PLEASE TAKE ONE

HELPING TODDLERS GROW HAPPY AND SMART

For Ages 12-36 Months

BASICS
DeKalb County

THE BASICS

MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

TALK, SING, AND POINT

COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE

EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

READ AND DISCUSS STORIES

© 2021 Third Sector New England, Inc. on behalf of The Basics, Inc. Some photos in this booklet are courtesy of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

80% OF BRAIN GROWTH HAPPENS DURING THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF LIFE.

During these early years of brain growth, infants and toddlers absorb massive amounts of information from interacting with other people. This early learning becomes the foundation for all future learning.

The Basics are five fun, simple, and powerful ways to help all our children become the happiest and most successful they can be!

Let's seize the opportunity!

THE BASICS

ONE

MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS.

Toddlers thrive when the world seems loving, safe, and predictable. Feeling secure in their relationships and surroundings gives them the confidence they need to explore, learn, and take on life's challenges.

In addition, taking steps to avoid stress when you can (and to cope effectively with stress when you can't avoid it), is important for both you and your child.

So maximize love, manage stress.

RESPOND TO THEM. Watch and respond to your toddler's words, feelings, and behaviors when they are upset as well as when they are happy.

CUDDLE THEM. Regularly hug and cuddle your toddler to help them feel safe and loved. And, remember that boys need just as much love as girls do.

ENCOURAGE THEM. Toddlers get a lot of satisfaction and confidence as they master new tasks. Help your child try new things. Follow their lead when they seem interested in something. Be supportive and encouraging as they take chances. Reassure them as they try to figure things out.

TALK ABOUT FEELINGS. Teach your toddler to name their feelings. This will help them understand and express emotions. You can say things like, "It looks like you're scared because you fell. Falling can be scary! But now you're OK."

INVOLVE THEM. Find simple ways to involve your toddler in chores and other activities around the house. For example, they could help you stir while you are cooking. This makes them feel helpful and provides opportunities for learning.

HAVE A ROUTINE. Have consistent times and ways of doing activities like feeding, bathing, reading, and bedtime. Your child will have an easier time with activity transitions when they know what to expect. Another part of a routine is having rules that you use consistently.

MANAGE HOUSEHOLD STRESS. Stress is normal, but too much stress is bad for a brain that is still developing. Adults' stress can trickle down to children, so it is important to have strategies for coping when your life gets stressful. Talk to friends, family, or your doctor about ways to deal with stress.

THE BASICS

TWO

TALK, SING, AND POINT.

Toddlers are curious! Talking with your toddler and answering their questions is a way to teach them about the world. By talking with your toddler, you will get to know to know the fascinating person they are becoming!

The quality of talk is just as important as the amount. So, scold when necessary, but talk mostly about happy things. This includes asking questions that get your toddler to think.

DESCRIBE LIFE. Talk about the things you're doing and what is going on around you. Have conversations as you walk around the neighborhood or do errands.

BE SPECIFIC. The more specific you can be with words, the more your child will learn. For example, instead of saying "Let's go," you could say, "Let's go shopping at the grocery store to buy some food."

ADD IDEAS. Help grow your child's vocabulary by expanding on what he says. For example, if he says "doggie," you can respond with, "Yes, that is a doggie. That doggie is brown and soft."

LISTEN AND RESPOND. Listen to your toddler's questions and answer them. Have a conversation. This is when the most powerful learning takes place.

ASK QUESTIONS. Get your toddler thinking. Have them explain what they are doing or what they think is going to happen. You may get some funny answers!

USE YOUR HANDS. When you talk about something, point to it. This helps your child understand what you mean. Encourage your child to point too. "Can you point to the triangle?" This will help them connect new words to the objects they represent.

SING AND RECITE. Sing songs and recite nursery rhymes. Choose ones you remember from your own childhood, read in books, or make up new ones.

USE ANY LANGUAGE. It doesn't matter what language you speak with your infant. All languages are equally beneficial.

THE BASICS

THREE

COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE.

Becoming good at math begins long before a child enters school. In fact, toddlers can learn simple math ideas, including numbers, patterns, sizes, shapes, distances, and making comparisons. Fun and simple activities can help prepare your child to be a math problem solver.

COUNT. Count with your toddler. Move to bigger numbers as they get the hang of it. Young children learn through all of their senses, so have them point to and touch the objects you count.

ADD AND SUBTRACT. Explore what happens when you add or take away items from a group. "You have three crackers. How many will you have if you eat one?"

NAME SHAPES. Look for shapes around you. "The clock is a circle. Do you see any other circles?" This could be a fun game when you are out doing errands.

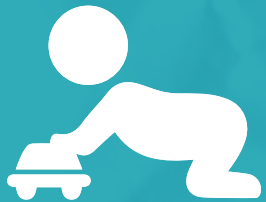
MATCH AND SORT. Make a game of matching and sorting objects into groups. Your child can match and sort items by their shape, color, size, or other features.

COMPARE SIZES, AMOUNTS, AND WEIGHTS. For example, describe things as "large, small, light," or "heavy." Ask you child which objects are larger or smaller.

PUT THINGS IN ORDER. Practice putting things in order. For example, your child could arrange dolls from smallest to largest, youngest to oldest, or heaviest to lightest. See what other categories they come up with!

MAKE MATH PART OF LIFE. Math plays a part in life even when we don't realize it. For example, to prepare dinner, you measure ingredients, set the oven timer, and count plates. Find ways to let your child help.

USE MUSIC. Clap and dance with your child. Your child will be learning about patterns while having fun.



THE BASICS

FOUR

EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY.

Children learn by touching, banging, dropping, stacking, pouring, crawling, walking, and running. They are excited to explore their surroundings. Their brains build mental maps of places and spaces. Helping your child become an explorer helps develop their “mind’s eye.” It prepares them for sports and even for being good at math!

FOLLOW THEM. Toddlers learn a lot by experimenting on their own. If your child looks like they are concentrating on something, like pouring water in the bath or stacking blocks, stand back for a moment and let them problem-solve for themselves. This is exercise for their brain!

HELP THEM BUILD. Use blocks to build a tower. How high can you go? What happens when you knock it over? What other shapes can you and your child build? You don't need to buy blocks to do this. You can also use cardboard boxes or plastic cups.

MAKE ART. Drawing is a good way to exercise little hands and be creative. Put out some crayons and paper. Your child can also experiment with tearing and folding the paper.

ROLL A BALL. Roll a ball or a bottle back and forth to develop coordination and teach about cause and effect.

PLAY OBSTACLE COURSE. Make a simple obstacle course. You can use blankets, pillows, or boxes. See if your child can go over, under, around, and through these objects.

PLAY HIDE AND SEEK. Your child can hide behind the couch or under the table. Or, you can hide objects around the room. This is a great activity for developing their thinking skills.

USE POSITION WORDS. In all of these activities, use words like "over, under, near, far, through," and "around."

THE BASICS

FIVE

READ AND DISCUSS STORIES.

The more we read with young children, the more prepared they become to enjoy reading and to do well in school. Stories expose children to new and exciting ideas and teach them to use imagination. What they learn about people, places, and things can be important building blocks to later life success. For both parents and children, times together with books form fond and lasting memories.

COMMIT TO READ EVERY DAY. Try to set aside 15 minutes every day to read together. Get books from your local library.

WARM UP. Before you open the book, check out the cover. Read the title. Look at the picture. Ask your child what she thinks the book might be about.

READ AND DISCUSS. Your toddler will learn the most if you have discussions while you read. Respond to their comments and questions about the story. Ask questions that get them thinking. "Why is the boy sad?" "What do you think is going to happen next?"

HELP THEM FOLLOW ALONG. Point to the words and pictures. This helps your toddler understand how reading works. For example, we read from left to right on the page.

USE EXPRESSION. Use your best reader's voice! Trying different voices for different characters is fun.

ENJOY THE PICTURES. Talk about what is happening in the pictures. You can talk about the colors and shapes you see or what the characters are doing.

DON'T BE TOO SERIOUS. Make it fun! Your toddler may want to turn the page before you've finished it. If they can't sit still for the whole book, that's okay.

SET A GREAT EXAMPLE. If toddlers see grownups reading and know that they enjoy it, they will learn that reading is a fun and important part of life.

MAXIMIZE LOVE, MANAGE STRESS

TALK, SING, AND POINT

COUNT, GROUP, AND COMPARE

EXPLORE THROUGH MOVEMENT AND PLAY

READ AND DISCUSS STORIES

ONE-WEEK CHALLENGE

For one week, see how many of The Basics can you do each day. To help you keep track, check off a box below when you do an activity from this book.

MONDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
TUESDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
WEDNESDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
THURSDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FRIDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SATURDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SUNDAY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

For more information about The Basics, please visit:

basicsdekalbcounty.org