

## WHAT TO TEACH MY TWO YEAR OLD?

Kim writes,

Your website is wonderful. I am a fairly new stay at home mom to a 9 year old, a 2 year old and an 8 month old. When my 9 year old goes back to school, I would like to begin a “school” for my 2 year old. I would like to teach her the alphabet, colors, shapes, numbers, etc. What would be the best way to do that?

I really think that this will be something good for my 2 year old and myself to do when her sister is taking a nap. I am open to any suggestions you may have or any examples of how a week of lessons should be planned.

Thank you so much for any help you can offer.

Jean replies,

Working with toddlers can be a lot of fun and very rewarding but keep in mind that you do not want to be too structured in your approach. Toddlers are not meant to be quiet and sit still. If you want to structure your time with her, that is fine, as long as that just means that you have a plan of when you will do what.

I would suggest a Project Time – a time when you can do something creative with your child or something that involves exploration or discovery. Suggestions:

- An open-ended art project – where there is no right or wrong way to proceed.
- Building something – out of blocks or other safe material such as cardboard boxes.
- Cooking together – letting your child help measure or stir cake batter.
- Going on a nature walk – looking for colored leaves or birds.
- Growing seeds together in a garden.

Then another day, I might have a Story, Music, Dramatics or Movement time with your child.

- Read a story about something that is relevant to your child. Discuss the story.
- Sing seasonal songs or recite nursery rhymes together.
- Play with fun, safe musical instruments, like bells, drums, etc.
- Act out a story with your child.
- Play throwing games and searching games outside with your child.

Another day, you might want to do a Concept Time. I find that combining concept learning (numbers, colors and shapes) with snack time, can make learning concepts fun.

- Discuss the colors of different foods.
- Look for opposites in foods, like hot and cold items.
- Count the number of fish crackers on a plate.
- Notice how food changes when it is cooked or frozen.

Most of these activities would only last about 10 to 15 minutes. Toddlers usually cannot focus on things for longer than this. Do not ever force a toddler to continue doing a project if he or she wants to stop. Also, plan a safe area where your child can play by themselves when they want to.

As far as teaching your 2 year old letters, I do not feel that she is mature enough to understand the concept of letters. When children are 2 and 3 years of age, this is the time to give them the basic building blocks that they will need so that when they reach 5, they can successfully learn to read and write.

Basic building blocks, include understanding likes and differences between things, understanding relationships between objects, beginning counting, beginning colors and shapes, thinking skills, social skills, coordination skills and emotional skills.

Keep early learning fun and your child will become a life-long learner.

Sincerely, Jean Warren, Preschool Express