



Toddlers at playgroup

Value of Toddlers at Playgroup:

- Toddlers are extremely interested in the world around them and can be very active learners at playgroup
- Toddlers love to be able to explore and discover new experiences
- Toddlers enjoy observing and copying preschool aged children
- Toddlers are risk takers, and need to be monitored closely by a parent/carer
- Toddlers can tire and exhaust easily; a quiet corner and a cuddle at playgroup will reassure them
- Parents will value the opportunity to meet other adults who may be sharing similar experiences

Safety: Toddlers need to be supervised at all times. They are keen risk takers and are so busy being independent that they will not identify hazards, or think of consequences.

Key Features of Toddlerhood:

- A strong desire for independence: “Me do it!” phase
- Highly egocentric
- Need for routine and order
- Emergence of pretend play & imagination
- Strong focus on movement & gross motor development
- Critical time for acquiring language
- Love of small objects (will often collect small fiddly items such as pebbles, puzzle pieces, erasers etc)





Basic Requirements

- Opportunities for the toddler to discover and move about, and still be near a caring adult.
- A space free from hazards. The toddler is inquisitive about everything and will climb on, push or pull anything s/he is interested in. Place safety caps on all power points, locks on cupboard doors, keep children out of any kitchen areas and away from hot cups of coffee.
- Establish clear playgroup guidelines and routines eg: “We are seated when we eat snack”, “No hat, no outside play”
- Provide opportunities for the toddler to develop self-help skills such as dress-ups, packing and unpacking a bag, and cleaning up at the end of playgroup.
- Mirrors are great for the egocentric toddler and provide an opportunity for self-reflection.
- Props baskets, theme items and imaginary games promote creativity within the toddler
- Push and pull-along toys, prams, and trolley carts are excellent for promoting walking skills.
- Opportunities to run, climb and move within safe spaces eg: stepping stones, music and movement activities, sand pit play and floor mat play.
- A language rich environment; storytelling, puppet play, singing & rhymes.
- Posting boxes, nesting cups, bead frames, and 3 piece puzzles will interest the inquisitive learner.
- Time: toddlers may spend a lot of time simply observing other children and activities, this is very normal and should not be discouraged.
- Plenty of similar toys as toddlers do not understand the concept of ‘sharing’
- Opportunities for a drink, snack, and a cuddle whenever required.



ACTIVITIES for Toddlers:

PASTING Paper and boxes are suitable for a toddler to stick things all over. They will often glue bits all on top of each other in layers - it's okay if this happens. It is the process and not the end product which is important.

TEARING PAPER & STUFFING It's great fun and good for developing muscles to tear up newspaper or old magazines. Screwing up the pieces and stuffing them into a stocking, sock or bag can be a great group project - to make a punching bag.

PAINTING Toddlers love to run their fingers through food and feel the texture. Similarly, they love to feel the finger paint. Allow the child to explore it on a low table top and encourage them to make patterns in the mixture. Toddlers can also use the easel for painting if the paper is attached at the right height. One or two colours are sufficient for the child to practice with paint and brushes.

SAND PLAY Toddlers enjoy exploring the sand. Feeling it with fingers and toes. Provide buckets, short handled spades, small wheel barrows and trucks, together with a variety of containers for the child to fill and empty.

PRETEND PLAY Provide small tea cups, tea pots, plastic pots and pans and plastic food. Encourage conversation. Make a hospital, pretend toys are sick.

SONG Children love to listen to songs either in group time or alone with a parent. They can join in simple circle games like 'Ring-a-Rosie'. Songs can be used to calm things down or to get the children excited and laughing. Repetition is important so the same songs can be sung week after week.

BOOKS Provide toddlers with a variety of books to explore with their carers. Lots of picture books, textured books, interactive books like 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt', etc. Act out the story together at Story Time