

Just in Time Parenting

Months 17-18



Use words to describe the way your child feels.

Your child can show intense feelings — suddenly becoming excited, frustrated, happy, angry, or afraid.

Give each feeling a name. When a box won't open or a car won't roll, your child may drop it or throw it in anger. Tell him calmly that you know it makes him angry when the toy won't work. These words show your toddler that you understand his anger. It helps him learn to tell you how he is feeling, instead of acting out. Here are some feeling words:

- Happy or glad
- Sad or unhappy
- Scared or afraid
- Angry or mad
- Silly
- Excited
- Proud

Show him how to handle strong feelings. Help him learn how the toy works, substitute another toy, or just hold him gently. He will know you care about his feelings, and he will start learning to handle them. It takes a long time for a child to understand and cope with his feelings. Your help will make this learning easier.

When others criticize, you can listen but not agree.

Sometimes others seem to be criticizing you all the time. It's hard to be calm when someone is putting you down, but the way you respond can make a big difference.

You can let them know that you **ACCEPT** what they say, but you don't have to **AGREE** with them.

By accepting, you're simply saying, "I hear you."

Here are some accepting words you can use to give a little breathing room and avoid arguments.

- *So you think I....*
- *I'll think about what you said....*
- *I can see how you might feel that way....*

If you don't argue, it's hard for others to keep putting you down.

What's it like to be 17 and 18 months old?



How I Talk

- ☐ I understand more words than I can say.
- ☐ I'm getting good at copying words.
- ☐ I often babble to myself.
- ☐ Sometimes I will do what you ask me to do.
- ☐ I try to sing, and I like to have you sing to me.
- ☐ Sometimes I can ask you for what I want — like a cookie — by naming it.
- ☐ I can say about ten words, but mostly I use the word “no.”
- ☐ I am beginning to understand the meaning of “now.”

How I Grow

- ☐ I like to lug, tug, and drag things.
- ☐ I want my own way almost all the time.
- ☐ I can walk upstairs if you will hold one hand.
- ☐ I like to run, but I fall or bump into things sometimes.
- ☐ I'm beginning to use one hand more than the other.
- ☐ When things don't go the way I want them to, I get angry.
- ☐ I'm learning to crawl backwards down the stairs.
- ☐ I like to grab anything I can reach.

Play I Enjoy

- ☐ I like playing with nesting toys and stacking toys.
- ☐ I often run around without any special plan.
- ☐ I like pushing wheel toys and large toy boxes and other things around the floor.
- ☐ I may be able to string large, colored, wooden beads.
- ☐ I like blowing bubbles.
- ☐ I still don't play very long with any one thing.

What I Can Do for Myself

- ☐ I can help put toys away.
- ☐ I may be able to turn on some faucets.
- ☐ When I'm ready for bed, I may bring you my pillow or my favorite stuffed toy.

Some children do things earlier or later than described here. Most differences are normal. Focus on what your child can do and get excited about each new skill. If you notice that your child is lagging behind in one or more areas for several months, circle the things that your child cannot do. Check the things your child can do. Use this list to talk with your doctor about your child's development.

What I Have Learned

- ☐ I can fit a round block into a round hole.
- ☐ I can point to one or two parts of my body if you name them.
- ☐ I can copy the simple lines you make on paper.
- ☐ I may be able to match circles and squares on a form board.
- ☐ I am beginning to remember where things belong.
- ☐ I can use a stick to get a toy.
- ☐ I can build a tower of two or three blocks.
- ☐ With your help, I can turn pages of a book.

How I Get Along With Others

- ☐ I'm still mostly just interested in myself.
- ☐ I may be grabby and greedy.
- ☐ Sometimes I'm stubborn and bossy, but sometimes I'm friendly.
- ☐ I may be afraid of some things, like thunder and lightning and large animals.
- ☐ I may have temper tantrums when I'm tired or angry.
- ☐ I still love to show off and get attention.

Let your toddler help around the house.

Children learn best when parents share simple tasks with them like cooking and cleaning.

- When your child tries to help you, remember to look for ways you can make helping fun for both of you. That way, your child will enjoy helping and will want to help more.
- Children can learn how to sweep the floor, pick flowers, and hang up clothes.

Toddlers spend a lot of their time just watching and listening to you.

- They're learning how to copy the things you do.
- When you let your toddler help you, you are giving him a chance to practice what he has learned.

Be gentle with mistakes. He will make mistakes of course, but don't yell at him for these. Instead say, "That was a good try. Maybe it would work better if you did it this way."

Take time to help him succeed. Later he will be able to do more things for himself and for you. This is time well spent for both of you.





Avoid spoiling your child: Set and reinforce limits.

Most of us think a “spoiled” child is one who always expects to get her own way, even at the expense of others. She is demanding, self-centered, and most unpleasant to be around.

You cannot spoil a young baby by giving her care, comfort, and attention when she wants it.

One-year-olds who have been well cared for are generally secure and trusting. Babies who have uncertain care during their first year may become fearful and more demanding.

During a child’s second and third years, “spoiling” can happen if parents don’t set limits or don’t enforce limits regularly. Children become spoiled when parents give in to unreasonable demands, and allow annoying behavior.

- When limits are clear and enforced all the time, children learn how to succeed within these limits.
- Children need and want reasonable limits and rules they can understand and follow.
- Don’t be afraid that your toddler will dislike you if you don’t always give her what she wants. Let her know you love her, but will not let her misbehave.
- Help her understand what the rules are, why they are needed, and what will happen if she does not follow them. Setting and enforcing limits shows your toddler that you will help her to grow up safe, capable and “unspoiled.”

Sharing is hard: Start teaching your toddler how.

“Mine! Mine!” Sharing is a hard thing to learn. We don’t expect children to be able to share until they are about 3 years old, but you can begin to teach sharing now. If there are other children in your home, your child may need to learn sharing faster.

Children learn best by having many good sharing experiences over time. Talk about what’s mine and what’s yours, what’s daddy’s, what’s mommy’s, and even what’s doggy’s.

Set a good example. You’ve just cut an apple in half. You can say, “I have a red apple, and I will share my apple with you.”

Have some things that are just for your toddler — that she does not have to share.

Your toddler will need a lot of help to learn to share. Be patient and don’t expect true sharing until your toddler is older.



Let your child decide how much food to eat.



Have you ever cooked a healthy meal, placed it in front of your child, and watched while he pushes the plate away after a few bites — or without even trying anything? You may feel frustrated and you might worry that your child isn't eating enough, but most toddlers eat enough for growth and health. They don't need to be bribed or rewarded to eat more.

It takes a lot of patience to help children this age learn to eat well.

- **Let your child serve himself.** While he may start out taking more than he needs, over time he will learn to take just the right amount.
- **Let your child decide how much to eat.** Only your child knows how hungry he is, so let him decide how much to eat. Let him eat until he starts to feel full, then let him stop. If your child asks for more of a certain food and you don't have any more of it, say you're sorry there isn't any more. Then offer more of the food that is still left.

- **Don't punish your child for eating too little or too much.**

If you do, your child will feel ashamed of his appetite and will begin to feel guilty about food.

When your child refuses a certain food, or refuses to eat at all, you might think he's being stubborn. If you watch your child's behavior, you may get a clearer idea of why he's not eating.

Here is what might be happening:

- **He's not hungry.** Like adults, children have different hunger schedules. Some toddlers wake up starving. Others are not ready to eat until after they've been up a while. Children are good at figuring out if they're hungry and how much they need to eat. Serve nutritious meals and snacks at regular times, but never force a child who's not hungry to eat something.
- **He's not hungry today.** Don't expect your child to eat the same amount every day. Some days your child will be very hungry. Other days he will be less hungry.
- **He's full after just a few bites.** Toddlers' stomachs are small, and can't hold much food at one time. That's why snacks are an important part of what your child eats every day. Encourage him to eat when he's hungry, and stop when he starts to feel full.
- **He doesn't like foods with strong smells, crunchy or slimy textures, or sharp flavors.** Like most other children, your child may refuse to eat a certain food just because of what it looks like or smells like — without even trying it. It may take 7-15 times before he's willing to eat it.
- **He's distracted by something else.** Toddlers have very short attention spans. He may not want to eat because he sees or hears something more interesting. Serve meals and snacks at a table, away from toys he likes. Turn off the TV, and don't answer the phone.
- **He's trying to get your attention.** Children want attention from their parents. If they can't get that attention through good behavior, they will misbehave to get attention. Spend more time with your child during meals. Instead of using his mealtime as a chance to do housework, sit down and eat as a family. Use the mealtime to talk, and be sure to include him. When he gets your attention in positive ways, he is less likely to act out.
- **He wants to make his own decisions.** Toddlers want chances to decide things for themselves. If you try to force him to eat, you are setting up a power struggle. Give him simple choices: choose between the green bib and the yellow one; decide whether to eat the corn or the beans first.

Set mealtime routines with your family.

Mealtimes are a time to talk and relax together.

- **If your family can't eat together every day, choose one or two times a week to have family meals.** Write the time on your calendar.
- **Eat at the table.** Toddlers get distracted easily. Sitting at the table, without the television or other distractions, helps focus. Set the table before the meal. Seeing the dishes on the table helps your child learn to associate the table with dinner. As your child gets older, she can help set the table.
- **Serve "family-style."** Put the food in serving containers on the table, and encourage your child to put

some food on his plate. Serving himself helps your child learn how much food it takes to fill up. At first help him by saying things like, "Just take one piece and if you need more, you can have it after you eat what is on your plate."

- **Handle spills in a kind way.** Toddlers' motor skills are still developing, so eating with a fork or spoon is hard. When spills happen, be calm. Say, "Everyone spills sometimes." Let your child help clean up the spill.
- **Talk with your toddler.** Talk about what he did during the day. Ask questions that he can answer. Show how to talk with the rest of the family.

- **Your toddler may be finished eating after a few minutes.**

Remember toddlers have short attention spans. Encourage him to sit with the family for a few minutes, but let him get up and do something else when he starts squirming. He can play nearby while the rest of the family finishes the meal.

- **Do it the same way every day.** Toddlers learn routines by doing them over and over. Your child will learn what to expect, and the routine will make her feel more comfortable and secure.



Spanking doesn't work. Teach children how to act.

Spanking and other physical punishments — like shaking, pinching, and hitting — don't teach children how to act. Spanking hurts children.

Physical punishment, or the threat of it, doesn't teach children to control themselves. In fact, it may teach them to be sneaky, aggressive, and afraid. It can teach them that hitting or hurting others is OK.

Threats don't help. It is harmful to punish a child by telling him you will leave him or stop loving him. Your toddler may feel he can't trust you or that he is not important to you. He may feel insecure and less willing to do what you want.



- **Tell your toddler what he should do instead of what he should not do.** "Carry your coat this way," not "Don't drag your coat on the ground."
- **Tell, don't ask.** If you want your child to act in a certain way, tell him what you want; don't ask him. If you need to take him to the doctor say, "Now we are going to the doctor" not "Do you want to go to the doctor now?" If it's time to put toys away say, "Let's put the toys away now," not "Do you want to put your toys away?"
- **Set things up to guide good behavior.** Within reason, remove things you don't want your child to touch. Limit visits with other children if you expect fights.

Be sure your little one gets enough rest to avoid being cranky.

- **Help your little one want to do what he needs to do.** If you want him to pick up his toys, make it a game that you play together. If he doesn't want to take a bath, tell him a story in the bath to make it more fun.
- **Catch your toddler being good and praise him.** Praise will help him understand which of his actions you like. Don't let him think that you will only pay attention to him when he is acting badly.
- **Plan ahead.** Take toys and books along on trips. Keep surprise toys or snacks in a separate bag for hungry or fussy times.
- **Offer other solutions.** "You can pour water in this sink — not on the kitchen floor." "You can throw the ball outside, not in the house."
- **Give choices.** "Will you put your toys away in the basket or in the box?" or "Are you going to wear your sweater or your jacket when you go out to play?"
- **If you find yourself getting angry at your child, take time out.** Put your toddler in a safe place; tell him you are upset and that you need to be quiet for a few minutes. Then, relax. After this, it will be easier for you to guide him calmly. If you must discipline your child, have your little one spend 2 minutes alone in his room so you can both take "time out."

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17-18 Months

Teach your child to connect sounds to objects.

- Sit together.
- Make sounds for your child. Use your body to show action like when a jet goes "zoom," a duck goes "quack," a fire engine goes "ding-ding-ding," a train goes "choo-choo-choo" and a dog goes "wuuff-wuuff."
- After you make each sound, say to your child, "What sound does a duck make? What sound does a dog make?"
- You can use a picture of the objects when you play this game.



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For a free online version of this newsletter, more parenting info and updated links, visit www.jitp.info.

Questions? Need help? Contact your local Extension office.

This newsletter gives equal space to both sexes. If he or she is used, we are talking about all children.

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