

Imagine, Imagine, you can Imagine...

How to Help Promote Imagination and Creativity in your Toddler

Be a Positive Role Model: Be as creative as you can be! Be open to new adventures and turn everyday activities into enriching experiences through the encouragement of imagination: a bath can become an adventure on the high seas with the bubbles as frothy waves during a storm and the bath towel becoming a cloak to keep the captain warm when she/he reaches dry land. Lunch can become a special occasion by way of a picnic with fun foods such as “Ants on a Log” or an “It’s Wednesday” lunch with mini cupcakes, simple party hats and stuffed animals or dolls as special “party guests.”

Create a Positive Environment: Where easier to develop imagination than right in the comfort of your own home? The rooms you sleep in, eat in or clean up can be rooms of wonder and possibility to a child. In the kitchen, a bowl and a wooden spoon that doubles as a magician’s wand become the means for a delicious “magical soup.” Drape sheets over the dining room table to turn it into a tent and have a special password to get in. Explore the backyard for simple treasures or make a bird feeder from a tin pie plate. The possibilities are endless.

Supply the Tools/Props: Have a supply of child-safe art and craft items on hand, such as crayons or markers, paint, paper, safety scissors, glue stick, stickers, popsicle sticks and different sized deli containers. Alternately, basic household items such as wooden spoons, bowls, pots and pans, empty boxes, sheets, and towels can work just as well as store-bought items to create new games and toys.

Let Your Toddler Guide the Activity: Children are individuals and have their own unique preferences and styles. Outgoing or cautious, each will have his or her own way of exploring and learning. Allow them the freedom to initiate activities that they enjoy and the space in which to create what they choose and allow them to direct how you participate. Whatever their ideas, the most important factor is that they are being creative and imaginative and having fun in their own way.

Read: Reading develops both imagination and language skills. Nursery rhymes for infants allow them to hear your voice and enjoy the rhythmic sounds; picture books for toddlers help develop their identification and word skills; and interactive ABC or 1-2-3 books for preschoolers are wonderful early learning tools for vocabulary and reading skills. Story books incite stimulation, wonder and imagination at all ages. *Alternately make up your own creative stories and let your toddler participate in naming a character or coming up with/choosing a next scenario, such as:*

“The silly little monster decided to go for a walk (to the playground, beach, in the dark) and on the way he saw a (pink tree, talking shell, nothing because it was dark!), so he said (“what a beautiful pink tree,” “hello shell,” “ouch” because he had stubbed his toe in the dark!).” Search together for pictures that represent your story, then paste them onto story cards and remember to make up lots of funny voices for each of the characters. Eventually, your toddler will start using his/her own imagination to make up creative and fun stories.

