

Activities for Children 30 - 36 Months Old



Tell or read a familiar story and pause frequently to leave out a word, asking your child to "fill it in." For example, Little Red Riding Hood said, "Grandmother, what big _____ you have."	Teach somersaults by doing one yourself first. Then help your child do one. Let her try it alone. Make sure furniture is out of the way. You may want to put some pillows on the floor for safety.	Give a cup to your child. Use bits of cereal or fruit and place one in your child's cup ("one for you") and one in your cup ("one for me"). Take turns. Dump out your child's cup and help count the pieces. This is good practice for early math skills.	Put an old blanket over a table to make a tent or house. Pack a "picnic" sack for your camper. Have your child take along a pillow on the "camp out" for a nap. Flashlights are especially fun.	Get a piece of butcher paper large enough for your child to lie on. Draw around your child's body to make an outline. Don't forget fingers and toes. Talk about body parts and print the words on the paper. Let your child color the poster. Hang the poster on a wall in your child's room.
Children at this age may be interested in creating art in different ways. Try cutting a potato in half and carving a simple shape or design for your child to dip in paint and then stamp onto paper.	Add water to tempera paint to make it runny. Drop some paint on a paper and blow through a straw to move the paint around the paper, or fill an old roll-on deodorant bottle with watered-down paint. Your child can roll color onto the paper.	A good activity to learn location words is to build roads and bridges with blocks. Use toy cars to go on the road, under or over a bridge, between the houses, and so forth.	Trace around simple objects with your child. Use cups of different sizes, blocks, or your child's and your hands. Using felt-tip markers or crayons of different colors makes it even more fun.	Have your child help you set the table. First, have your child place the plates, then cups, and then napkins. By placing one at each place, he will learn one-to-one correspondence. Show your child where the utensils should be placed.
Collect empty boxes (cereal, TV dinners, egg cartons) and help your child set up her own grocery store.	Help your child learn new words to describe objects in everyday conversations. Describe by color, size, and shape (the blue cup, the big ball). Also, describe how things move (a car goes fast, a turtle moves slowly) and how they feel (ice cream is cold, soup is hot).	Make your own puzzles by cutting out magazine pictures of whole people. Have your child help glue pictures onto cardboard. Cut pictures into three pieces by cutting curvy lines. Head, trunk, and legs make good pieces for your child to put together.	Dribble different colors of paint in the middle or on one side of a paper. Fold the paper in half. Let your child open the paper to see the design it makes.	A good game for trips in the car is to play a matching game with a set of Old Maid cards. Place a few different cards in front of your child. Give him a card that matches one displayed and ask him to find the card like the one you gave him.
Cut pictures out of magazines to make two groups such as dogs, food, toys, or clothes. Have two boxes ready and put a picture of a dog in one and of food in the other. Have your child put additional pictures in the right box, helping her learn about categories.	Cut a stiff paper plate to make a hand paddle and show your child how to use it to hit a balloon. See how long your child can keep the balloon in the air or how many times he can hit it back to you. This activity helps develop large body and eye-hand coordination. Always carefully supervise when playing with balloons.	To improve coordination and balance, show your child the "bear walk" by walking on hands and feet, keeping the legs and arms straight. Try the "rabbit hop" by crouching down and then jumping forward.	Encourage your child to try the "elephant walk," bending forward at the waist and letting your arms (hands clasped together) swing freely while taking slow and heavy steps. This is great to do with music.	Make a poster of your child's favorite things using pictures from old magazines. Use safety scissors and paste or a glue stick to allow your child to do it independently, yet safely.



Communication

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your child can talk about many things and can follow simple directions. She will make mistakes with her grammar, saying “foots” instead of “feet,” for example. Your child can tell you what’s happening. She’s using longer sentences now. Talk about what happened during the day. Read to your child every day. She might even pretend to read favorite books by herself, using the words you have read to her.

Reading Magazines Talk about the pictures in ordinary household magazines. Find pictures of household items that your child will recognize, such as toothpaste, soap, diapers, pets, or cars. Point to the picture and ask, “What is this?” “Do we have this at home?”

Silly Me Your child will have fun if you pretend you don’t know what things really are. Point to the toothpaste and ask your child, “Is that the soap?” Let him tell you what it really is. Act surprised. Your child will enjoy “teaching” you the right name of things.

Bandage Game Make pretend bandages using tape or stickers. Ask your child, “Where is your cut? Where shall I put this?” Get your child to name as many body parts as possible, and put a bandage on each part. You can wash the bandage off during bath time. This game can also be played with a doll or stuffed animal.

Let’s Put Things Away When putting away food after going to the market or putting away gardening tools after planting seeds, ask your child to help. Tell her, “Put the butter in the refrigerator” or “Put the shovel in the pail.” You’ll have fun giving some silly directions, too, such as “Put the lemons under the chair.” Use words such as “up” and “down.”

What’s Going On? When reading books or magazines, ask your child to tell you what’s happening in a picture: “What’s the baby doing?” “What is the dog doing?” Then, listen carefully to your child’s interesting story.

What’s Your Name? Play this silly name game. When you greet your child, act as if you don’t know who he is. Say, “Hello, little boy. What’s your name?” When he tells you, greet him with happy surprise. “Oh, you’re my little boy! I’m so happy to see you!”



30–36 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your child is improving skills using his leg and arm muscles. He is working on making these muscles stronger, more flexible, more coordinated, and quicker. He can catch an 8-inch ball, jump about 2 feet, make sharp turns around a corner while running, and avoid obstacles in his path.

Over the River When playing outside, place a small towel or piece of cloth about 24 inches wide on the grass. This is the "river." Have your child run and jump over the river without getting wet. At first, you can bunch the towel up in the middle or fold it so that the river is only about 12 inches wide. As your child is able, you can open the towel so that the river is wider.

Balloon Kick Let your child kick a balloon from one end of the room to another. Lay a box on its side for a goal. See if she can kick the balloon into the box.

Animal Walk Show your child how to walk like different animals (e.g., squat like a duck, walk on all fours like a dog). Encourage him to pretend to be these animals and make noises like them. Play along. Call the cat: "Here, kitty, kitty." Balance on one foot like a flamingo.

Heel-to-Toe Walk Show your child how to walk heel to toe using a line on the sidewalk or a short length of clothesline on the ground. Show your child how to outstretch her arms to keep her balance.

Basketball Place an empty laundry basket on the floor against an empty wall. Give your child a soft ball about 4 inches in size. Place a string or piece of tape on the floor for a throw-line, and show your child how to throw overhand to get the ball in the basket. Start about 4 feet back from the basket. Move back as your child gets better.

Chasing Bubbles On a nice day, while playing outside, blow bubbles and ask your child to clap his hands together and pop them. Blow some high so that your child can jump up. Blow some far away from you so that your child will need to dash out a little. Clap all of the big ones. Now, clap and pop all of the little ones. Play this game as long as you both enjoy it. When you're done, go wash those soapy hands together!



30–36 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your child is learning to hold pens, crayons, and markers with her thumb and two fingers just like big people do. She has learned to make scissors open and close and can make snips in paper when you hold it. She can string beads easily and can work puzzles with four or five pieces.

Yummy Puzzles Cut off the front part of your child's favorite cereal box. Now cut this into four or five puzzle pieces. Your child will have fun putting this simple puzzle together. He may need a little help at first.

Copy Me Show your child how to make lines and circles. You might also try simple shapes. Circles and straight lines will be easiest for your child to copy. Your child may want to learn to write the first letter of her name when you are playing this game. Keep it fun. Celebrate any attempt at writing a letter, even if it doesn't look much like the real thing.

Tong Time Give your child a pair of small kitchen tongs or ice tongs. See if he can move cotton balls from one container into another. Then try something heavier such as walnuts, spools, or small stones.

Junior Mechanic Collect large bolts, matching nuts, and even washers. Your child will enjoy matching the bolt to the nut and twisting them together. Watch your child to be sure she doesn't put anything in her mouth.

Little Beader Have fun stringing large buttons, beads, large pasta tubes (e.g., macaroni, rigatoni), or large loop-shaped cereal. Make sure the string, shoelace, or yarn your child is using has a stiff end; wrap tape around the ends of string to make it easy for beading. Let your child make a necklace for you and one for him. What concentration!

Bubbles on Paper Let your child use a washable crayon or felt-tip pen to draw bubbles on paper. Show her how to draw big bubbles and little bubbles, purple bubbles and green bubbles. Let her draw as many as she wants. Now that she has drawn so many bubbles, maybe it's time to blow some real bubbles!



30–36 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your child can notice similarities and differences among many things. He knows about long and short, a little and a lot, and which one of your kitchen spoons is the biggest. With your help he can put three things of different sizes in order from small to large. Pretend play is still very important and fun for both of you!

What Is This? After giving your child a bath, stand or seat your child in front of a mirror. With a towel, dry different parts of her body. While drying her hair, ask (with a smile and pretend puzzlement), "What is this stuff?" While drying her shoulder ask, "What is this thing?" While drying ribs ask, "What are these bony things?" Have fun being together while tickling, cuddling, and teaching the names of body parts.

Copycat Cars Line up four to five small cars or other objects in a row. Make sure your child sees what you did. Give your child some objects to line up in a row just like you did. You can line up different things, such as blocks, spoons, or shells. Even if your child doesn't do it exactly like you, help out. Say, "See, the red one is by the yellow one." Then, praise your child for playing the game: "Wow, you're a good liner-upper!"

Big and Little Show your child two items of different sizes, such as shoes, cups, or spoons. Ask him to point to the big one, then the little one. You can play Big and Little with many things such as dogs, leaves, and cars, especially at the park. Play this game anywhere in the house or at the supermarket with vegetables, boxes, or cans. Add a medium-size item and change the game to Big, Little, and One in the Middle.

Tell Me Your Story Give your child some plain paper and a few washable crayons or felt-tip pens for drawing. When your child finishes, ask her to tell you about what she drew. Write the story on your child's paper. Print her name. Tell her, "This is your story, and this is your name." Read the story to Grandma or someone else important.

Reading the Neighborhood As you walk or drive around your neighborhood, show your child signs such as the large yellow "M" for McDonald's. Show him a stop sign and tell him what it says. Next time you go out, ask him to read signs with you.

Silly Sounds Play a silly copy game with your child while you are in the car or on the bus. For example, tell her, "Bee, zim, zop" or some other silly phrase. See if your child can copy you. Let your child make up a silly phrase and copy her.



30–36 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Toddler Grow and Learn



Your child is becoming more independent in taking care of her personal needs, but she still needs your hugs and reassurance. Usually she can separate from you in familiar settings. She can obey simple rules. She enjoys simple games with other children and takes pride in her accomplishments. She will respond with pride when you notice positive behavior, such as being helpful, following a rule, or doing something for herself.

Kitchen Helper Let your child help with cooking by measuring, pouring, stirring, cutting (with cookie cutters or plastic knives), and tearing salad greens. These are real activities that help the family. Tell him, "Thank you for helping."

Super Picker-Upper Show your child how to put trash in the trash can. If your child drops paper, ask her to pick it up and put it into the trash can. She may enjoy helping you put the can outside for the garbage truck to pick up. Show your child how important it is to keep the world clean. Talk about what would happen if people didn't pick up trash.

Bathing Beauty Your child will enjoy trying to wash himself in the bathtub. Show him how to use a washcloth and soap. Be sure to let your child know that he is doing a good job. Then, give your child a towel so that he can dry himself. Have fun with your child; say, "Whose clean little boy is this?"

Naming Feelings Help your child understand feelings by noticing them and giving them names. Children need to learn that feelings change and that others may have feelings, too. Say, "I can tell you're excited because it's almost your birthday!" Don't be afraid to use big words.

Super Driver Make an obstacle course in the driveway or yard. Let your little driver push a cart or pull a wagon, steering around a box or a flower pot or over a hose. There's a big hug at the finish line!

Look at You Start a dress-up bin for your child. Go through your closet and instead of getting rid of your old clothes, put some of them in a box for your child to play with. Old purses, wallets, hats, ties, shoes, belts, and necklaces are fun. Let your child dress up and then let her look in the mirror. Have your camera ready.



30–36 months