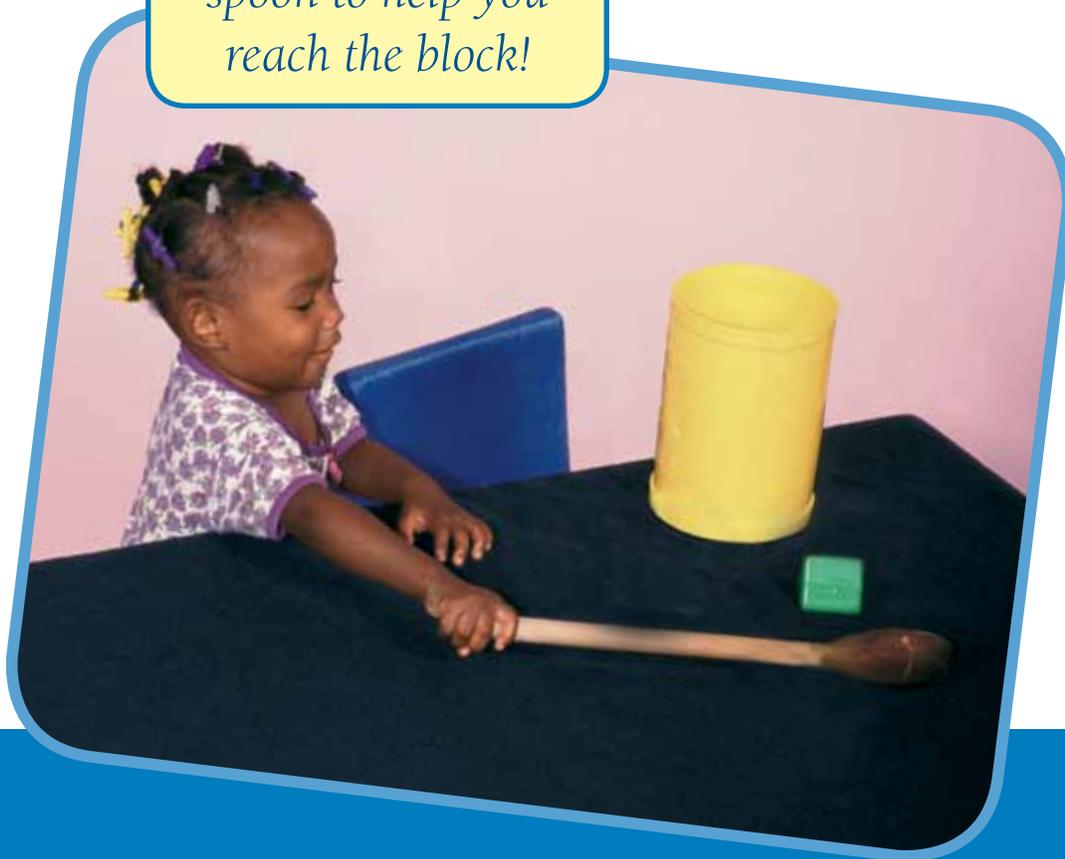
Mouse Paint
by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Using Tools

Encourage your child to use an object as a tool to get an item that is out of reach.

Your child will practice using tools to solve problems.

You're using the spoon to help you reach the block!





Why this is important

When you encourage your child to use objects to reach things, she learns that tools can help her complete tasks she could not otherwise do. When she uses a wooden spoon to move a block closer to her, she learns that an object such as a spoon can be used in more than one way. This understanding helps her think of new ways to solve problems.

What you do

- Look for opportunities to offer your child a tool to use to get something that is out of reach. For example, when her ball rolls under a chair and out of her reach, use the opportunity to offer her a tool that can help her get the ball. Give her a ruler to reach with. Be sure to supervise her exploration and give her some help if needed.
- Place a few blocks out of her reach on a table. Place a long wooden spoon on the table and wait to see if she will use the spoon as a tool. Help her by asking, *Can you use the spoon to reach the blocks?*
- Show your child other tools to use such as a low, sturdy stool to help her reach high places. When using the stool, make sure you have removed dangerous items to another room or a very high shelf.
A stool should be used only if you are able to watch and help as your child uses it.
- Step back and let her discover new uses for household objects. She may surprise you with her ideas!

Another idea

Encourage your child to help with household chores so she can see how you use tools around the house. Offer her a wagon to use to collect her toys at clean-up time.

Let's read together!

Tools
by Ann Morris

See, Show, Say

*Show me a
purple lunchbox.*

As you read with your child, invite her to look at, point to, and talk about what she sees on the page.

Reading interactively helps your child stay interested in a book and learn.





Why this is important

Young children who pay close attention to and talk about books are more engaged in learning. Engaging your child in the story helps increase her vocabulary and comprehension, which are important early literacy skills.

What you do

- Sit comfortably with your child to establish a loving reading routine. Pay attention to her eyes as you read a familiar book. If she looks at something on the page when you read about it, pause and describe it. *You see that big, red truck.*
- Continue to read her favorite books to her. As long as she is actively looking and listening she will be learning from the experience.
- Invite her to participate during reading. *There is a bicycle. Can you put your finger on the bicycle? Or, Which coat is blue? Can you find the blue coat?* Encourage her to repeat a few words such as *blue* or *coat*.
- Ask questions when she feels comfortable with the book. *What is the little boy holding? Where do you think they are going?* Give your child time to talk about the picture before moving on.
- Think of seeing, showing, and saying as three levels of response to a story, each one more challenging than the last. Start a new book with simply asking your child to notice the pictures. On pages where she cannot name objects, invite her to point. If she can say the names of the objects, ask questions so she will answer with words and not actions.

Another idea

Give your child time to ask questions about the book. Answer her questions in ways that extend her involvement with the book. *The fire truck is going to put out the fire. Let's make the sound of the siren together. Rrrr.*

Let's read together!

Find the Puppy
by Phil Roxbee Cox