

How To Understand Toddler Behavior

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Friday, April 21, 2006

Aren't they just so cute? Well most of the time they are! Toddlers are in a stage of rapid growth and exploration. They are absorbing their world, while at the same time stretching, sometimes painfully, our nerves. Toddlers can be a handful for any parent, no matter how patient you may be. It's a mighty big and overwhelming world for such a small person. Don't lose your cool, just try to see it from your toddler's point of view to gain an understanding of what he is going through.

1. **Throwing temper tantrums.** This is when your child has extreme outbursts of foot stomping, body squirming, running rampant and more. You will be hard-pressed to find a toddler that doesn't throw temper tantrums every now and then. They are at a stage where they are beginning to understand what you are saying, but they don't have the ability to express themselves verbally by piecing thoughts and words together. Since they desperately want to convey their thoughts but are limited, it comes out as a tantrum.
2. **Biting.** This is a quick fix to get a reaction out of whomever they are biting. It could happen when another child steals a toy or can happen to you if they don't get their way. It gives them a sense of power to draw this reaction and boy, can it hurt! Monitor the biting habit and try to nip it in the bud. This is a good scenario in which to sternly use the word "no!"
3. **Mine!** Toddlers are very egocentric and do not consider sharing. If she sees a child with a toy that she wants, she may grab it, not realizing the consequences. All you can do is teach them what is appropriate behavior, and over time they will learn to take turns. You may opt to tell them that "It isn't nice to take toys away from someone" or "You need to wait for your turn to play with the toy." Then gently remove the toy from your child's hand and let them watch you give it back to the other child to finish playing with it.
4. **Time.** Your toddler won't understand when you tell them you will go outside to play in ten minutes. They have no concept of that time frame and will become confused and frustrated when they try to do it immediately and you repeat, "I told you in ten minutes!" Use an alternate tactic such as, "when Mommy is done washing the dishes we can go outside and play."
5. **Prepare them.** Did sitting on Santa's lap terrify your child instead of excite them? It isn't everyday a strange, big, round man in a bright red suit with white fur covering his face walks around for them to see and experience. Before taking your child to these types of events, prepare them. Show them pictures and tell them stories. Let them know what they are about to see. It may help calm their anxiety when the event takes place.
6. **Imitating you.** If you are doing it, why can't I? She is trying to learn independence and imitate your many moves. If you are folding laundry, she should be able to help by taking it back out of the basket. Teaching her "no" or "don't touch" should be reserved for safety issues. Be patient with her and let her experience her way of helping. It may cause you more work but will cause less frustration for her.
7. **Throwing things.** After awhile you get used to her testing the laws of gravity by dropping things from her high chair and leaning over to see how they fell. It can even be pretty cute at times. Then she learns to throw things, which mostly is just for fun, but when she starts to throw things during a fit of rage at other toddlers or even at you, then it isn't so cute anymore.
8. **Playtime.** Toddlers are typically more active at this time than at any other time in their lives. Much of their play involves figuring out how things work, such as taking things apart and putting them back together. They are generally quite independent and self-centered and enjoy playing near other children, but not always with them. Play dates are a good idea for children not in a daycare environment in order to help them learn socialization skills. Limit the play dates to an hour and with only one to three friends so the environment is not overwhelming.
9. **Activities.** Some good activities that you can do with your toddler include reading books and talking about the pictures, singing simple songs, and matching games. Other things they like to do is run, jump, pound on play toys, stack blocks and measuring and pouring, such as in a sandbox.
10. **TV?** Parking children in front of a television is a very controversial issue. There are some wonderful educational shows that will help your children learn, such as 'Little Einsteins' and 'The Wiggles,' however it is believed they should only be watched in moderation. Be active with your toddler instead of using a television as a babysitter.
11. **How to handle your toddler.** Be patient with your toddler by understanding these reasons, explain to them that it is not OK and try to take extra steps to calm them down. They are just in a major learning phase of behavioral norms. Try your own form of mild discipline, such as time-outs or placing their favorite toy on the naughty shelf in the closet. This teaches them that there are, in fact, consequences for poor behavior.