



AutismCenterOK.org  
405-842-9995

## LET'S PLAY

### A Guide for Families

For Children Ages 1-5 Years





The mission of the **Oklahoma Early Access Autism Project** is to increase statewide capacity for early identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and to improve access to needed services. The project promotes community awareness of autism and developmental health and trains early childhood professionals in developmental monitoring and screening. The Early Access Project is made possible by a contract with the Developmental Disabilities Council of Oklahoma.



This project is provided and funded by the Developmental Disabilities Council of Oklahoma, supported in part by grant numbers 2001OKSCDD, 2101OKSCDD, and/or 2201OKSCDD from the US Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.

### ***Lemon Lime Adventures***

[lemonlimeadventures.com](http://lemonlimeadventures.com)

This parenting blog provides articles, resources, creative ideas and encouragement for parents and teachers on ways to engage with your child through different sensory activities.

### ***Center on the Social & Emotional Foundations for Early Learning***

[csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html)

Age-specific categories and materials are provided for both parents and teachers. There is access to short videos to watch and free materials to print. This site helps parents and caregivers learn ways to teach children crucial skills that are important for school readiness.

### ***Center on the Developing Child***

[developingchild.harvard.edu](http://developingchild.harvard.edu)

This site focuses on the importance of child development and seeks to empower parents and caregivers with resources to set them up for success. Also provided is a resource library with many different topics and in several other languages.

### ***Zero to Three:***

[zerotothree.org/early-learning/play](http://zerotothree.org/early-learning/play)

This family friendly website provides an array of ideas, resources and helpful tips on how to create the meaningful and important connections that are critical to your child's emotional well-being and development.

### ***CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early.***

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/>

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's *Learn The Signs. Act Early* website provides free resources for parents including tools for monitoring your child's development with checklists or with an app for your Apple or Android device.



### *For Playtime Ideas*

Contact your local library to ask about developmental resources and activities. For instance, the **Metropolitan Library System** in Oklahoma County offers free playtime sessions with peers, storytime, arts-and-crafts more for children Birth-Pre-K at various locations across town.

<https://www.metrolibrary.org/events/upcoming>

### *For Parenting Assistance*

**Child Guidance**, a program available to families of children birth to age 13, promotes optimal development, behavior and interaction for families with young children. They are a resource for families and caregivers for guidance regarding your child's behavior, development, or any parenting concerns you might have. Services are available through local county health departments. Those counties include: Bryan, Canadian, Carter, Cleveland, Comanche, Custer, Garfield, Kay, LeFlore, Muskogee, Oklahoma, Payne, Pittsburg, Pottawatomie, Rogers and Tulsa and also serve surrounding areas. All families with young children are eligible for Child Guidance Services regardless of income.

In Oklahoma County please call 405-271-5700, option 5 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

### *If You Are Concerned about Your Child's Development*

**SoonerStart**, Oklahoma's Early Intervention program for infants and toddlers birth to 36 months who have developmental delays, disabilities or both, is designed to help parents, caregivers and young children gain the knowledge and confidence they need to be successful in life. Through visits with Early Intervention professionals, the family receives information, support, guidance and consultation about improving the child and families' quality of life. This program that can be provided in the home, childcare center, the park or other natural settings in the community. Contact your county's SoonerStart office for further information.

From birth, children are on a journey of discovery, always absorbing new things. They develop skills that will help them meet their developmental milestones, as well as understand the world and how to participate and interact with others in it. Almost everything presents a learning opportunity and it is important that your toddler is exposed to as many activities as possible to help boost their development. **The good news is that the best developmental activities for your toddler are the ones they experience through play!**

This [book of activities](#) is designed as a companion to the CDC Milestone Checklists available to view at [cdc.gov/actearly](https://cdc.gov/actearly). As you follow the development of your toddler use this book of activities to encourage your toddler's growth. These activities offer an important opportunity for you to spend quality time with your toddler through play. They are designed to use materials that you have on hand rather than requiring you to purchase new toys or games. A toddler of any ability will benefit from these activities which promote active learning and contribute to the overall healthy development of your toddler.

### **Important Reminder: Don't Wait!**

While the activities in this book will contribute to your toddler's development, don't wait to talk to your child's doctor or nurse if you notice any sign of possible delay from the Milestone Checklists. Take your Milestone Checklist with you when you see your child's doctor.



### Social-Emotional

*Your baby is beginning to play more cooperatively with others, and understand that other people have feelings. Use the following activities to encourage your child to engage in social interaction and to begin to explore and learn about feelings.*



**Play Ball**—Throw a soft bouncy ball and see if your child will run or crawl to get it, or you can play by rolling the ball back and forth.



**Faces and Feelings**—Look at a book that has pictures of other babies and people that are using different expressions. Point out the faces and talk about what emotion they are feeling.

### Language/Communication

*Your baby is beginning to say 1 to 3 simple words (ex: “mama”, “dada”, “bye-bye”). Reading books, talking, laughing, and playing together helps promote language.*



**Name It!**—Point to various things in your house and name them until your child begins to say them on his/her own. This game can be played anywhere, including your house, in the park or even in the supermarket.



**Read It!**—Read and talk about the pictures in books. Ask your child to point out specific objects on the page. Reading alphabet books helps lay the foundation for learning the ABCs.

### Cognitive (Learning, Thinking, Problem-Solving)

*This is a time your child should start developing problem solving skills and begin to think for themselves.*



**Balance It Out** - Make a balance scale with one hanger, two cups, and two pieces of string. Poke two holes in each cup, and loop strings through the cup holes and hanger, knotting to secure. Make sure the cups are level. Have your child put objects in each cup, explaining the lower cup is heavier. Ask your child to guess which will be heavier or lighter.



**Creative Writing** - Spread shaving cream or lotion on a table, tray or cookie sheet. Ask your child to draw certain shapes, numbers, and letters. Show them how to erase their work. This activity can also be done outside on a smooth surface or tarp, or on the bathtub or shower wall.

### Movement/Physical Development

*Children are beginning to skip, hop, and ride a tricycle. They can feed themselves and toilet independently.*



**Target Practice** - Cut holes in a big piece of cardboard or tarp. Ask your child to throw a beanbag or ball through the holes. You can also use sidewalk chalk to draw a target on a driveway or sidewalk. Have your child start close and continue to move back for more of a challenge. You can add points to make it a game. Cheer when your child hits the target.



**Masking Tape Obstacle Course** - Use painter's tape or masking tape to create an obstacle course in a hallway or between pieces of furniture. String tape across the space at different heights and angles. Show your child how to climb under, step over, and crawl through the course without breaking or knocking down the strips of tape.



### Social-Emotional

*At this age, children are eager to please and want to be liked by their peers. They can understand real from make-believe and enjoy creative activities like singing, dancing, or drawing pictures.*



**Teddy Bear Picnic** - Have your child bring favorite stuffed animals or dolls on a picnic. Bring a basket with a blanket, napkins, pretend food, plastic plates, and cups. Your child can pick a spot for the picnic and direct the stuffed animals or dolls where to sit. Have your child offer food to their “friends”, use manners, and wait their turn. Last, your child can practice “cleaning up”.



**What Would You Do?** - Ask your child questions like: “What would you do if Katie said you couldn’t play with her today?” or “What would you do if another child was acting ‘mean’ on the playground?” Encourage your child to answer in a kind way. You can guide your child and give them the words to use to express themselves in different situations. You can use a puppet or stuffed animal to help act out the scenarios.

### Language/Communication

*By now, your child should speak clearly, tell stories, and converse about daily events. Parents should see children using verbal and nonverbal ways to communicate.*



**“Reading” in Pictures** - Instead of simply reading a book to your child ask them to look at the pictures and tell you what is happening. Ask your child what they think will happen next in the story before turning the page. You can also ask them to tell the story to another family member or friend.



**Action Charade Game** - Have your child act out daily activities without using words. Write four activities (like brushing teeth or checking for mail) on small pieces of paper and put them in a bag. Let your child choose one from the bag. Have them act out all the steps, and try to guess the activity they are acting out.

### Cognitive (Learning, Thinking, Problem-Solving)

*Your baby is learning to explore the surroundings, and to copy another person’s actions. Use the following activities to have some creative fun interactions.*



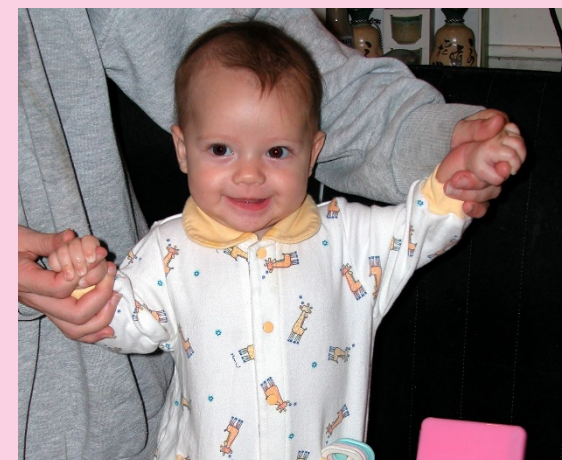
**Make Some Noise**—Explore your home to find things to make music with. Sit with your child and drum on pots and pans following the beat of a favorite song. Or use an empty water bottle filled with beads or pebbles as a noisemaker.



**In and Out**—Show your child how to put things into containers such as pots, jars, boxes, and milk cartons. An example could be having your child put Cheerios into an empty ice cube tray. Encourage your child to dump the items out and put them back in again.

### Movement/Physical Development

*Your baby is becoming stronger and faster in his movements. Whether he is cruising, getting ready to walk, or is actively walking, physical activities will continue to strengthen his muscles as he grows.*



**Let’s Dance!**—Turn on your favorite music and hold your child’s hands as he/she bends up and down. Gently bounce to the beat as you dance. Clap and praise when he/she “dances” on their own by trying to do what you do without holding on.



**Boxes Make Great Toys**—Save large boxes for your child to play with. Cut holes in the sides for windows and doors. Your child will love crawling in and out of the boxes.



### Social-Emotional

*Your child is beginning to express different emotions, explore his surroundings with you or another familiar person, and engage in imaginative play.*



**Sing-a-Along**—You can sing the song “If You’re Happy and You Know It” and substitute “happy” with different feelings.



**Let’s Pretend**—Feed a baby doll with a toy fork, dress up in costume, use a block as an “airplane”, or a box as a house to promote pretend play.

### Language/Communication

*Your child should be able to 1) Say up to 20 simple words, such as ‘cup’, ‘daddy’, and ‘dog’; 2) Understand simple words said to them like ‘drink’, ‘shoe’, and ‘car’; 3) Be able to follow simple instructions, such as ‘kiss mommy’, ‘kick ball’, and ‘give me’; 4) Gesture or point when showing or asking you for something.*

18 Months - Points to get the attention of others



your child, “your turn” and, if they initiate with “I see a ball” add in additional descriptive language such as, “It’s a red ball!”

**I “Spy”**— Play this at home, outside, or using a book. Name and describe a familiar and visible object, saying, for instance, “I see a furry dog”. Give your child an opportunity to point to the object or imitate your words. You can tell



**Point and Pop**—Blow bubbles for your child and pop the bubbles with your fingers. Soon your child will be encouraged to point and pop them too. Label your actions, saying “POP!” as you pop the bubbles.

### Cognitive (Learning, Thinking, Problem-Solving)

*Kids at this age love playing games and spending time with others. They are learning to plan and are more organized in their play.*



**Play with Laundry** - Have your child help you with the laundry by sorting all like things together in stacks. Ask them to sort socks, underwear, shirts and pants. You can also ask them to sort the clothing by “owner” (my shirts, Dad's shirts, Mom's shirts) and then by color.



**Matching Game** - Gather random (preferably flat) items from around the house, lay them on a large piece of paper and trace around them. You’ll want to use items that are easy to trace, and that will be easy for your child to recognize once they are traced. Have your child match the items to the drawings on the paper.

### Movement/Physical Development

*Children at this age are very busy. They love movement activities. Many have mastered climbing, sliding on playground equipment and jumping.*



**Living Room Dance Party** - Play a song and show your child how to gallop, walk on their tip-toes, walk quietly or ice skate around the room to the music. This gets your child moving and listening to your instructions. For even more fun include siblings or friends in your dance party.

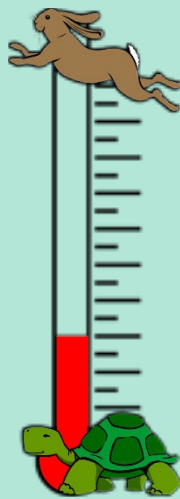


**Make Your Own Kite** - Recycle your grocery store plastic bag or use a kitchen trash bag and turn it into a kite. Use a string, ribbon, or shoelace to tie to the handles of the bag. Make a kite for your child and one for yourself. Then enjoy running around outside and flying the kites together.



### Social-Emotional

*During year 3 to year 4 toddlers are learning how to become independent. They are developing friendship skills and learning how to take turns.*



**Feelings Thermometer**— Draw a big picture of a thermometer. Draw a turtle at the bottom and a bunny at the top. Ask your child if he feels calm like a turtle or jumpy (bouncy?) like a bunny? When your child is feeling over-energized, help him think of things he can do to be calmer like a turtle. Maybe he could run outside, bounce a ball, or jump up and down.



**It's My Turn to Bowl!** - Make a bowling alley using plastic bottles or paper towel rolls as bowling pins. Show your child how to roll a ball into the pins and then say “now it’s your turn”. Continue alternating turns with your child, providing reminders about taking turns and encouraging them to help you reset the “bowling pins” after each turn.

### Language/Communication

*Toddlers at this age speak and understand many words. They can have a conversation of several sentences and follow instructions of 2-3 steps.*



**Show and Tell** - Ask your child to find certain items around your house or yard and put them in a paper bag. You can set a timer and make it a race. When they come back have them describe the items they found. Ask them questions like: What color is it? How does it feel, soft or rough? How can you use it? Eat it? Roll it?



**Simon Says** - Play the traditional game of Simon Says. Instruct your child to do certain actions, but only when you first say “Simon says.” Use words like “in”, “on”, and “under” as well as instructions with 2-3 steps. For example, say “Simon says, put your hand on your head and stand on one foot” or “Simon says, put your shoe under the chair.”

### Cognitive (Learning, Thinking, Problem-Solving)

*Your toddler is beginning to show you that he has ideas and can think for himself. Give him choices frequently and allow him to try solving problems.*



**What's Inside?**—Use a pillow case or paper sack and place 3-4 small items inside, such as a small block, ball, spoon, and car. Ask your child to reach into bag and use his sense of touch to locate the item you requested.



**Stuffed Animal Peek-a-Boo**—Hide several stuffed animals around the house (or yard) with little parts of the animals peeking out to provide your child a clue to help find them.

### Movement/Physical Development

*Your toddler should be walking, pulling toys while walking, drinking from a cup, and helping dress himself. Physical activities not only help build your child’s muscles, they also improve his cognitive skills.*



**Pillow Pile**—Use pillows of all shapes, colors, and sizes. The greater the variety, the better. Scatter the pillows on the floor. Encourage your child to climb over, around, and on top of the pillows.



**Obstacle Course**—(indoors or outdoors) Items you can use to set up a path are pillows, cushions, boxes, hula hoops, and pool noodles. The course should encourage children to climb over, under, through, around, in, and out of obstacles. Get creative!



### Social-Emotional

*Your child is eager to become more independent. His emotions can seem to change very easily from one extreme to another. He is showing more interest in playing alongside other children, and expressing concern for others.*



**Feelings Mat** - Draw a picture of a blank face on a piece of paper or wipe off board. Use play dough or dry erase makers to add facial features to the blank face. Talk to your child about the emotions that match with the different faces and have your child draw and label how they are feeling that day.



**Water Play**— Arrange a playdate with another toddler and let them enjoy water fun playing side by side. Use a plastic bin that can be put on the floor or on a small child's table (indoors or outside). Gather items from around the house such as plastic cups, spoons, bath toys, small rocks, strainer, plastic dolls/animals, etc.

### Language/Communication

*Your child's language is growing rapidly. You should be able to understand at least half of what he is saying. He should be saying 2-4 word sentences, repeating new words he hears, identifying body parts and saying names of familiar people.*



**Count on Counting**—Count fingers, toes, and eyes during bath time, or while waiting at the doctor's office. Or count how many goldfish there are on a plate or the number of shapes in the shape sorter. Sidewalk chalk is another fun way to count by drawing numbers on the driveway.



**Real Life Reading**—Focus on finding books at the library that relate to your toddler's life. Examples are books about going to the doctor's office, sleeping in a new bed or going potty. Doing so helps them see and learn about common events in printed materials.

### Cognitive (Learning, Thinking, Problem-Solving)

*Your child continues to make strides with his cognitive skills. He is learning new concepts, skills, and how to point and name things.*



**Measuring Up**—Plastic measuring cups/spoons or mixing bowls make a fun "nesting" toy for your child. Children learn this through trial and error, but you can show them how by lining items up smallest to largest and then helping them fit the items together again.



**Sort It Out**—Take two cups, two spoons, and two blocks. Place one spoon in one cup and one block in the other cup. Encourage your child to finish putting the remaining spoons and blocks in the correct cup. Sorting can also be practiced putting away toys, such as balls in one bin and blocks in the other, or by separating laundry.

### Movement/Physical Development

*Your child should have plenty of opportunities to run, climb and be physically active at this age. Large muscle strength, especially in the legs, is important for standing, walking, balancing, transitioning from sitting to standing, and for squatting while playing.*



**Act Like an Animal**—Crawl around and pretend to be a particular animal. Slither like a snake or roar like a bear and have your toddler try to copy you or guess what animal you are.



**Tunnel Time**—Use a pop-up laundry basket or several large unused boxes and set up a tunnel for your child to crawl through. You could also build a fort using blankets or sheets thrown over a table (coffee table, dining room table, etc.) and have your child crawl, or roll a ball through it.