



Trailblazing with Two-Year-Olds



"Me!" "Mine!" "No!" and "I do it!" These are some favorite words for two-year-olds, who like to be independent and do things for themselves. Changes in mood are also common. They may be happy one minute and angry the next.

Two-year-olds want to do as much as they can and more. They get upset when they find they don't have the skills to do things or the words to say what they want. Some adults call this period the 'terrible twos'. But when you take the time to learn about and understand children this age, you'll see that they are really trailblazing two-year-olds.

What to Expect from Two-Year-Olds

Remember: Every child is different. They may learn and grow at different rates.

Doing Skills

- Walks, runs, climbs, and walks up and down stairs
- Feeds herself with a spoon
- Wants to dress herself, brush her hair and teeth
- Bends over to pick up a toy and does not fall
- Opens cabinets, drawers, and boxes
- Starts to be interested in toilet learning

Thinking Skills

- Follows easy directions
- Likes to take things apart
- Likes to look at books
- Points to eyes, ears, and nose when asked
- Likes to look at the same book over and over again

Talking Skills

- Sings simple songs
- Says names of toys
- Uses two to three words in a sentence
- Talks about himself by name
- Says "me" and "mine"
- Laughs at silly things

Skills with Others

- Plays beside other children more than with them
- Acts shy around people she doesn't know
- Isn't able to share
- Wants lots of attention

Two-Year-Olds
love to be
active.

Tips for Working with Two-Year-Olds

- Do a safety check in your house again. Two-year-olds have grown taller. They are better at opening doors and drawers than younger children.
- Two-year-olds can sit still only for a few minutes. Plan to keep them moving!
- Let them help you with simple chores, such as picking up toys, putting clothes in a laundry basket, putting napkins on the table, etc.
- Give them simple choices. "Do you want milk or juice to drink?" "Do you want to use the red crayon or the blue one?"
- Two-year-olds will play with a toy for a few minutes and move on to another one.
- Do not think two-year-olds will be able to share or take turns. Learning these skills will come later. Have more than one of the same toy so children don't have to wait to play.
- Be prepared for temper tantrums. Learning is hard work and can be upsetting.
- Add to what a child is saying. When a child says, "Juice," say to her, "You must be thirsty. I'll get you some juice to drink."
- Two-year-olds need time before they can make changes. Give them a few warnings before you make a change. "It's soon going to be time to go inside for lunch."
- Keep directions simple. "Close the door, please." "Please pick up the doll."



Things to Do with Two-Year-Olds

- Give them plenty of time to run, jump, and climb outside.
- Read books to them every day.
- Sing simple songs with them.
- Sing action songs with movements and do finger plays.
- Set out newspaper, grocery bags, and scrap paper for children to use for drawing and painting instead of coloring books or workbooks.
- Give them paint, crayons, chalk, and finger paints to draw and scribble. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to do art.
- Make times for playing in sand, mud, clay, and water. Two-year-olds love messy play.
- Give them cups, large spoons, and small bowls for mixing, sifting, pouring, stirring, and shaping.
- Give them things to take apart and put back together. (Make sure the pieces are large enough so a child won't choke on them.)



Reference: Used in part with permission from National Network for Child Care -NNCC. Oesterreich, L. (1995). Ages & stages - two-year-olds. In L. Oesterreich, B. Holt, & S. Karas, *Iowa family child care handbook* [Pm 1541] (pp. 199-201). Ames, IA: Iowa State University Extension.

extension.psu.edu/youth/betterkidcare

Supported by funds from the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, jointly overseen by the Departments of Human Services and Education.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status.

Claudia C. Mincemoyer, Ph.D.,
Better Kid Care Program Director
2182 Sandy Drive – Suite 204
State College, PA 16803

© 2016 The Pennsylvania State University

TIPS0106.indd