

Toys for 2-year-olds (Toddlers)

Toddlers are rapidly learning language and have some sense of danger. Nevertheless they do a lot of physical “testing”: jumping from heights, climbing, hanging by their arms, rolling, and rough-and-tumble play. They have good control of their hands and fingers and like to do things with small objects.



Good toys for 2-year-olds:

- Things for solving problems—wood puzzles (with 4 to 12 pieces), blocks that snap together, objects to sort (by size, shape, color, smell), and things with hooks, buttons, buckles, and snaps
- Things for pretending and building—blocks, smaller (and sturdy) transportation toys, construction sets, child-sized furniture (kitchen sets, chairs, play food), dress-up clothes, dolls with accessories, puppets, and sand and water play toys
- Things to create with—large non-toxic, washable crayons and markers, large paintbrushes and finger paint, large paper for drawing and painting, colored construction paper, toddler-sized scissors with blunt tips, chalkboard and large chalk, and rhythm instruments
- Picture books with more details than books for younger children
- CD and DVD players with a variety of music (of course, phonograph players and cassette recorders work too!)
- Things for using their large and small muscles—large and small balls for kicking and throwing, ride-on equipment (but probably not tricycles until children are 3), tunnels, low climbers with soft material underneath, and pounding and hammering toys

Toys for 3- to 6-year-olds (Preschool and Kindergarteners)

Preschoolers and kindergartners have longer attention spans than toddlers. Typically they talk a lot and ask a lot of questions. They like to experiment with things and with their still-emerging physical skills. They like to play with friends—and don’t like to lose! They can take turns—and sharing one toy by two or more children is often possible for older preschoolers and kindergarteners.

Good toys for 3- to 6-year-olds:

- Things for solving problems—puzzles (with 12 to 20+ pieces), blocks that snap together, collections and other smaller objects to sort by length, width, height, shape, color, smell, quantity, and other features—collections of plastic bottle caps, plastic bowls and lids, keys, shells, counting bears, small colored blocks
- Things for pretending and building—many blocks for building complex structures, transportation toys, construction sets, child-sized furniture (“apartment” sets, play food), dress-up clothes, dolls with accessories, puppets and simple puppet theaters, and sand and water play toys
- Things to create with—large and small crayons and markers, large and small paintbrushes and finger paint, large and small paper for drawing and painting, colored construction paper, preschooler-sized scissors, chalkboard and large and small chalk, modeling clay and play dough, modeling tools, paste, paper and cloth scraps for collage, and instruments—rhythm instruments and keyboards, xylophones, maracas, and tambourines
- Picture books with even more words and more detailed pictures than toddler books
- CD and DVD players with a variety of music (of course, phonograph players and cassette recorders work too!)
- Things for using their large and small muscles—large and small balls for kicking and throwing/catching, ride-on equipment including tricycles, tunnels, taller climbers with soft material underneath, wagons and wheelbarrows, plastic bats and balls, plastic bowling pins, targets and things to throw at them, and a workbench with a vise, hammer, nails, and saw
- If a child has access to a computer: programs that are interactive (the child can do something) and that children can understand (the software uses graphics and spoken instruction, not just print), children can control the software’s pace and path, and children have opportunities to explore a variety of concepts on several levels .