



COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

18 TO 36 MONTHS

Provide toys with different shapes, colors, sizes, and sounds. Point out same and different. Ask why, where, when, and what questions to get your child to use observation, exploration, and prediction thinking skills.

Provide and discuss cause and effect activities such as push/pull toys, open/close, on/off, etc. Ask “What happens if…”

Use “mathematical” vocabulary throughout your conversations with your child: “Here is the small, red, round ball,” “Now you have 3 toys,” or “You are under the table.”

With supervision, have your child play in water, sand, or other sensory materials with containers, funnels, water droppers, sponges, measuring cups, etc.

Ask open-ended questions about everything. Open-ended questions require more than a yes or no answer and allow for your toddler to think about what is happening around them.



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Do a cooking activity together. Allow for egg cracking, pouring, stirring, mashing, measuring, and mixing using action words as you and your child are doing them.

Practice pointing and counting things: “One, two, three cars, there are three cars.” Add one object at a time and say the next number. Work up to five and eventually go higher as your child better understands.

Have your child sort by color, size, shape, or other characteristics of objects.

Go on a shape or color hunt inside and outside. Have your child make check marks or lines on paper as you count together. Count the total when finished: “We found five circles.”

Use prepositional words when locating objects to show spatial relationships: under, over, behind, on top of, in, out, etc.





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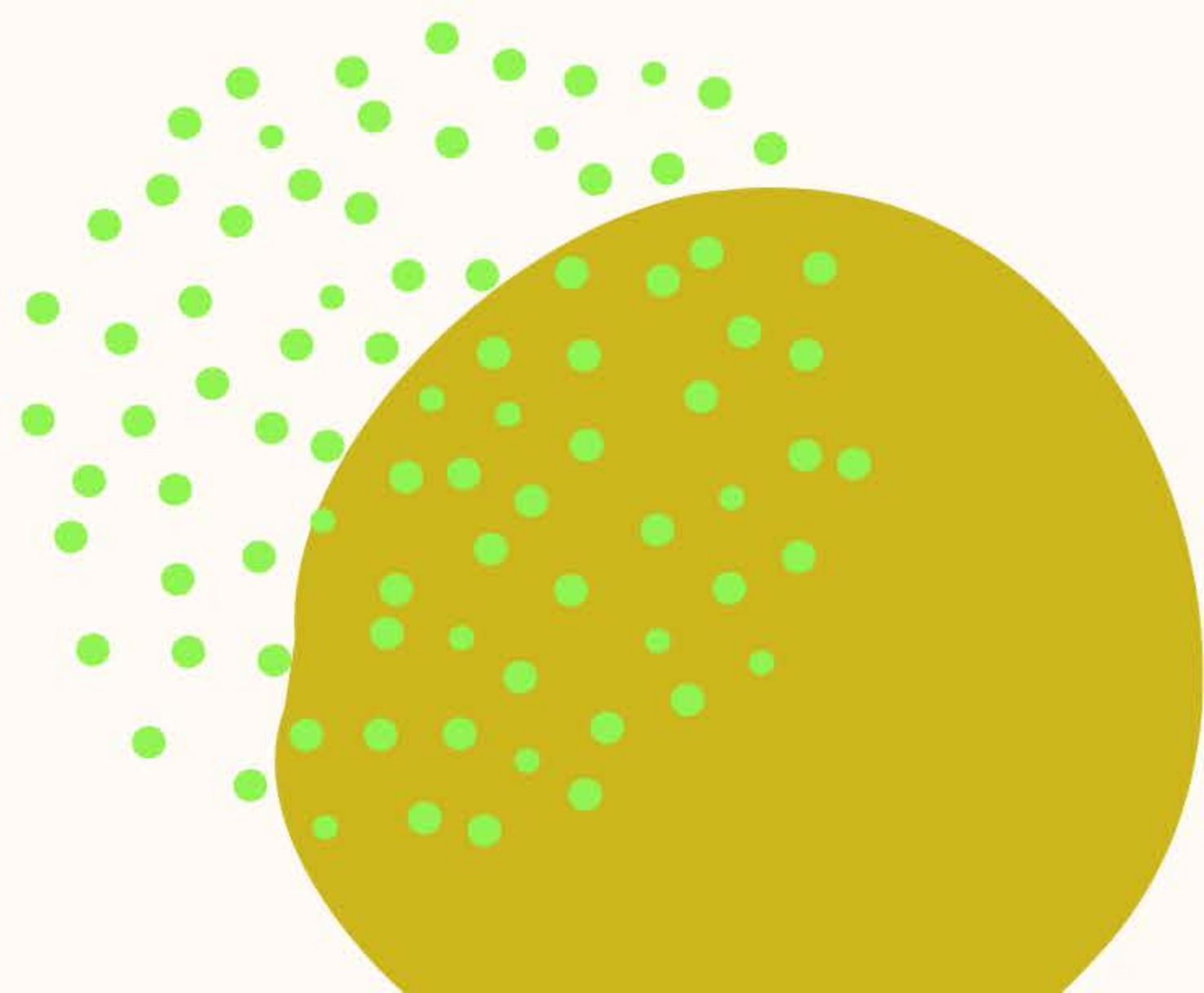
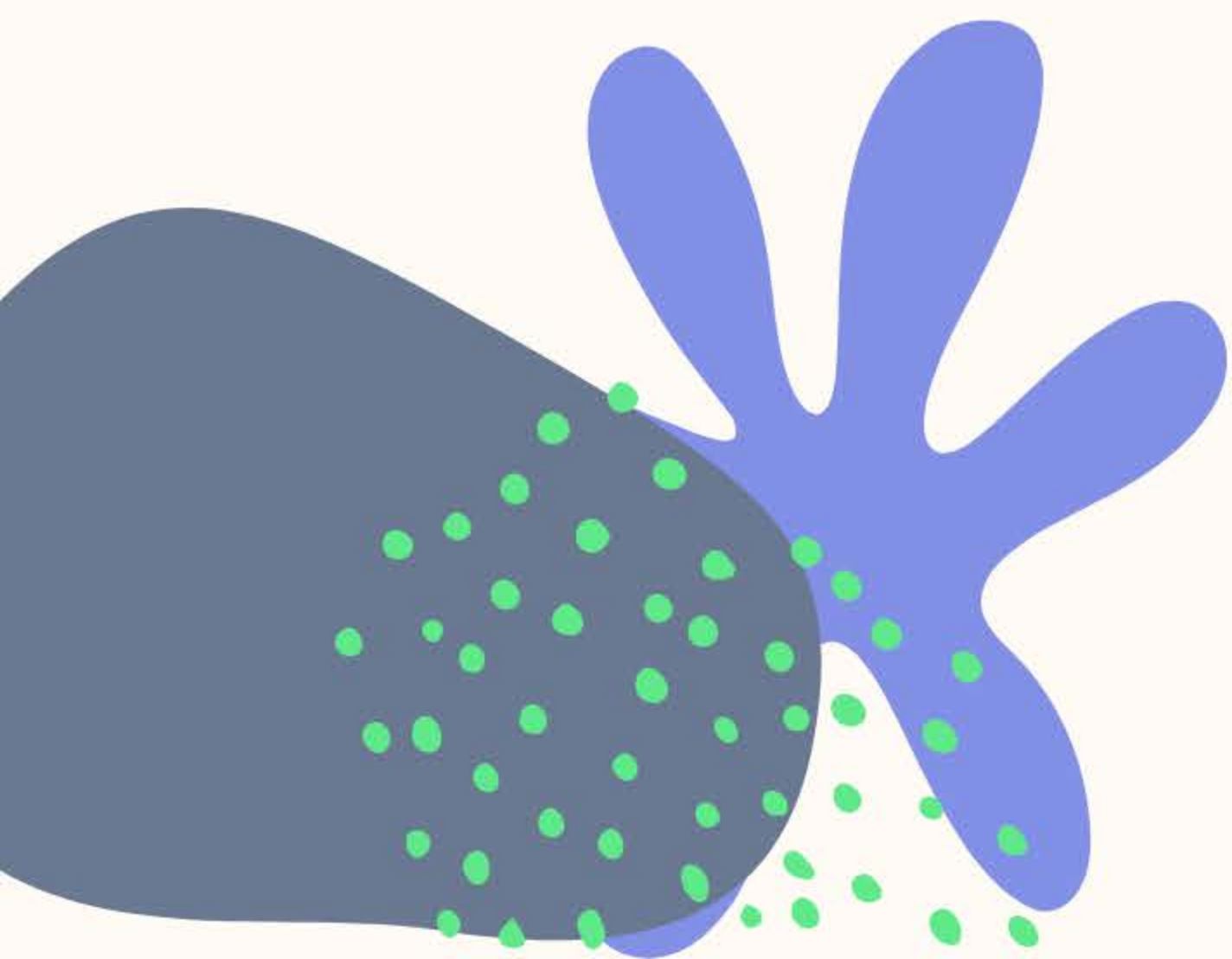
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Introduce the concept of time by using statements such as, “When we are done with this, then we will be doing that,” “We have three (showing three fingers) more sleeps and then we go to grandma’s house,” or “In five minutes, we will be cleaning up (showing five fingers).”

Introduce simple patterns: shoe – sock – shoe – sock. Introduce increasingly complex patterns as they master simple patterns. Patterns can include days of the week, breakfast, lunch, dinner, morning, night, or something that occurs in the same order every time.

Introduce environment by collecting rocks, twigs, leaves, and other nature items. Observe, describe, and ask and answer questions about the earth.





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Have a sink and float experience while taking a bath. Include objects that will sink and float, ask open-ended questions about what is happening, and allow your child to add objects. Encourage your child to make predictions: “What do you think will happen if we put the sponge in the water?”

Experiment with push and pull: doors, wagons, chairs, etc.

Go on a walk and point out living and non-living objects. Discuss what makes them living and non-living.

Read books about similarities and differences among people, places, and around the world.

