

Cognitive Development

8 TO 21 MONTHS



Provide toys with different shapes, colors, sizes, and sounds. Point out same and different. Ask why, where, when, what questions to get your toddler 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...?"

Play hide and seek with objects. Start simple and work up to challenging.

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

Read books about numbers, shapes, sizes, etc.

Make music using pots and pans, containers, wooden and large plastic spoons. Let your child lead as you make similar sounds.





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With supervision, have your toddler play in water, sand, or other sensory materials with containers or spoons for filling and dumping. Add small objects to sensory play: toy car in sand, sink/float items in water, etc.

Use different size containers and demonstrate how certain items can “fit” or are “too big” for a certain container but may fit in another one.

Build a fort with your toddler using household items. Let them choose what can be used and have them add to the fort.

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.

Count everything with your toddler when given the opportunity. Eventually, they will begin to recognize the sounds of numbers when counting more than one thing.

Label body parts that are not as common such as stomach/tummy, chin, lips, fingernails, etc.

