

FIRST TEACHER:

a Parent's Guide to
Growing and Learning



TWO-YEAR-OLDS



The Office of Early Learning is proud to present you with *First Teacher: a Parent's Guide to Growing and Learning*. This booklet was created to give you information on your child's development and activities to use in your every day routines. These activities will help your child's development and provide the building blocks for your child's future school success and life.

This booklet is divided into five areas which are key indicators of your child's development and begin at birth. The information in this booklet will serve as a guideline for what your child should know and be able to do from two years of age. This information follows Florida's Early Learning and Developmental Standards which are used in early learning programs throughout the state.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

LEARNING STYLES

FEELINGS, BEHAVIORS, AND RELATIONSHIPS

TALKING AND LISTENING

THINKING AND REASONING

Your relationship with your child and the time you spend together will help your child's development in every way. Each child is unique and may not master skills at the same rate. If you have concerns regarding your child's rate of development contact your child's doctor.

We hope the information in this booklet will help you make the most of your time with your child.

You are your child's first teacher.

FAMILY MATTERS

Two-Year-Olds

You will notice that your child is becoming more social, developing friendships and relationships with other children and adults. This age is often referred to as the “terrible twos.” But, it really is the “terrific twos.” Your child may cry, whine and have temper tantrums, but he is really learning how to deal with all of the feelings he is trying to understand. Being supportive and offering different ways for him to express his strong feelings will help to provide a strong basis for future relationships.

You will also notice your child beginning to do many things on his own such as walking down stairs, getting dressed and washing his hands. He will also be very curious about the world around him. Give him words to describe what he sees and feels. Your child’s brain is growing and developing quickly at this age. You can support his development by naming and describing objects, saying please and thank you, building block towers, drawing and reading to him every day.

This booklet offers activities and strategies for you to use daily to help your child grow and develop. The easy-to-follow activities will help you build a strong relationship and a foundation for your child’s learning and future success. All families are different. Remember to include stories, activities and languages from your own family.





GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

It starts with you

Your child is no longer a baby! Your baby will begin to look more like a young child. At this age your child will develop new muscle skills. Your child can help turn pages in a book, walk backwards, go up stairs and walk on his tiptoes. Playing catch and coloring are great ways to help your child develop both his small and large muscle skills.

Your two-year-old can take a more active role in his personal care. Your child will have better coordination and begin to help with brushing his teeth and washing his hands. The more your child can help with his personal care, the more likely that morning and nighttime routines will go smoothly.

As your baby grows

Your two-year-old's growth and development will go through many changes. He will:

- feed himself without help
- hear and respond to instructions
- use one hand to turn the page of a book
- jump off steps
- help dress himself
- ride a tricycle using the pedals
- participate in sleep routines such as arranging his bedtime toys

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying these activities:

- Take your child to the park to climb, slide and swing. These activities help your child improve his large muscle skills and coordination.
- Give your child time to run and play outdoors. Practice throwing or kicking a ball back and forth.

Taking care of baby

Your child should have almost a full set of teeth by now. It's never too early to get your child in the habit of brushing his teeth morning and night. Make brushing teeth a fun experience. Let your child pick out his own toothbrush and cup. Even though your child will lose his baby teeth, it is very important to take care of his teeth and prevent painful cavities.



LEARNING STYLES

It starts with you

Have you ever noticed that your child will ask you to read the same book again and again until you both know every word? This is a good example of your child showing her ability to concentrate. Your child will enjoy hearing the same songs and will probably begin saying “more” or “again” when you finish. Engage your child in a conversation by asking different questions about the activity or book your child is repeating. Your child is learning and building confidence from repeating your words and actions.

As your baby grows

Your child will show how she learns as she:

- helps you with simple chores around the house like sweeping or picking up toys
- shows interest in patterns and sorting objects by shape or color
- repeats activities or games over and over, such as building a block tower, taking it apart and then building it again
- finds solutions to simple problems, such as how to go around another toy when riding her small car
- uses objects in ways other than their intended use, such as pretending a shoebox is a car

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying these activities:

- Fill several clear plastic cups with water colored with food coloring. Take your child to an area outside, the bathtub or somewhere she can spill water. Let her have fun dumping and mixing the different colors.
- Give your child a large empty box and crayons or washable markers. Let her use them to scribble and draw on the cardboard box. Talk about the colors she is using and what she is drawing.

Taking care of baby

Give your child paper and plenty of crayons or washable markers to use. See what lines and marks she makes. Ask her what she is drawing, write her name on the paper and hang the art work on your refrigerator or give it to a special friend or family member.



FEELINGS, BEHAVIORS & RELATIONSHIPS

It starts with you

Your two-year-old is developing his sense of self. He is testing his “limits,” so to speak. Two-year-olds are looking to show you they are independent, even though they still need you. They are also looking for your approval and praise of their new independence. You may begin to hear your child say, “Me do it!”

Give your child lots of chances to do things by himself. Getting dressed is a great example. Allow your child to attempt to put on his pants, shirt and socks. Even encourage him to put on his shoes. Give him plenty of time to try and try again. Help him when he needs it, and tell him what a good job he’s done. This may take more time in your day, but your child is learning and growing confident as he tries to do these things on his own!

As your baby grows

During the second year of your child's life, he will show his development in forming relationships as he:

- says "hello" to a new neighbor or friend
- begins to understand and use words about his feelings, such as "I'm mad" to get his needs met
- approaches a new person after his parents or caregivers have talked to the person for a while
- points to himself in a picture
- asks for help from parents or caregivers during a conflict with another child

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Let your child help you with small tasks around the house like giving everyone a napkin at dinner. Tell him what a great job he has done and that he is a good helper.
- Give your child a piece of paper and something to write with if you are stuck in traffic. This will give him an opportunity to practice writing and drawing.
- Allow him to do things on his own like climbing the ladder to the slide or help getting dressed.
- Your two-year-old is able to sit for short periods of time. Have a bag packed at all times with a book, a couple of toys and a snack. Take this bag when you need to bring your child with you to run errands.

Taking care of baby

If you have a child in child care, take a few minutes once a week to discuss your child's progress with his teacher. Your child's teacher will be pleased to know you are interested in his daily learning experience. Having these talks once a week will let you know how your child is doing while he's away from you and if the early learning program is a good fit for your family.



TALKING & LISTENING

It starts with you

At two-years-old, your child's vocabulary has gone from babbles and coos to words you can understand. Your child can use three-word sentences such as "pick me up." Although your child is learning a lot of new words, she may still struggle to tell you what she needs and wants. For example, your child may become upset when you give her the blue shirt to wear because she wanted the green one. Your two-year-old does not know how to tell you what she wanted to wear. This frustration often causes a "melt down." Try to be patient and offer other choices if possible. It is easy for us to forget how hard she works to tell us her wants and needs.

As baby grows

Your child will show his beginning language skills as he:

- listens to books for longer periods of time
- repeats songs and rhymes
- uses words to describe things such as “pretty flower” and “big ball”
- recognizes the first letter in her first name
- pretends to write a letter to be mailed
- responds to questions when asked

Playing and learning

Help your child’s development by trying these activities:

- Have a conversation with her by asking questions like, “What songs did you sing today at school?” and “Can you sing that song with me?”
- Give your child a choice of what she can wear each day. Ask her if she wants to wear the dress or the shorts. When your child makes the choice, confirm her decision by saying, “You want to wear shorts today. Good choice!”

Taking care of baby

Your child will know some letters of the alphabet. When you see signs around town or written words in your house, talk to your child about the first letter in each word. Sound out that letter. For example, if you are driving and come to a stop sign, ask your child what letters she sees. Sound out all the letters to your child, “Stop starts with an S. S makes a sss sound.” This will help her begin to recognize letters and match them to their sounds.



THINKING & REASONING

It starts with you

Two-year-olds are becoming more active, alert and aware. Your two-year-old is beginning to understand big and small and notice when someone has more of something than she does. This can be difficult when a friend or a sibling has more snacks, blocks or crayons and your child becomes upset. This could become a temper tantrum and you can support her by:

- staying calm
- telling her to use her words for what she wants
- reminding her of the rules
- offering choices that may meet her needs

Your child's has become more aware of the world around, which allows her to begin to recognize familiar places such as the entrance to your neighborhood, the grocery store and grandma's house. She will also begin to recognize simple patterns and notice if something is not where it should be.

As your baby grows

During the second year of your child's life, your child will show her thinking and reasoning skills as she:

- talks about what she sees, such as, “I want some!” and “Daddy come home.”
- Asks, “What’s that?” over and over
- takes things apart, stacking and sorting
- completes simple three or four-piece puzzles
- plays with dolls or pretends to be a familiar story character, a mommy or a daddy

Playing and learning

Help your child's development by trying some of the following activities:

- Talk to your child about the different houses or cars in your neighborhood. Talk about the differences, such as, “That house has a blue roof. It kind of looks like a triangle,” “That house is white and has pretty pink flowers outside the front door” and “Look how big that house is. It has four windows. Let's count – one, two, three, four.”
- When driving home from child care, talk to your child about different animals and where they live. For example, “Where does a cow live?” or “Where does an elephant live?”

Taking care of baby

When your child has a problem such as not being able to complete a simple puzzle, she may need your support in finding a solution. Take the time to encourage her to work through the problem. This teaches her to be patient and to think things through. This will help her solve the problem on her own the next time.

Your child will enjoy singing songs with you. After she knows a song, begin leaving out some of the words and have her sing them.



THE POWER OF FAMILY

Children are happiest when they play, and playing is one of the best tools for teaching young children. It is easy to get on your child's level and play pretend with him. Get down on the floor and pretend to be your child's favorite animal to help his imagination. Use objects around your house. A strainer from the kitchen can become a space helmet. Your child will enjoy the time you two spend together, and so will you! Play helps improve his imagination, his physical development, his social skills and more.

Below are some ideas on how to play with your child:

- pretend to bathe or feed a baby doll
- have a tea party
- pretend to cook
- pretend to be animals
- pretend to be astronauts
- play hide and seek

Housework is a never-ending cycle. Let your little one help with the work. Young children love to help and can be successful at simple chores. You can let your child help with housework while she learns. Just remember that it's the effort that counts! Below are some easy chores for you to introduce to your young child:

- sorting spoons to put away
- helping fold and put away laundry
- matching socks
- picking up toys and putting them away
- feeding pets
- helping dad with yard work

Remember, you are your child's first teacher!

All babies develop differently and at different times. If you have questions or concerns about your baby's development or behavior, it is important to take action early. Talk to a doctor, your child's teacher or contact any of the resources listed in the back of this booklet.

PARENT RESOURCES

OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

Provides state-level support and direction for parents, teachers and early learning professionals. OEL administers three statewide programs including: the state child care subsidy program, School Readiness, the free Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program for four-year-olds, and the Child Care Resource and Referral program for all Florida families. 1-866-357-3239 (Toll-free), (TTY: 711)

2-1-1

24-hour hotline where parents can access national, state, and local information and referral services. 2-1-1 connects parents to information to assist families with food, housing, employment, health care and counseling services.

Dial 211

www.211.org

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

General ADA information is available including answers to specific technical questions, free ADA materials, and information about filing a complaint.

1-800-514-0301 (Toll-free), (TTY: 1-800-514-0383)

www.ada.gov

CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL NETWORK (CCR&R)

Helps families find local child care programs that fits their unique needs. CCR&R connects families to local resources and provides information on how parents can find, locate and afford quality child care.

1-866-357-3239 (Toll-free), (TTY: 711)

CHOOSE MY PLATE

Offers information and resources on healthy eating choices and habits for children and families.

www.choosemyplate.gov

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES (DCF) LICENSING WEBSITE

Responsible for the administration of child care program licensing and training throughout Florida. DCF also administers programs addressing issues such as, adult and child protective services, homelessness, food stamps, refugee services, and adoption and foster care.

www.myflorida.com/childcare

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Department of Education/Office of Early Learning (DOE/OEL) for information on readiness rates of Voluntary Prekindergarten providers.

1-866-447-1159 (Toll-free)

www.fldoe.org/earlylearning

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH/CHILDREN'S MEDICAL SERVICES/EARLY STEPS

Provides services to infants and toddlers (birth to thirty-six months) with significant delays or a diagnosed physical or mental condition.

1-800-654-4440

www.cms-kids.com/families/early_steps

FLORIDA ABUSE HOTLINE

24-hour hotline that receives reports of abuse and exploitation of children, elderly, and adults with disabilities.

1-800-96-ABUSE or 1-800-962-2873 (Toll-free)

www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse

FLORIDA'S CENTRAL DIRECTORY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Provides information and referrals on disabilities and special health care needs for families, service coordinators, and other professionals who work with children with special needs.

1-800-654-4440 (Toll-free)

www.centraldirectory.org

FLORIDA CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Child support services that include locating missing parents, establishing legal paternity, and establishing, enforcing, and modifying support orders.

1-800-622-KIDS or 1-800-622-5437 (Toll-free)

www.myflorida.com/dor/childsupport/

FLORIDA KIDCARE

Health insurance program for uninsured children younger than age 19. The Florida KidCare program assesses eligibility based on age and family income.

1-888-540-5437 (Toll-free), (TTY: 1-877-316-8748)

www.floridakidcare.com

MYFLORIDA.COM

Florida's Government Website

www.myflorida.com

FLORIDA HEALTHY START

Ensures that all Florida families have access to a continuum of affordable and quality health and related services.

727-507-6330

www.healthystartflorida.com

HEAD START

Head Start is a national school readiness program that provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to children from low-income families. For Head Start programs in your area, visit the listed website.

www.floridaheadstart.org

PARENTS WITHOUT PARTNERS

Provides help to single parents through discussions, professional speakers, study groups, publications and social activities for families and adults.

1-800-637-7974 (Toll-free)

www.parentswithoutpartners.org

VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN

A free voluntary program designed to prepare four-year-olds for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success.

1-866-357-3239 (Toll-free), (TTY: 711)



For more information about what your child should know and be able to do visit the Early Learning and Developmental Standards at www.flbt5.com.



Office of Early Learning
866-357-3239