

Toddler Activity Guide

The Pennsylvania One Book 2021 “Many Books, One Pennsylvania Community” Program engages young children, families, and caregivers to read, explore, and play with special emphasis on emotional resilience and wellness. The purpose of this guide is to provide activity ideas for librarians and caregivers to use with young children.

Art

Flour Etch A Sketch

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will engage in reciprocal communication.
 - Infants and toddlers will develop expressive language skills.
- ▶ **Approaches to Learning - Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - Infants and toddlers will use sensory exploration and demonstrate a growing interest in the environment to gain information.

The great thing about an Etch A Sketch is that you can easily start over if you make a mistake. This activity allows toddlers to reuse the same art materials over and over again. Some children may struggle when something they created is erased or goes away. If someone erases their creation without their permission, it can be upsetting for a child whose boundaries are often violated. Respect for others’ work should be discussed before the activity.

Materials:

- Flour
- Dark-colored surface such as a cookie sheet with sides, a colored paper plate, or a paper-lined storage tub.

Directions:

- Pour a thin layer of flour on the surface.
- Use your finger to draw in the flour.
- When you are ready to start again, lightly shake the container to erase the image.

Questions:

- Tell me about your drawing.

Extensions:

- A similar activity can be done with pudding inside a self-sealing plastic bag. You may want to consider double bagging or taping the end shut to help contain the pudding.



Edible Finger Paint

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will demonstrate an increased complexity in combining a variety of art materials to engage in the process of art.
- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will engage in reciprocal communication.
 - Infants and toddlers will develop expressive language skills.



Finger painting is one of the easiest types of art where young children can find success. It allows them a venue for self-expression while working on building finger strength and control. These options also have the added fun of being edible.

Materials:

- Edible finger paint. Some ideas include:
 - Pudding
 - Yogurt with a drop or two of food coloring
 - Ketchup
- Paper plates

Directions:

- Put a small amount of the “paint” on the plate and let the child create whatever they want.

Questions:

- What have you painted?
- Can you tell me a story about this?



Feed the Birds

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will engage in reciprocal communication.
 - Infants and toddlers will develop expressive language skills.
- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - Infants and toddlers will develop control and coordination of the hands.
 - Infants and toddlers will develop skills to manipulate toys and objects.
- ▶ **Scientific Thinking and Technology and Expression – Exploring, Processing, and Problem-Solving**
 - Infants and toddlers will become increasingly purposeful in their exploration of living and nonliving things.

These crafty activities help children with motor skills development. They also end up with a product that benefits an animal. When you put the bird feeder outside, toddlers can watch as birds eat from their creation, which will help them learn empathy. Two different types of bird feeders are featured below.

Materials:

Feeder 1:

- Plain Cheerios
- Pipe cleaner

Feeder 2:

- Peanut butter
- Bird seed
- String or yarn
- Toilet paper roll
- Scissors or a single hole punch
- Plate



Directions:

Feeder 1:

- Make a loop on one end of a pipe cleaner so that Cheerios cannot fall off that end.
- Thread the Cheerios onto the pipe cleaner. This may take your toddler a few tries before they figure it out.
- When the Cheerios are close to the top, make a hook on the other end to loop over a tree branch.

Feeder 2:

- Cut or punch two holes on one end of an empty toilet paper roll. The holes should be on opposite sides.
- Use your fingers to cover the toilet paper roll in peanut butter.
- Put some bird seed on a plate.
- Roll the covered toilet paper roll in the bird seed.
- Tie a piece of string through each hole to create a loop to place over a tree branch.

Questions:

- Do you think the birds will like their dinner?
- What color birds do you think we will see?

Yoga Books

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - Infants and toddlers will gain control of their bodies and movements.
 - Infants and toddlers will exhibit and demonstrate balance and strength.
- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will actively engage with text.
 - Infants and toddlers will develop receptive language skills.

Yoga has many benefits for children including building confidence, reducing anxiety, building focus and concentration, teaching self-care, promoting self-awareness, and building flexibility and balance. (*Yoga for Kids and Their Grown-Ups*. Katherine Priore Ghannam. Rockridge Press, 2018.)

Tip: Be sure to “fail” along with your little one when trying yoga poses. If you are accomplished at tree pose, occasionally “fall” out of the pose and talk about how it takes time to master. This is also an opportunity to try an easier version of a pose together. Also, keep in mind that there is no expectation of form or silence when children are doing yoga. Just focusing on their bodies and attempting the poses provides a strong foundation as children learn how to move and control their bodies. Children may also find one pose that they want to do over and over. That is fine, too.



Materials:

- A book about yoga for children. There are a number of books to choose from. The following are all available in board book format:

Yoga Baby. Amanda Flinn. Illustration, Shane Crampton. Beaming Books, 2020.

Yoga Baby. Amy Hovey. Orca Book Publishers, 2019.

Meddy Teddy: Mindful Poses for Little Yogis. Rodale Kids, 2018.

I Yoga You. Genevieve Santos. Little Simon, 2019.

- Open space to try yoga poses
- Optional: Yoga mat or towel

Directions:

- Read the book together and try to recreate some of the poses.

Questions:

- What is your favorite yoga pose?

Extensions:

- Do you like learning yoga by watching someone do the poses? Search for “Cosmic Kids Yoga” on YouTube to find videos on specific poses and stories told with yoga poses.
- Work with a doll or a stuffed animal. Maneuver their arms and legs into yoga poses.
- Have fun with animal sounds while practicing yoga poses. There are many poses, such as downward dog, cobra, and lion, that allow for you to make the animal sounds during or after the pose. Try wagging your tail like a dog during or after the downward dog pose.
- Turn the animal movements/sounds into a song while practicing the poses.

*The yoga person had a dog,
e-i-e-i-o*

*And that dog liked to wag,
e-i-e-i-o*

*With a wag wag here,
and a wag wag there*

*Here a wag, there a wag,
everywhere a wag wag*

*The yoga person had a cobra,
e-i-e-i-o*

And that cobra liked to hiss...

Freeze Game

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will respond to music in a variety of ways.
- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - Infants and toddlers will gain control of their bodies and movements.
 - Infants and toddlers will exhibit and demonstrate balance and strength.
- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will develop receptive language skills.

This classic game is a simple way for children to work on self-control. It also helps children work on listening skills, which is a building block for literacy.

Materials:

- Music of any style

Directions:

- Tell everyone to dance or move however they like when the music is playing.
- When the music stops, everyone should freeze in their current position.
- Hold that position until the music starts again.
- Continue as long as you like with the activity.



Let's Learn Emotions

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will actively engage with text.
 - Infants and toddlers will engage in reciprocal communication.
- ▶ **Social and Emotional Development – Student Interpersonal Skills**
 - Infants and toddlers will demonstrate an increasing awareness of emotion.



Young children are learning about emotions in many ways. They are learning about themselves and what it means to feel happy or sad. They are also learning to recognize the signs of different emotions in other people. They are learning to see when someone else is sad and that a hug may be helpful. Books can help children learn about emotions.

Materials:

- A book with photographs of many emotions. These examples are all available in board book format:

Baby Faces. DK Publishing, 2006.

Why the Face? Jean Jullien. Phaidon Press Limited, 2018. (Note that this book has illustrations instead of photographs.)

Making Faces: A First Book of Emotions. Abrams Appleseed, 2017.

Baby Faces. Margaret Miller. Little Simon, 1998.

My Face Book / Mi libro de las caras. Star Bright Books, 2011.

- Mirror

Directions:

- Read the book together.
- Ask the child what the person in the book is feeling. Are they happy? Are they sad?
- Practice making happy, sad, angry, surprised, etc., faces together in the mirror.

Questions:

- How do you know this person is happy? Sad? Angry?

Active Alphabets

PA Early Learning Standard

► Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts

- Infants and toddlers will become increasingly aware of print.
- Infants and toddlers will engage with print within their environment.

► Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body

- Infants and toddlers will gain control of their bodies and movements.

Letter recognition is one of the earliest building blocks for reading. Children who already recognize letters have an easier time learning different letter sounds. Basic letter recognition is key to being able to read words. Singing the “ABC Song” is a lot of fun. Adding movement helps toddlers learn while getting the wiggles out. Knowing letters also helps children build confidence as they start to recognize letters in other places.

Materials:

- One sheet of paper per letter with the capital letter printed or written large and clear
- Optional: Laminate each sheet so they last longer
- Optional: Instead of letters on paper, you can use a rug with the alphabet printed along the edges

Directions:

- Move from letter to letter as you sing the alphabet song.

Extensions:

- Teach meaningful letters to each child. Many children learn the letters in their name first. Can they find the first letter of their name?
- As children get better at recognizing letters, ask them to find the same letter somewhere else. Perhaps in a book or on a sign.
- Move this activity outside by writing letters on a sidewalk using chalk.
- Make this a tactile activity by choosing one or more letters and “writing” them on the floor using masking tape. Can you cover the letter using toys? For example, can a bunch of small toy cars cover all of the tape for the letter “C”? Blocks are a great toy for this activity.





Bubble Time

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Language and Literacy Development – English Language Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will engage in reciprocal communication.
- ▶ **Approaches to Learning – Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - Infants and toddlers will use sensory exploration and demonstrate a growing interest in the environment to gain information.

Everyone loves bubbles. They are fun. They are interactive. They can also be used in teaching moments. If using bubbles with a group of children (or even just one-on-one), you can use bubbles to teach children how to take turns. Perhaps everyone gets a chance to blow bubbles. Perhaps everyone gets a chance to pop the bubbles.

Bubbles can be used to work on empathy. Bubbles are very delicate. Encourage children to try to carefully catch a bubble on their finger without popping it.

Bubbles can also help children with the mouth movements needed to make the “ooh” sound by rounding their lips as they blow.

Bubbles can help children learn about anticipation. Say “Ready, Set, GO!” each time you are about to blow bubbles.

Materials:

- Bubble solution (Make your own using dish soap and water. Some recipes suggest including glycerin, corn syrup, or sugar.)
- Bubble wand



Questions:

- What shape is a bubble?
- Look closely at the bubbles. Do you see any colors? (This works best with larger bubbles.)
- What does a bubble feel like? (You may need to help children come up with words for this one. Bubbles may feel sticky or slimy.)

Let's Be Fish

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Creative Thinking and Expression – Communicating Through the Arts**
 - Infants and toddlers will respond to music in a variety of ways.
- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - Infants and toddlers will gain control of their bodies and movements.
 - Infants and toddlers will exhibit and demonstrate balance and strength.

This activity helps children work on spatial awareness. Spatial awareness is the concept concerning the understanding of size, position, shape, movement, and direction. Spatial awareness is also a strong basis for many math concepts. Working on this skill now will help children with math later. The activity also requires everyone to work on consideration and cooperation. Note that toddlers often don't have full control over their bodies yet. Expect missteps and celebrate growth over time.

Materials:

- Space to move around
- Music (You might choose to use “fishy” music, such as “The Goldfish” by Laurie Berkner or “Octopus’s Garden” by The Beatles.)
- Optional: Stuffed animals (turtle, whale, crab, or anything that is sea life).

Directions:

- Optional: Place the stuffed animals in random spots around the floor.
- Play the music and have everyone swim around.
- Instruct everyone to be careful to not bump into any other fish (people or stuffed animals).

Questions:

- Did you bump into any other fish?
- Did you see anything fun on your swim through the ocean?

Extensions:

- You can continue this activity with other animals. Be puppies in a dog park. Be birds flying through the sky.
- Read a non-fiction book about the animal in your activity to learn more about them.

Treasure Hunters

PA Early Learning Standard

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 - Infants and toddlers will develop control and coordination of the hands.
 - Infants and toddlers will develop skills to manipulate toys and objects.
- ▶ **Approaches to Learning - Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - Infants and toddlers will use sensory exploration and demonstrate a growing interest in the environment to gain information.



This is a great activity for children to explore different ways to solve a problem.

Materials:

- Small storage tub
- Cornmeal (You can also experiment with flour, rice, or sand.)
- Kitchen utensils: small colanders, slotted spoons, non-slotted spoons, kitchen tongs, etc.
- Small toys: magnetic letters, plastic animals, buttons, etc.



Directions:

- Pour a couple boxes of cornmeal in the storage tub.
- Bury a few toys in the cornmeal.
- Let the child explore using different things to search for treasure. For example, the colander can be used like you are sifting for gold. Don't forget to try digging with just your hands.

Questions:

- Which tool works best?



Build It Up, Knock It Down

PA Early Learning Standard

- ▶ **Health, Wellness, and Physical Development – Learning About My Body**
 - Infants and toddlers will develop control and coordination of the hands.
 - Infants and toddlers will develop skills to manipulate toys and objects.
- ▶ **Approaches to Learning – Constructing, Organizing, and Applying Knowledge**
 - Infants and toddlers will develop an increased capacity to attend to a task even when faced with challenges.
- ▶ **Mathematical Thinking and Expression – Exploring, Processing, and Problem-Solving**
 - Infants and toddlers will demonstrate increased understanding of numbers and rote counting.

Honestly, what is more fun? Building with blocks or knocking the creation down? This activity helps children with engineering skills as they work out how to make a taller tower. It also helps with resilience as they learn to try again after their creation unexpectedly crashes. Some children may struggle when something they created is knocked down or goes away. If someone knocks down their creation without their permission, it can be upsetting for a child whose boundaries are often violated. Respect for someone else's creation and knocking down only what you have built should be discussed before the opportunity.

Materials:

- Building blocks

Directions:

- Use your imagination to build towers, buildings, bridges, houses, barns – whatever you can think of.
- Make this a math and engineering activity by counting how many blocks are in your tower.
- Work on color recognition by building with only one block color at a time.

Questions:

- How can we make the tower stronger? You may want to talk through a solution such as building a wider base.

Extensions:

- Read a book about construction together after building with blocks. Do you have any toy construction vehicles that you can play with while building with blocks?



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