

Encouraging Curiosity

Why is play important for your toddler / preschooler?

Children love to play! It's how they learn, and grow healthy bodies and brains. The world is a new place to them. They're experiencing new things every day, and this is exciting. It's important for you as a parent to encourage your child's curiosity. Their curiosity drives them to have new experiences and learn how the world works, how to move their bodies and how to problem solve.

How to encourage curiosity?

1. **Observe what they're doing.** Watch to see what they're interested in and share their interest.
2. **Play together.** Join in with the activity. Get on the floor with them.
3. **Follow their lead.** Let your child be in charge.
4. **Activities don't have to be done "correctly".** It's okay if your child is doing things a little silly. Play time is to have fun and be curious.
5. **Extend their play.** Ask some questions to keep them going such as "oh wow! I wonder what will happen if ____?"
6. **Be okay with messes.** Curiosity leads to messes and that's okay. They may get dirty while playing outside, lots of toys will be on the floor, and paint may get everywhere! Try and stay positive. If you get upset, your child will feel shame for being curious.
7. **Child proof.** Make sure your child's play environment is safe. If you yell "No!" every time they go towards a new object, they will soon learn it's not good to be curious. You want them to be safe and free to play.
8. **Have a play space.** Have a designated area for toys and curiosity. Make sure your child can reach toys and play objects. Put away anything that is breakable or dangerous.
9. **Be excited with them.** While your child is playing and exploring; smile, clap, and give encouraging words. "Wow! Look at you!" "Did you make that? It's incredible!" "Way to go!" This will make your child proud and excited to explore again.

Some activities to try with your 1-3-year-old:

- Play in the backyard. Let your child pick some leaves or flowers, run, and jump around.
- Scribble with crayons or play with paint.
- Play with playdough.
- Stack blocks or containers.
- Play dress up. Pretend together (ice cream shop, going to the doctor, taking care of a baby doll)
- Have a dance party.

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