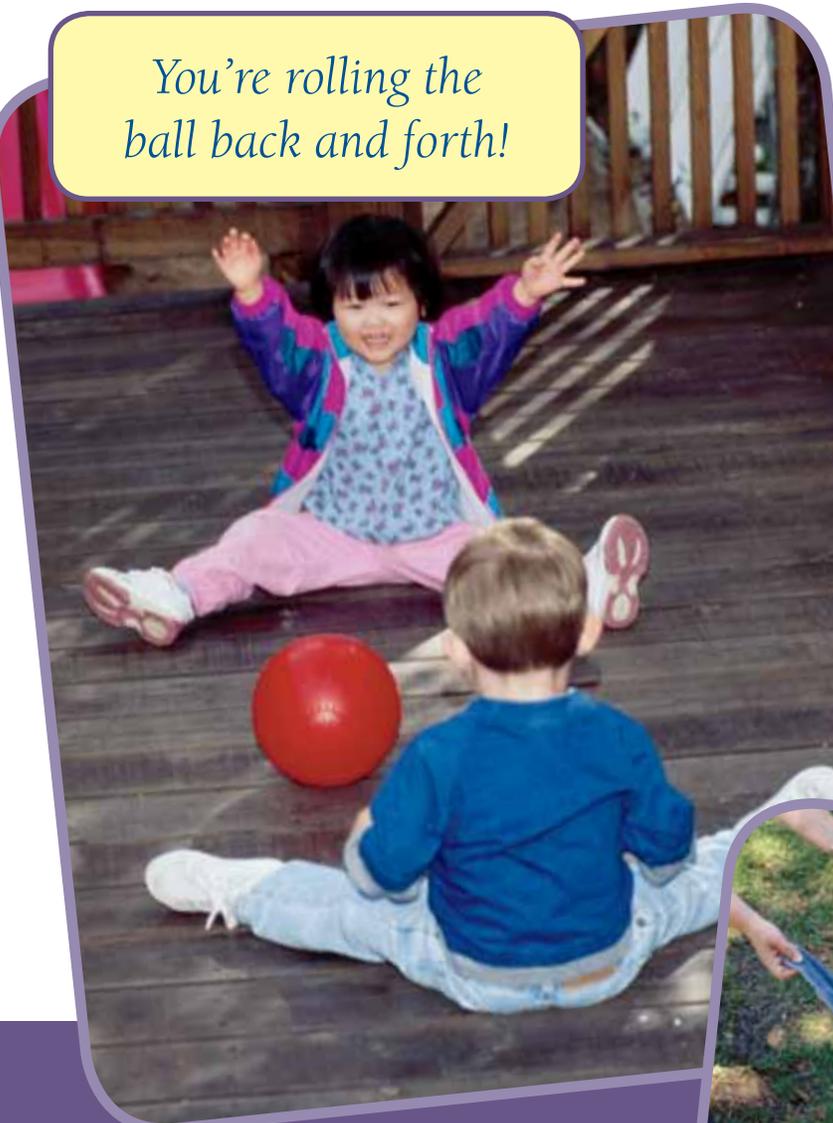


Play With Others

You're rolling the ball back and forth!



Show your child and another child how they can use a ball to play together.

This gives your child a guided experience in cooperating with another child.

What can you make this ball do?





Why this is important

Your child may be ready to begin learning how to play cooperatively with another child. Through cooperative games, she will understand that playing with others can be more fun than competition or solitary play. As she gets older, she will find that many activities can be accomplished only through cooperative behavior. A child who enjoys cooperative games early in life is more likely to approach later situations involving cooperation in a positive way.

What you do

- Show your child and another how to sit on the floor so they can roll a ball back and forth. Stay close to offer help when needed.
- Give them a large towel after they have had time to practice rolling the ball. Invite them to each hold two corners of the towel.
- Place a light ball on the towel.
- Talk about how they can make the ball move. *What happens if you shake the towel? What else can you make the ball do?*
- Use words to explain to them what they are doing. *John, you're holding up your side of the towel so the ball won't roll off. You can make the ball bounce because you're playing together.*
If the ball goes astray, help them get it back.

Another idea

Think of other simple games that two children can play together. Encourage them to build with blocks, play with toy cars, or look at books cooperatively.

Let's read together!

A Boy and His Bunny
by Sean Bryan

Choose the Doll's Clothes

You're choosing a pretty gray and white shirt for the girl.

Let your child choose the clothes to put on a paper person while you talk about and ask about the clothing.

Your child can practice making choices about clothing as she learns the words for each item.





Why this is important

Your child will learn the words for the clothing and begin to evaluate choices about what her doll should wear. At first, she may confuse shirts with pants or put them on the wrong parts of the doll, but with practice she will soon understand and begin to say their names. Talking about clothes during the game will help your child become more aware of her own clothing and encourage her interest in dressing herself.

What you do

- Cut out a large paper person and a few simple clothes that will fit over it.
- Invite your child to talk about what clothes the doll might wear.
- Help her choose clothing by asking questions and naming the pieces for her. *I see shoes, pants, a coat, and a shirt. What do you want to put on his feet? Can you find something for him to wear outside so he will be warm?*
- Encourage your child to choose the clothing items and lay them on the doll. After you name them, ask her the name of each piece she chooses. *What are those things called that you're putting on his feet?*

Another idea

Show your child pictures of children in a magazine or catalog. Talk about what they are wearing. *This girl has her warm, winter coat on.* Later, ask your child to explain what the children in the pictures are dressed for such as bedtime, swimming, or cold weather.

Let's read together!

Sweater
by Kit Allen

Drawing Around Things

Your line is going around the can.



Give your child a round plastic cup or objects of other shapes to trace.

Outlining things with his finger or a pencil gives your child practice using the small muscles in his hands as he learns about shapes.



Why this is important

Tracing an object helps your child better understand the relationship of a representation, such as an outline, to an object. With practice, he will become more aware of the differences between the shapes he traces. Using a writing tool, such as a pencil or crayon, helps strengthen his fine motor control (the ability to control the muscles in his hands). Fine motor control is essential to many later skills, such as carefully turning the pages in a book and holding a pencil for writing.

What you do

- Show your child how to hold a box or lid and trace around it with his finger.
- Offer him a pencil or crayon to trace around the shape.
- Follow the line on the paper with your finger. Invite your child to do the same as you talk about the shape on the paper matching the object he traced. *The lid is a circle. You made a circle on the paper when you drew around it with the pencil.*
- Give your child a chance to choose an object to trace. Talk about each shape he chooses.
- Guide his choices toward shapes with simple outlines such as blocks, cups, or plates.

Another idea

Allowing your child to search for new shapes on his own makes him more aware of the shapes of objects around him. Keep many interesting objects handy for him to choose from. Encourage him to trace each new shape and talk about the result on the paper.

Let's read together!

Black on White
by Tana Hoban

Using a Different Voice

Teddy Bear wants to push your car.



Change your voice when you speak to your child.

By varying your voice, you keep her attention and show your child ways to experiment with the tone and volume of her own voice.



Why this is important

Language depends on intonation and rhythm as well as words. One word can have several meanings, depending on the way it is said: “Yes?” (I’m listening), or “Yes” (I agree), or “Yes!” (Hooray!). Your child needs to hear variety in order to create it in her own speech. When she plays whispering games with you, she learns how to control her voice.

What you do

- Speak to your child in a higher or lower voice or whisper in your child’s ear. She will pay closer attention to your words when you change your tone, and she may enjoy the novelty of the change.
- Get your child’s attention, make her feel special, and show your surprise or delight by changing the tone of your voice. For example, use your lowest bass voice to make her laugh, sing your words to help her relax, or, when she might expect you to call to her from across the room, instead, go to her and whisper.
- Respond to changes in your child’s voice by letting her know you understand what she is trying to say. *What a high voice! You sound excited about your truck rolling on the floor!*

Another idea

An easy way to try out new voices is to create a voice for each character in a book you read together. You can give her a chance to choose a voice, or make up new voices and use them each time a character speaks.

Let’s read together!

Quiet Loud
by Leslie Patricelli

Happy Face, Sad Face

*This boy looks happy.
He's smiling!*

Happy!



Show your child pictures of other people showing their feelings and give him words for how they feel.

Helping him notice the feelings of others develops your child's ability to understand his own emotions.



Why this is important

Seeing feelings expressed on faces around him or in pictures will make it easier for your child to learn the words for those feelings. As he hears other people talk about their feelings, he will begin to see that he can use words instead of actions to express himself. Understanding that others have the same feelings he has helps your child develop his relationships with those around him.

What you do

- Show your child pictures of faces that clearly show an emotion. Talk about the expressions on the faces. *That girl is crying. She looks sad.*
- Encourage him to talk about what makes the people in the pictures have those feelings. Avoid *why* questions because they are harder to answer.
- Ask him if he can remember an event that has made him feel happy, angry, or sad.
- Tell him how you feel. *I feel happy. May I tell you about it?*
- Give him words for his feelings. *I see you look angry. Can you tell me what happened?*
- Comfort him when he cannot express how he feels. He will need your patience and love as he learns to determine what kinds of feelings he has.

Another idea

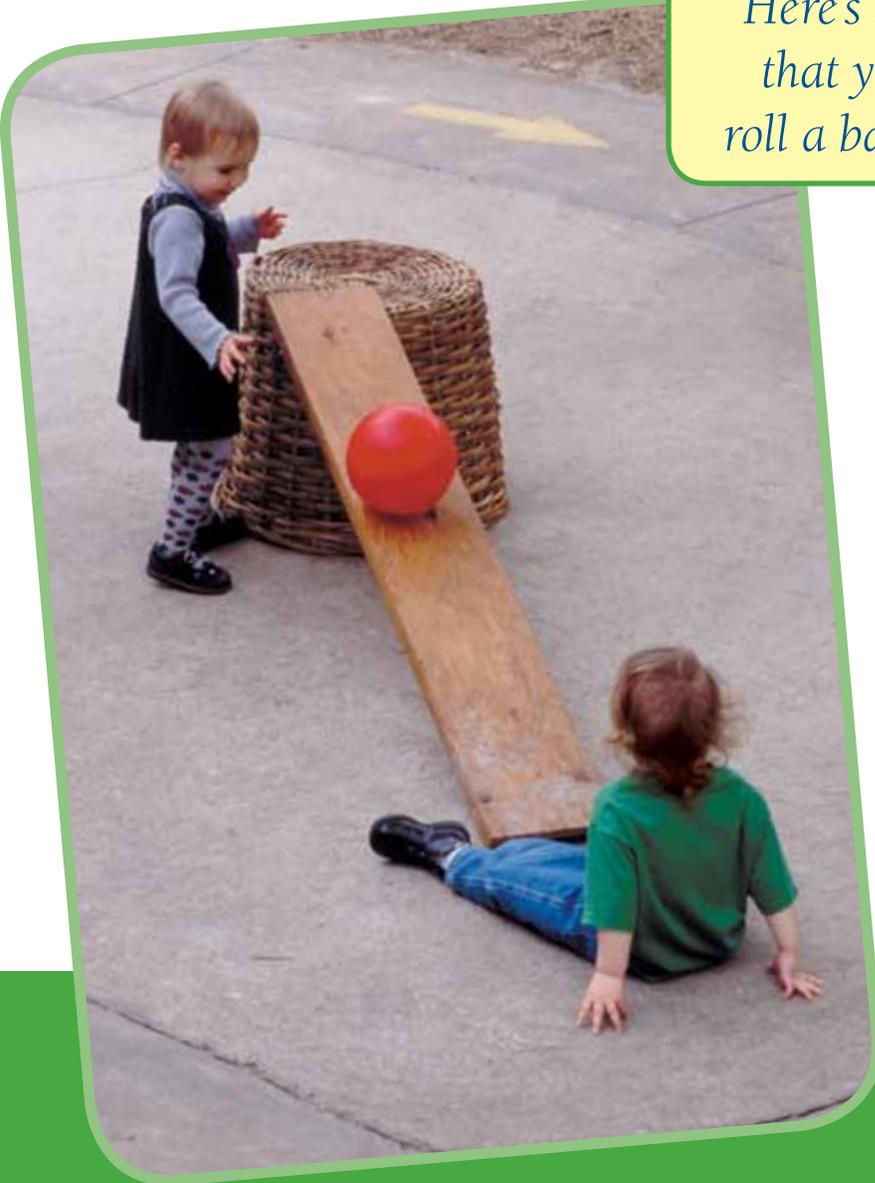
Talk about the characters in his favorite storybooks and encourage him to tell you what they are laughing or crying about.

Let's read together!

What Shall We Do with the Boo-Hoo Baby?
by Cressida Cowell

Two Together

*Here's a board
that you can
roll a ball down.*



Give both your child and a friend a ball to kick or encourage them to roll a ball down a slanting board.

An open-ended opportunity for play with a peer helps your child learn cooperation skills.



Why this is important

When you give two children the chance to have open-ended play together, they can learn to cooperate. Playing with a ball offers your child the chance to practice skills while she learns to play with a peer. Your child will gradually learn how to cooperate first with you, then her peers, and finally larger groups.

What you do

- Give your child a large, soft ball to play with. Show her how to kick it with her toe and encourage her to practice.
- Offer another ball to a child playing nearby. Let the two children play side-by-side.
- Create a cooperative game for the children after they have each had time to play with their own ball. Find a slanted surface for a ball to roll down, such as a long board with one end propped on a box.
- Show the children how to play together. One child stands at the top of the ramp and rolls the ball as the other waits at the bottom to catch it.
- Provide lots of encouragement as they play. *Jeremy, you are waiting so patiently for Michaela to roll the ball to you. Hooray! You caught it. Now you can give it back to Michaela so she can roll it again.*

Another idea

Encourage the children to come up with new ways to use the balls or the ramp together. Step back and allow them to create their own game.

Let's read together!

Is Your Mama a Llama?
by Deborah Guarino

Choosing and Stringing

*I've tied a ring on the end.
Now let's see what you can do.*

Collect a box of things that your child can string on a ribbon or thick piece of yarn.

Your child can practice making choices as she learns to connect objects.





Why this is important

Children develop confidence in themselves when their choices bring them satisfaction. When your child creates a necklace completely on her own, she learns how to play independently and choose for herself. She also practices the skill of using her hands and eyes together to put objects on a string.

What you do

- Fill a box with household objects that have a big hole in them such as curtain rings, large spools, or jar rims. Make sure that the box contains safe objects that allow for independent play.
- Tie a curtain ring (or other large item) at the end of a ribbon and invite her to string other items on, one at a time. Hold the ribbon, if needed, as your child works.
- Talk about the size, color, and feel of the objects. *These rings feel smooth and round. The ribbon is pink and shiny.*
- Help your child wear the finished product as a necklace if she would like to.
- Join your child in hunting for new objects to add to the box. She may notice that jar rims, cookie cutters, or stacking toy rings will work for stringing.

Another idea

Keep the box available so your child can practice stringing when she wants to play again.

Let's read together!

Color Zoo Board Book
by Lois Ehlert

In, Out, and Around

You're under.



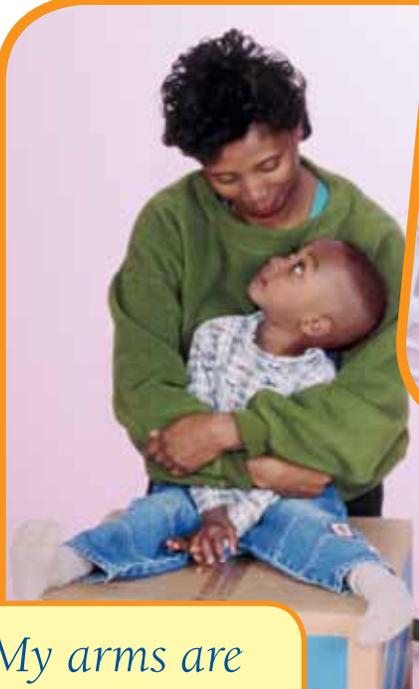
Think of some simple actions to help your child learn position words, such as *in*, *out*, and *under*, and use these words as he plays.

Your child will learn that words not only name objects but can also tell about their positions and relationships.

Your arms are going through.



My arms are around you.





Why this is important

Understanding that words can tell the positions and relationships of objects is a significant step in your child's language development. Frequently using prepositions—words that show position—will help your child see one object in relation to another or in relation to himself. Relationships help to string words and ideas together in oral and written language.

What you do

- Offer your child a shoebox, a small object, and a large piece of paper. Play a game to show him the meaning of words such as *in*, *out*, and *around*.
- Show him how to put the object in the box and then take it out. He can put the object on top of or under the paper, and he can wrap the paper around the object.
- Place a large box on the floor, so that he can become the object that is *in*, *out of*, and *around* the box. Talk about each position as he plays. *You are in the box. Can you climb out of the box?*
- Use a toy that clearly has a front and a back, such as a small truck. Take turns with your child placing a doll *beside*, *behind*, *in front of*, and *on top of* the truck. Talk about each position.

Another idea

As you care for him and work around your home, use words that help your child understand the position of objects. *Your shirt is in the drawer. Dump the bugs out of the cup. Wrap the towel around your shoulders. Your bear is on the table.*

Let's read together!

Inside, Outside, Upside Down
by Stan Berenstain

Giving One to Each

One cookie for each plate.

One!

Give your child just enough napkins, forks, or food items, and let him give one to each person or place at the table.

Setting the table gives your child practical experience with matching one number to one item.





Why this is important

Children like helping with grown-up jobs. Setting the table provides an opportunity for children to practice one-to-one correspondence (one napkin for each plate). The one-to-one relationship is the basis of counting and other math skills.

What you do

- Ask your child to help you set the table.
- Show him how to put a napkin beside one plate.
- Give him just enough napkins and ask him to put one beside each plate.
- Describe what he is doing using the word one. *One for Daddy; one for Grandma; one for Michael.*
- If he no longer has enough napkins to put one at each plate, help him find the place where he put more than one. Explain what happened and offer encouragement. *There were two napkins by this plate. Can you put one at the last plate so each person has one napkin for dinner?*
- Thank your child for helping you set the table.

Ready to move on?

After you've done this activity several times with your child, try counting the napkins and places at the table before he starts. This will help him become familiar with the sounds of the number words. *One, two, three, four napkins. One, two, three, four plates. Can you put one napkin at each plate, please?*

Let's read together!

One Bear, One Dog
by Paul Stickland

A Fun Path

You're following
the path.

Talk about your child's actions as he goes along a path of objects by stepping *over*, crawling *under*, jumping *in*, and climbing *on* them.

Your child's physical skills and awareness of space and positional words will increase.





Why this is important

Following an obstacle course encourages your child's physical development as well as his understanding of the position of his body in space. When you use the words that describe his actions as he plays, it is easier for him to learn new vocabulary.

What you do

- Create a path of various obstacles for your child to move through, such as a cardboard box open at both ends, a small stool to climb on and jump off, or a crumpled towel to step over.
- Use a piece of rope or a garden hose as a guide, if needed.
- Change the path occasionally, using new objects each time. Remember your child's skill level and keep the obstacles manageable.
- Stay close by and use position words to talk about what your child does. *You're going under the bench. You're stepping over the paper.*
- Be flexible, allowing your child to step off the path if he chooses. He may strictly follow the sequence or try different obstacles randomly.

Another idea

Invite your child to play "Follow the Leader." Allow him to lead you along the path as he chooses what to do next. You can be the leader and show him a new way to move around each object.

Let's read together!

Jonathan and His Mommy
by Irene Smalls