

Two Year Old Children in a Child Care Setting

Arrival time is a most important time. It sets the tone for the day ahead. Many children and parents find it stressful to say goodbye. It is the responsibility of the teacher to make this time as positive as possible. Two year olds need continual support for their daily adjustment to school; getting down at eye level with a welcoming smile and a special hug helps the day begin happily. Talk to each parent and develop a routine that works for that child and parent. All children are different and have different needs, desires and comfort zones. The classroom must be organized to meet the needs of all of the children. Classrooms need to be child friendly and inviting. Some children need the security of a cozy corner; puppets and books, while other children arrive raring to see what adventures are ready for them to explore. Soft music sets a soothing tone.

We do not teach two-year-old children. We want to encourage children to explore and discover. The primary goal for teachers is to provide a warm, supportive environment for children. The aim is for children to form strong attachments to caregivers, and feel comfortable to investigate the many interesting sights, sounds, smells, activities and areas in the classroom. Teachers set up intriguing activities. It might be as simple as four bins of sand and pitchers of water. Effective teachers sit with children during activities, share observations, ask open-ended questions and support what is happening.

It is important to understand the stages of development and have realistic expectations. It is an unnatural act for two-year-olds to line up. They cannot sit for long periods of time, they rarely enjoy coloring on paper with crayons and it is difficult for two-year-old children to function in a large group. Routines need to be simple and as individualized as possible. Make transitions calm and fun. Sing through the day!

Social-Emotional:

Two-year-old children live in the moment and find wonder in the ordinary. They seem to be on an emotional roller coaster. They move around fast and insist on doing things their way. They have whims. They want to be in control and so do we! Two's enjoy doing things independently and are *proud* of their accomplishments. Be it washing their hands, tossing the paper towel into the trash, getting their lunch boxes, pouring drinks or helping a friend- it's the "me do it myself" stage.

It is the role of the teacher to observe and discover what is comforting to each child. These are very young children away from their families and home environment. Two-year-olds need assistance negotiating through interpersonal relationships, understanding and articulating their feelings and using their words to convey what is on their minds. Occasionally, two's will physically demonstrate what they cannot articulate; they will hit, push, tug and bite. They need to be re-directed and taught socially acceptable means of communication.

Play:

Play needs to be the focus of the program. Play is the way young children make sense of their world. Play helps children become confident and secure with real life situations, as well as work through fears and anxieties. Play with the children, give the children language to describe what they are doing, ask open-ended questions, add to their experiences by finding props, get down on the floor with the children and act silly. Some age appropriate play activities include:

- Dress up
- Housekeeping, housecleaning, dusting, washing
- Blocks (wooden, foam and cardboard) and manipulatives with props
- Shoe store with different shoes to match and sell
- Dolls-washing and dressing
- Play doctor or hair dresser
- Fire trucks, cars, rockets, boats, etc made from boxes
- Transportation toys (cars, trucks and other vehicles)
- Camping in a tent with flashlights
- Filling and dumping anything into any container

Fine Motor and Art Activities:

Two-year-olds are “artful”. When encouraged, they can turn everything into art. Children need to be encouraged to create, explore and manipulate materials. They love to mix paint, squeeze glue bottles and rip paper. Many enjoy easels, stuffing bags, finger painting, clay and creating collages. Two-year-olds will put glue and paint all over their hands and arms and friends. They will pile objects onto one piece of paper until the paper tears. They will mix colors, dump the paint and attempt to lick the yuckiest brushes. An art experience must not be confused with an exercise in following directions. Some appropriate art and fine motor activities are:

- Squeeze glue, glue materials and objects together
- Paint on easels, with brushes, rollers, vehicles, utensils, sponges, feet and hands
- Paint on fabric, wood, plastic and paper cut into different shapes/sizes
- Cut play-dough with scissors
- Tear paper, stuff it in to bags
- Cooperative sculptures
- Crumple paper into balls and throw them
- Stick items onto clear contact paper
- Play with bubble wands and strawberry baskets
- Hammer golf tees in to Styrofoam
- Drop objects into a can
- Different types/textures of play-dough and clay

Sensory and Science:

Two-year-old children learn primarily through their senses. Whether it be eating foods, crawling on the floor or exploring outside, sensory and science experiences also happen all the time. Additionally, children need planned sensory activities. Sensory materials and bins should be available every day. Sensory experiences are calming and encourage emotional release. They encourage socialization, cooperation, creativity and enhance vocabulary as well as fine motor skills. Below are some appropriate sensory and science activities:

- Sand, water, soil
- Wood shavings
- Shaving cream (add food coloring)
- Cooking: eggs, milk shakes, fruit smoothies, mashed potatoes
- Finger painting – add sand for texture
- Play-dough, clay, gook, gak, ooblick
- Smell jars
- Taste foods
- “feelie” bags
- finger/foot paint
- work with large blocks of ice or ice cubes
- sprout seeds and grow plants

Literacy:

Two-year-olds love to be read to and should have story time at least twice a day, individually and as a group. They are learning that pictures and words tell a story and need to be exposed to the rhyme and rhythm of language. They also need to learn to care for and respect books. Children thrive on predictable, repetitive stories. Finger-plays, poems and songs are an excellent means to enhance literacy. Children love to hear their names interjected in a song. A major part of the teacher interaction is to talk and listen to the children. Ideas to encourage literacy development are:

- listen to children and respond accordingly
- puppets, puppet shows, flannel board stories
- planned and spontaneous story times
- interesting, appropriate books available
- read to small groups of children-involve children in the story
- repeat names of children often
- name body parts
- read and discuss simple stories
- sing lots of songs-interject children’s names into lyrics
- ask open-ended questions
- give words to actions and objects
- have visual clues to go with words
- play, point and say
- sing clean-up and transitions songs

Music:

The sounds of music are comforting and soothing. Music encourages auditory and verbal skills, it encourages exploration and is simply enjoyable. It is also a wonderful emotional outlet. Circle time is really important and when it is engaging and fun, most children will want to join in. Children should not be forced to sit in a circle. Some suggested music activities are:

- sing through the day, sing during transitions
- make up songs about the children and activities
- play multi-cultural music
- play soft background music
- dance with the children
- make musical instruments
- play with instruments
- march and parade around the school

Gross Motor Activities:

Two-year-old children learn about themselves and the world by moving their bodies through space. They need to move constantly. Both indoors and outside, they need to walk, run, jump, run, climb, run, bend, run, twist, run, swing, crawl, roll and run some more. Some suggested activities are:

- provide boards, crates and tunnels for children to manipulate
- blow bubbles and encourage the children to chase them
- play in giant cartons or boxes
- play with a parachute
- make scoops out of plastic cartons- play scoop ball
- make a bowling game out of milk cartons
- play games with eggs and spoons
- play games such as follow the leader
- obstacle courses in the yard or classroom
- throw bean bags
- hang objects for children to bat
- play with balls
- dance with scarves
- jump rope and hula hoops