

24-36 Months

- 1. Expand It-**Toddlers are learning to use their vocabulary to build 2-3+ word phrases. When your child says “ball”, expand on that word by putting it in a simple sentence for him to hear and imitate, such as “A big, red ball”. **Skills:** Receptive/expressive language
- 2. What Do You Feel?-**Use a small box or bag and place an object inside such as a block. Place the same block and a different object, such as cotton ball on the table. Have the child reach into the box/bag without looking and feel the object, then encourage him to look at the two objects on the table and tell you which one was inside the box/bag. **Skills:** Sensory-tactile, memory, language
- 3. Sing the Missing Word-**By age 2 most toddlers are quite familiar with certain songs such as “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” or “Old MacDonald”. To help your child learn to sing these songs on his own & to encourage language, sing a familiar song and leave out a word for your child to fill in. For example, “twinkle, twinkle little_____” and see if your child will spontaneously say “star” to fill in the missing word. **Skills:** Language, memory, attention, rhythm/music.
- 4. Obstacle Course-**Toddlers are developing balance & coordination skills & like to be active. Create an indoor obstacle course using pillow, stuffed toys, blankets, furniture or an outdoor course using old tires, logs, trikes, rocks, etc. Arrange objects so your child needs to crawl under, walk around, jump over, walk on and balance, slide, scoot, step, walk between, swing, etc. **Skills:** Gross motor coordination, balance, motor planning, body in space awareness.
- 5. Let’s Pretend-**Toddlers are starting to use imaginative play and this can be encouraged by staging imaginary play scenes for your child. Use dolls, action figures, stuffed animals and props like empty containers or pretend food/dishes & create scenarios for your child where you play alongside them having an imaginary tea party, imaginary baseball game, imaginary breakfast, etc. **Skills:** Creativity, imagination, language, socialization
- 6. Roll it, Pat It-**Use store bought Play Doh or make your own. Supply your child with a rolling pin, cookie cutters, spoons, bowls, etc and encourage rolling of dough, pulling dough apart, making imaginary food, poking the dough with fingers, etc. **Skills:** Fine motor, finger isolation, hand strength/dexterity, imaginative play, tactile/sensory exploration.
- 7. Give me ONE-**Many parents focus on having their children count by rote to ten, but fail to teach the concept of a number. Use Cheerios or your child’s blocks and while teaching counting work on the concept of “one” by asking your child “can I have one block?” or “give me one Cheerio” and help him learn the concept of one out of many. When he understands one, you can move on to asking him to find two of out of many. **Skills:** Concept of number, counting, receptive language
- 8. Frogs on a Lily Pad-**Help children learn to jump forward & side to side, but cutting out big green circular shapes & taping them to the floor a few inches apart. Tell your child he is a frog and needs to jump from one lily pad to the next without jumping into the

water. As he gets better coordinated you can move the circles a bit farther apart. **Skills:** Gross motor, jumping, coordination.

9. **Let's Learn Colors**-Use 4 large containers or laundry baskets and cut out a red, yellow, blue, green circle to tape on the front of each. Get balls in each of the 4 colors and make a game of throwing the same color ball into the same color basket. **Skills:** Cognitive, color matching, language, gross motor, coordination.
10. **Mailman**- Use some junk mail or let your child scribble on paper and seal it in envelopes. Place a different sticker on the outside of each envelope and place them around the house. Give your child a backpack or fabric bag and ask him to go around the house collecting the letter. Using a Kleenex or empty shoebox, cut a hole in the top for your mailbox. Then ask the child to sort through his bag and "find the letter to the horse", "find the letter to the sunshine", etc and encourage him to find the correct letter with the matching sticker and drop it into the mailbox. **Skills:** Cognitive, attention, memory, receptive/expressive language, following directions, fine motor.
11. **Bead Stringing**- No need to buy beads if you don't own a set. You can use dry rigatoni pasta or wagon wheel pasta and a shoestring or regular string to work on bead stringing. As a craft you can first color the pasta with paint or markers and later you can help your child sort colors or make patterns, but putting 2 green beads onto the string, then 2 red, etc. **Skills:** Fine Motor, Cognitive, color matching/sorting/recognition, hand-eye coordination.
12. **What's The Use?**-Find some everyday objects that are familiar to your child and see if he can identify the objects by their function. Place a ball, spoon, cup and shoe out in front of him and ask "Which one do you put on your foot?" or "Which one do you drink out of?" and see if he can tell you the object and its function. **Skills:** Cognitive, receptive/expressive language.
13. **I Spy**-Play this game inside or outside with your child encouraging him to find things that are familiar by saying "I spy something that flies" and see if he can find a bird, or "I spy something that drives on the road" and see if he points to his toy car. **Skills:** Cognitive, attention, memory, receptive/expressive language.
14. **Nature Walk**-Take a walk around your neighborhood or local park in different seasons and talk about what you see/find with your child. Talk about trees, flowers, cars, people, anything and everything you see! Collect leaves or rocks & bring them home to make craft projects. **Skills:** Gross Motor, Cognitive, Language.
15. **Sidewalk Chalk (bathtub chalk)**-Use your sidewalk, patio or driveway as a place for your child to get creative with sidewalk chalk that washes off with water. If it's too cold, use bathtub chalk/paints to encourage creativity. **Skills:** Fine motor, imitation, handedness, thumb & fingers grasp.
16. **Grocery Store Helper**-Make grocery trips fun by enlisting your child to find certain special items for you. When finding bananas, talk about how they are yellow in comparison to the apples you just bought, which are red. See if he can locate his favorite cereal or pick out the alphabet soup among the cans. Lots of learning can take

place at the grocery store. **Skills:** Cognitive, pattern & color recognition, receptive/expressive language.

- 17. Balance, Catch, Jump-**Place a piece of duct tape (2" wide or more) on the floor and show your child how to walk on it like a balance beam heel to toe. Next show your child how to jump over it. Practice throwing a ball toward a target or into a large box or laundry basket. Practice catching a large ball from a distance of 3-5 feet. **Skills:** Gross Motor, balance, coordination.
- 18. Pay Attention-**If your child does not stick with one toy or activity for more than a minute or so, use an egg timer and set it to two minutes and teach your child that when the timer rings then he may switch to another activity/toy. Gradually move the timer up as your child's attention span increases to a max of 5 minutes per toy for 2-3 year olds. **Skills:** Attention Span, listening.
- 19. All About Me-**Use a mirror and ask "Who is that in the mirror" or "What is his name?" or "How old are you?" Help your child learn his sense of self, by learning to say his name and age upon request. **Skills:** Social skills, receptive/expressive language.
- 20. Can You Do It?-**Encourage imitation of various facial gestures and/or body movements during play, such as raising both your arms above your head and then dropping one arm down and seeing if your child can imitate you. Or standing on one leg briefly & then jumping twice. Or sticking out your tongue and then blinking your eyes. See if your child can copy your movements and then copy his too to make it a fun turn taking game. **Skills:** Social, imitation, following directions, listening, turn taking.
- 21. Story Time-**Now that your child is older he can sit & attend to a short story of 3 minutes or longer. Encourage him to find details in a picture book, for example instead of just asking him to find the ball, ask him "what is under the tree?" and see if he tells you "a ball", or "find the man who is wearing a hat on his head". Challenge him with details. **Skills:** Listening, visual attention, receptive/expressive language.
- 22. My Own Band-**Use store bought instruments or make your own using empty boxes, pots & pans with wooden spoons, paper towel rolls, etc. Encourage your child to make music and play or sing along with him. Beat on a drum and count "1, 2, 3" and see if he can imitate your pattern on the beat. **Skills:** Creativity, rhythm, imitation, number concepts, language.
- 23. Sensory Boxes-**Use storage container with lids or dish bins and fill them with rice, beans, cotton balls, mini pompoms, etc to create sensory boxes which foster play much like a sandbox, but can be used indoors during all seasons. Hide toys inside and see if your child can find them. Use large spoons and cups and buckets to dump and fill. **Skills:**
- 24. Lines & Circles-**Get out crayons & paper and while coloring sing "Wheels on the Bus", encouraging circle scribble during "wheels on the bus go round and round", horizontal lines when the "wipes on the bus go swish, swish, swish", vertical lines when "the people on the bus go up & down" and dots when the "horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep". **Skills:** Fine motor, grasp, imitation skills, language, listening.

- 25. Stack & Nest-**Use measuring cups or store bought stacking/nesting cups to work on concept of size “big & little”, “which one is bigger?”, “which one is smaller?”. **Skills:** Concept of size, fine motor skills, language.
- 26. Where Did it Go?-** Use a small toy or a piece of food that is a favorite of your child as a motivator. Take 2 large non-see through cups and show your child where you are hiding the toy/food. Then tell your child to watch carefully and reverse the cups. See if he/she remembers where the toy/food was hidden. Do not try to trick your child, always show them where the object is hiding & encourage them to sustain attention to the task and find the hidden item. If they master finding it using 2 cups, then add a third cup. **Skills:** Attention, memory, problem solving, listening.
- 27. Cardboard House-**Use a large cardboard box (large appliance boxes for refrigerators, stoves work great) and turn it upside down and cut windows & doors in it for your child. Allow them paint or color it with crayons or markers and use it as a play house. You will be amazed at the hours of fun this creates for toddlers both indoors & out. **Skills:** Imaginative play, fine motor, language.
- 28. Play Date-**Two year olds are ready for building and enhancing their social skills with peers and scheduling play dates with one same aged peer is a nice way to begin. Keep in mind that toddlers do not typically play cooperatively, they tend to play on their own among their peers unless everyone is fighting over the same toy! This is a great time to schedule one on one play sessions where adults can model turn-taking, sharing, waiting, using language to ask for toys “May I have a turn?” or “Can I have your blue car?”. **Skills:** Socialization, turn taking, waiting, language, following rules.
- 29. On the Curb-**Toddlers are increasing their motor skills rapidly and practicing balance skills such as walking along a curb heel to toe when outside on walks or going to the store can help them refine these skills. Hold both hand or one hand at first until your child gets the hang of walking along a curb & then fade your assistance until he can do it hands free on his own. **Skills:** Gross motor, balance, following directions.
- 30. WH Question Game-**As toddlers improve with language they begin to ask questions and you too can challenge your child with creative thinking and the ability to answer “wh” questions. For example, when Mom leaves for work, have Dad ask “Where did Mom go?” and see if your child can answer “Work” or “go to work”. When your child is playing ask her “what drives on that road you made?” and see if she answers “car”. When outside on walks ask “what flies?” and see if he can answer “A bird”. After dinner ask “Who cooked your dinner for you?” and see if your child can answer “Mommy”. Help them answer the questions if they don’t respond and if they respond with a single word, such as “mommy”, expand on the single word by putting it into a sentence for them such as “Yes, Mommy cooked your mac & cheese”.