

Learning and developing through play

Why play?

Jack, your toddler, is busy in the back yard with Bláthnaid, your older child. They are filling plastic containers with soil and dumping it beside the fence. This continues for ten minutes with Jack absorbed in the play. He then notices Bláthnaid using a jam-jar lid to add water from a puddle to the soil. He copies her and the play goes on.

Jack is learning about how much soil 'fits' in the containers, how heavy they become when filled, and the effect of water on soil. He is developing his muscles, learning to share and take turns, and learning that Bláthnaid has ideas and thoughts that are different to his. Play is one of the ways your toddler learns about everything around him/her. *Aistear*, the new curriculum framework for children from birth to six years shows how important play is for toddlers and gives lots of ideas for playing with your child. For more information on *Aistear*, visit www.ncca.ie/earlylearning.

Tip-sheet for
parents of toddlers
(12 months—3 years)



Playing with your toddler

Below are some tips for helping your toddler to learn and develop through play.

1. Give your toddler **time** to play every day.
2. Have **interesting and safe things** to play with. Items like boxes, spoons, empty food containers, and clothes can be more fun than bought toys, and cost less.
3. **Join in** the play. Get down on the floor, grass and so on, and play together.
4. Make **space** for play. For example, have a place in the kitchen or bedroom, and outside where your toddler can get toys easily and store them away.
5. **Talk** to your child about what he/she is playing: for example, *I had great fun when we played with the garage. What did you like best about it?*
6. **Tell** your childminder or the staff in the crèche about the games, activities, nursery rhymes, and books your toddler enjoys.

Here are some ideas from *Aistear* for how you as a parent can help your child to learn and develop through different types of play both indoors and outdoors.

Pretend play

- Follow your toddler's lead and pretend to feed the dolls, to be a dog, to make the dinner, or to drive the train.
- Let your toddler help you do things around the house, for example give him/her a brush to sweep or pegs to help you hang clothes or food to help you feed a pet animal.
- Play with small toys like cars, train sets, animals, dinosaurs, and people. Talk about what is happening: *The farmer is milking the cows. The girl is fixing the car in the garage. The dragon is breathing fire.*
- Use a pretend phone to call Granny or to order a pizza.
- Use empty food cartons, old clothes or shoes to make a shop. Play together.
- Make a shopping list – your toddler writes and you help put a picture beside each word so he/she can read the list when you go to the supermarket.
- Put chairs in a row to make a train or even an aeroplane and take off on an adventure to visit Santa at the North Pole or to see the animals in the zoo.



You can help me to
learn all sorts of things
when we play together.

