

Decision making is a skill that we all must learn through practice. Now is a good time to start teaching your child how to make good decisions.

A 2-year-old can make simple choices and learn from the results. Mealtimes are a good place to start. "Do you want an apple or an orange?" is a reasonable choice for a 2-year-old.

Allow time for him to answer and be prepared to follow through with the decision.

Some parents offer a choice, but they don't really mean it. If it is bedtime, don't ask, "Are you ready to go to bed?" unless you're ready for him to say, "No!" Instead, simply state the situation ("It is time for bed.") or offer a choice you are willing to accept: "Would you like to go to bed with your blanket or your teddy bear?" Don't get involved in long negotiations and deal making.

PLAYMATES

Your child will enjoy playmates of her own age now. Children of working parents often have playmates at a daycare setting. When children are at home all day, make an effort to see that they have playmates. Being around children of similar age helps 2-year-olds learn to relate to others, to play together and to share.

Where can you find playmates? Get together with neighbors who have kids. Swap babysitting with other parents. When you do this, your child has a chance to play and you have a chance for some peace and quiet. Many parents participate in scheduled play groups or form their own.

FROM CRIB TO BED

Two-year-olds usually love to climb. When they try climbing over the crib rail, it is time to make other sleeping plans.

It may take awhile to get used to a bed with no sides. You can place the bed in a corner so that two sides are protected by a wall. Railings are also available which slide under the mattress. Some parents slide chairs with straight backs against the bed to make a rail. This may help your child feel more secure. Some parents put blankets on the floor to soften any falls that may come. Or they just put the whole mattress on the floor! When you do move your child to a bed, use a waterproof liner to protect against bed wetting accidents. Be prepared for a quick change by keeping spare sheets nearby. Moving to a bed is a big step for both you and your child. It is another step toward independence because your 2-year-old will now be able to get out of bed when he likes. Decide how you feel about him coming to your bed and follow your policy consistently. Some parents enjoy having youngsters in bed with them. If you or your spouse don't, it can be difficult to exclude a child once a habit develops.

Next Issue:
Self-esteem, safety,
learning games and more!

*Prepared by Don Bower,
Extension Human Development Specialist,
and reviewed by Mary Anne Pace-Nichols, Karen
Shetterley, Katrina Bowers, Holly Alley, Judy Hibbs,
Esther Maddux and Cindy Darden.*

Putting Knowledge to Work

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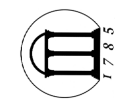
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Gale A. Buchanan, Dean and Director

The University of Georgia
Cooperative Extension Service
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
Athens, GA 30602



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1-2-3 Grow!

25-27 MONTHS

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
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25-27 Months

1-2-3 Grow!

Your 2-year-old is growing and changing every day. One minute he may be stubborn, and the next he will be sociable and loving. These extremes in behavior are normal as he tries to understand what life is all about. Remember, even though he develops new skills every day, your child is still very young. He still needs your guidance and reassurance.

HOW DOES YOUR TODDLER GROW?

The 2-year-old continues to become better coordinated. She uses more words and longer sentences. Emotionally, she will have ups and downs. She is aware of other people's feelings and tries to make others feel better with a hug and kiss. On the other hand, she probably needs to do things her own way. This leads to bossiness and stubbornness.

Your child is also becoming a very social person. Children at this age enjoy company. Parents, grandparents, other children, friends and neighbors are all part of the 2-year-old's expanding world.

As you watch your child over the next few months, you can expect to see these behaviors:

- Ambition beyond ability. Your child attempts to do things that she is not yet

capable of doing. Climbing is a good example. This ambitious 2-year-old needs constant supervision.

- Intense curiosity. Your child will continue to investigate any new person, object or sound she finds.
- Pretend games. The first beginnings of imagination are starting to show as your 2-year-old gives "make-believe" names to objects. A block becomes a car; a jump rope is now a snake.
- Physical activities. Your toddler will jump, stand on one foot, and climb higher and higher.
- Beginning to know shapes and colors. She may be able to name and point to some colors.

FEARS

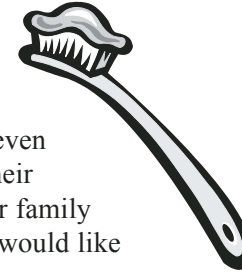
A 2-year-old may suddenly become afraid of different people, places and other things in his environment. This is a sign that he is more aware of a broader environment and notices more things. Each child has his own fears, but some common ones include the noise of a vacuum cleaner, animals, the dark, the doctor, loud noises and certain people. Your child's fears are very real to him.

Toddlers normally outgrow these fears as they become old enough to understand that the feared "thing" really is not harmful. Don't tease him or dismiss these fears as "being a baby."

The best way to handle fears is to reassure your child and provide the feeling that you are close by to protect him. Comforting words such as "Yes, the dark can be scary, but we're right here," let him know that you understand his fear.

TOOTH CARE

Many dentists like to begin seeing children around age 2. Toddlers need to learn good tooth-care habits early, even though they are just getting their "baby" teeth. Check with your family dentist to see when he or she would like to see your toddler.



RITUAL AND ROUTINE

Your 2-year-old may go through a stage of wanting everything done the same way every day.

This means that the same cup is used, the books go on the shelf the same way or the door be closed (or open) all the time.

The need for routine is another natural protection for children. As toddlers come in contact with many new experiences and people, they need some things that they can count on. New experiences are unpredictable, so it is nice to know that some things stay the same. Grown-ups have the same need for stability and routine in some parts of their lives.

Your challenge is to provide the right amount of new experiences balanced with a certain amount of routine. Two-year-olds enjoy going shopping, to a neighbor's house or to the playground to meet other children. These are important for development. To help your child adjust to new people and places, plan activities for short periods of time, be prepared to leave when he shows signs of being tired, and provide comfort by staying nearby.

TOILET TEACHING

Continue to follow your child's lead. Many children have learned bowel control by now. Many still wet during the day and at night.

Even the child who stays dry for long periods may have accidents. Try not to get angry or shame your child when accidents do happen. Most children do not stay dry consistently until 2½ years of age in the daytime and until 3 years old at night.

Children are sometimes more upset about accidents than are parents. Accidents are usually due to immature muscles which children cannot yet control, combined with the toddler being involved in a fun activity that he doesn't want to quit. Continue to compliment your child for successes. If accidents continue, or begin again months or years after your child has learned control, talk to a doctor about possible causes.

FAVORITE PARENT

Another 2-year-old stage is to become attached to one parent and have nothing to do with the other. This is another sign of developing emotions and usually does not last long. If you are the rejected parent, don't worry. Avoid a tug-of-war for your child's affection. Stand together as parents so she will learn she cannot play one parent against another.

If someone else cares for your toddler while you work, you may worry that your child may grow to love him or her more than you. Such fears have caused some parents to quit their jobs! A child needs to feel secure in his parents' love. The consistent love of other caregivers will just add to that sense of security. When you select other caregivers, choose someone you can depend on to love your child as their own. Their love will complement your own, not replace it.

PARENTS AS TEACHERS

A very important skill in your child's development is the ability to make good decisions.