



# First Steps

## 2 Years — 11 Months

### Time

A sense of time is a sophisticated skill. It develops slowly because it is so abstract. The passing of time cannot be seen or felt. In fact, if we are really enjoying something, time seems to go by very quickly. If we are bored or sad, on the other hand, it seems to drag indefinitely. Is it any wonder that our children have a hard time learning about time.

We begin to teach our children some concepts of time when we have predictable schedules and sequences of daily activities. Your child began learning about time in her first months of life. When she was hungry, she would cry. She came to expect, because it happened in this order so often, that Mom would come, change her diaper, take her to some comfortable place, and give her a nipple she could suck and fill her empty tummy. First hunger, then cry, then diaper, then feeding, and finally feeling full again. A time sequence.

Later, as you developed a bedtime routine, your youngster learned that first she got to play in water and get all soapy and rinsed, then dried and dressed in PJs. Next she got her hair combed and her teeth brushed. A book or two and a song came next. Finally, tucked into bed, the lights turned off and the nightlight turned on, then quiet and sleep. Just once try to change the order of events and you knew your child knew the sequence of events for bedtime.

Play the What Comes Next? Game often during the day. As you help her dress in the morning, ask her what she puts on first. Then say, “What’s next?” Then, “What is last?” When you are sure she knows the correct order, try giving her a shoe before she puts on her jeans. Then you can both have a good laugh about how silly that is. Try the same procedure for washing and drying hands, setting the table, and getting into the car. She will be learning the meaning of words like: when, then, first, next, last. This is the beginning of learning to sequence, a very necessary skill for math, reading, and spelling when she gets to school.

Although it is much too early to teach her to read a clock and tell time, it is not too early to show her that time is predictable and there is a pattern to it. Just use the big hand for now. When she is anxious to go to play group, show her the clock and tell her, “When this big hand points up, we will go to the car.” Or when she is hungry, tell her, “When the big hand points down, Daddy will be home and we’ll eat dinner.” Do your best to see that things happen at the appointed time so that your daughter begins to understand the correlation between what the clock does and the activities of the day.

After a while she will see that the big hand moves slowly, but not too slowly. If she asks about the little hand, tell her it moves even more slowly, but don’t try to explain hours and minutes to her yet. Of course, this exercise only works for time less than one hour. When the event is more than an hour away, use “after” some other event that she knows, like we’ll go after lunch. By talking about time in this way, she begins to anticipate future events. The concepts of past, present, and future will lay a foundation for understanding time.



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### Twins

Twice the trouble and twice the fun. At least that's what the old adage said. There are two concerns about raising twins. First is sibling rivalry. This is not usually much of a problem between the twins themselves, the problem is between the twins and non-twin siblings in the family. How can a singleton compete with two who are cute, dressed alike, and constantly fussed over by friends and strangers? Work hard to make the non-twin siblings feel special and important too.

The other concern is language delay. Twins often start speaking significantly later than other children. Often not starting until around 18 months, while some start even later. They make more use of gestures and non-verbal communication. It is common for the twins to have a special secret jargon known only to themselves.

They tend to have smaller vocabularies, use shorter sentences, and less complicated grammar. These language delays often persist throughout the preschool years. They just seem to lag behind verbally, yet non-verbally be on a par with their age-mates. The reasons for this may be that individually they receive less parent-child verbal interaction. At the same time they receive more child-child communication.

There seems to be no reason for concern about twins' language development as they usually catch up once they start school.

### Collections

Your preschooler is working really hard to classify the world around her. She likes to lump everything into categories like, animal or plant, hard or soft, by color, or by size. Collecting things stimulates this kind of mental function.

You can help her by allowing her to collect things that she finds. She doesn't have to have collections of toys that must be paid for. She will love the collections she chooses from things around her because she can control them. She may choose stones or seashells or sticks. Give her containers for her collections and a place to store them. She may go to her box and lay everything out in a row or pile them all up. Talk to her about why she picked these particular ones. Ask her to show you her favorites. Always encourage her to articulate what she is thinking about.

### Preferring One Parent Over the Other

This is common about this age. Please don't take it personally! These whims are temporary. Sometimes it is caused by one parent doing what only the other one usually does, like driving her to play group. Sometimes she is angry because one parent has been away on business and she doesn't know how to say, "I really, really missed you. I was afraid you wouldn't come home." Don't try to win back her affection with new toys or relaxed rules. That will only set you up to have her do it again to get her own way. It is a bad precedent to set.



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### Lies

Lies at this age may have a few different reasons. Perhaps your child is just creating a fantasy and really cannot tell the difference between the fantasy and reality. She may be telling lies to avoid getting in trouble. Sometimes forgetfulness is the reason for a lie. If something happened a few hours ago, she may truly not remember if she did it or her sister did. Very few children lie because they are just unable to cope with reality. This last group are small in number and will probably need a professional's to help solve the problem.

Fantasy is pretending you are something that you are not or that things around you are something other than what they are. Fantasy can also include invisible friends. When the fantasies are harmless, join in and create your own tall tale until you can both laugh at the absurdity.

Your child's intention is not to deceive you. She just wants to make you happy. If she is pretty certain that you are not going to be happy if she tells you it was her who wrote on the walls, she says she didn't do it.

Don't punish a preschooler for lying, they really don't grasp the concept of truth yet. You can however, hold them responsible for their behavior. If she colors on the wall, don't bother asking her if she did it. You know she did. Instead get a bucket and sponge and guide her little hands to clean up the mess. Explain that we like nice clean walls and that colors are for paper only. In this way, there is no anger, less reason for her to fear telling the truth, and she takes responsibility for her behavior.

If your child admits that she has done something wrong, be sure to let her know how pleased you are that she told the truth. Then don't punish her for her misdeed, but help her to make it right somehow. If you respond with anger and punishment, then why should she tell the truth next time?

Finally, as with any behavior you want to eliminate, make sure you aren't doing it yourself. Don't make promises you cannot keep. Don't embellish the story with details that aren't true. And don't tell your daughter something that is not true. Be an example of a true and honest person and she will want to be like you.

### Learning Colors

Most preschoolers can label five to ten colors. Some kids don't care to learn colors because they aren't visual learners. However, if you suspect your daughter is color blind, choose books where there is more contrast between the pictures and the page background. Also more intense colors and brighter colors will be easier for your daughter to see than pastels and dark colors. More boys than girls are color blind.

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for making such a varied and intriguing world for us to enjoy. Help me instill a joy of learning and awe of beauty in my child. Help me to stay simple and childlike in my joy. In Jesus' name, Amen



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## Games that Develop Skills

### Improving Listening Skills

To teach concentration and the ability to consider several options and choose the one that best fits.

1. This is a variation of I Spy. In this one you choose an object and tell three or four things about it. Make two of the details things this object has in common with others the child can see. Make one detail more specific to the correct answer. Like: I spy something made of wood that has a back and four legs. Since there is also a table made of wood and with four legs, mentioning the back makes it specific to the chair. If one of your clues is that it is something you sit on, she will answer chair too quickly before considering other possible answers. The idea is for her to have to consider several choices.

2. **Which Sounds Like Mine?** In this game you need to collect four or five opaque containers with lids. Also collect pairs of things that will fit in the containers. All the items should be approximately the same weight. Before you show the containers to your child, mark one that is yours. Put one of a pair of items in your container and put one of each of the other pairs in your child's containers. Now show her the containers and rattle your container. Now she can pick up each of the other containers and rattle them until she can figure out which one sounds like yours. Then you can replace the item in your container and let her try again with her containers to choose the one that sounds like your new one.

### Teaching Opposites

Make your own picture story book by clipping pictures from magazines, catalogs, and newspapers. Some ideas for opposites to teach are: big and little, indoors and outdoors, wet and dry, fast and slow, hard and soft, light and dark. Stop and talk about the pictures and let your child act out or talk about the opposites you have chosen.

### Teach Associations

Make a deck of picture cards by pasting picture onto index cards. Start by placing three cards in front of your child. Ask a question like, "Which one says meow?" Let her pick from her cards. If she gets it right, say something like, "Yes, that's a cat. Cats say meow." If she gets it wrong, don't say, "That's wrong." Say something about her choice like, "That's a small animal too, but that one is a dog." You can use pictures of lots of different things and ask questions about some characteristic of the person or thing. In this way she learns to associate people and things with a characteristic, she learns more vocabulary, and you make a game of it.

As with any learning games, quit while she is still wanting more, not when she is bored with the game. Also, let her try to fool you too. Take your turn too. Talk through how you consider which one is the best answer.

### Take an Exploration Walk

Much of your child's learning when she gets to school is spectator and listening based. Take a walk simply for her to explore. Encourage the use of as many senses as possible. Talk about how things smell and feel and sound. Let her play with pebbles and poke sticks in the dirt. Let her stomp in puddles and roll down a grassy hill. Teach her to find the drop of honey in honeysuckle and how maple seeds turn into little helicopters. Take a deep breath and just enjoy creation and let your daughter expand her horizons.