

Your  
2 to 2 1/2  
Year-Old  
Child



School Readiness Program  
Provided by the WIC Program and First 5 LA

## Eager to Learn!

**Listen to me talk.** Most children say **over a hundred words** by the time they are 2 1/2 years old. You still may not understand all of the words your child says. You can help your child learn new words.

**I may be ready to use the toilet.** Many girls are ready when they are about 2 years old. Boys are usually ready later when they are about 2 1/2 years old.

**I can do things all by myself.** Your 2 1/2 year-old is getting better and better at using his or her hands.

**Playing is how I learn.** I will talk better and get along better with children if I practice by playing and pretending. Children who spend a lot of time on screens do not have as much time to learn from playing. Playing teaches your child about the world. Look inside for games you can play that will help your child learn.



**Read, read, read!** Help your child find a favorite book. Your child learns best when reading is fun for both of you. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

**QUESTION: My child says a lot of words in baby talk. How can I teach my child how to say the words correctly?**

**ANSWER:** The best way for your child to learn to speak correctly is by hearing you speak correctly. For example, if your child says, “DAH” for DOG, you can say, “Yes that is a DOG.” If your child calls a cat a dog, you can say, “That is a CAT. You are right. It has four legs and a tail like a DOG.”



### Try this!

Your child is learning more about feelings. You can help your child learn the words for feelings. Tell your child how you feel. Use words like happy, sad, excited, angry or other feeling words. For example, if your child is crying, say, “You look sad.” Children who can use words to explain their feelings do not hit or bite as much as children who do not know those words.

**QUESTION: What if my child is not talking yet?**

**ANSWER:** By 2 years, most children say at least 50 words. If your child is not talking yet, **ask your doctor.** If your child needs extra help, it is best to get the help as early as possible. There are special programs for helping children, even very young children.



### Try this!

Make a sorting game for your child. Cut out triangles, squares, circles, half-circles and rectangles from cardboard or paper. Color them red, blue, green, purple or other bright colors. Below are three games you can play. (Start by using just two shapes and two colors. When this is too easy for your child, make it harder by adding another shape or color.)

**QUESTION: How can I help my child learn more words?**

**ANSWER:** Your child is starting to learn words that describe things. You can help them learn by talking a lot. Use words that describe color, shape, size and the way things feel when you touch them. You can tell your child what is in front, behind, under and over.

- 1) **Colors:** Pick a color. Tell your child the name of the color and ask your child to find the other shapes that are that color. For example say, “Look! I have the RED triangle. Can you find something RED?”
- 2) **Shapes:** Pick a shape. Tell your child the name of the shape and ask your child to find the other pieces that are the same shape. For example say, “Look! I have the red TRIANGLE. Can you find another TRIANGLE?”
- 3) **Matching:** Make two pieces that are the same shape and the same color. Give your child one piece and ask your child to find the other piece that is the same shape and same color. Talk about “same” and “different.” These will be important ideas for your child to understand when your child starts school.

**QUESTION: I am tired of changing diapers! When will my child start using the toilet?**

**ANSWER: Every child is different.** Here are some signs that can help you know when your child is ready.

Is your child noticing when he or she is peeing (urinating) or pooping (having a bowel movement or BM) in a diaper? Does your child pull on their pants or say, “Uh oh” when peeing or pooping in the diaper? Choose words to teach to your child (toilet or potty, pee or poop) or teach your child to point when they need to go to the bathroom.

Does your child like to put things where they belong? You can tell your child that urine and bowel movements (BM’s) belong in the toilet. Use the words that are comfortable for you.

Try not to start during a time when your child’s favorite word is “NO.” It is much easier to toilet train when your child is more interested in pleasing you.

**Try this!**

Have your child sing the ABC song while washing his or her hands. This helps your child in two ways. It helps your child learn the alphabet and it helps your child wash long enough to wash off the germs. Washing hands before eating and after using the toilet is a good way to keep your child from getting sick.



**QUESTION: How do I teach my child to use the toilet?**

**ANSWER: Children learn to use the toilet most easily when they want to be independent AND when they want to please their parents.** It usually takes about six months to learn to use the toilet.

Start by letting your child sit on the toilet (or potty seat) in diapers and clothes while you explain what a toilet is for and how to use it. You can empty the BM from a dirty diaper into the toilet to show your child where it belongs.

Once they are comfortable with sitting on the toilet, take off their diaper. Let your child sit on the toilet several times each day. If you can tell when your child is having a BM, ask if they want to sit on the toilet to finish. Ask several times each day if your child wants to sit on the toilet to try to pee.

When your child has used the toilet correctly a few times, you can try training pants. Having accidents is part of learning. If you punish them for accidents, learning to use the toilet may become stressful for your child and may take longer. Instead, encourage your child when they use the toilet successfully.

Many children do not stay dry at night until they are at least 3 years-old. Be patient.

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**QUESTION: How coordinated should my 2 to 2 1/2 year-old child be?**

**ANSWER:** Your 2 to 2 1/2 year-old can wash her hands, stack 4 to 8 blocks, undress and begin to put on clothes. She may be able to stand on one foot for a second. She can throw a ball, but cannot catch very well yet. She can also turn doorknobs, so be careful that she does not go outside alone. Your child can unscrew jar lids. Make sure that medicines are out of reach. She will want to brush her teeth “all by myself.” Your child will still need your help to make sure that the teeth are really clean.

**QUESTION: My child pushes a block on the floor and says, “Vroom, Vroom!” Should I explain that the block is not a car?**

**ANSWER: No.** Pretending or “pretend play” is part of the magic of being a child. It is also one of the best ways for children to learn. When you get onto the floor and pretend with your child, it helps their creativity and imagination develop. You are helping your child learn to talk. You are helping your child learn to understand more words. You are also helping your child learn about feelings and about how other people act. Pretend play is one of the most important parts of growing up. And, it is really fun to let yourself be a kid again and play, play, play!

**QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for 2 to 2½ year-old children?**

**ANSWER: You** are still your child’s most important playmate. Read, play and cuddle with your child every day. **TALK** and **SING** in every language you know. Your child will love riding on toys with wheels. Crayons, play dough and other art supplies give him a chance to practice new skills. Your child will love to pretend. Toy telephones, a small broom or mop, pots and pans and other kitchen supplies, rakes and shovels and dress up clothes are fun for 2 year-olds.



For children ages 2-5 years, it is recommended to limit screen time to no more than 1 hour per day of educational media. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.



Parents who keep the TV on or focus on their phones miss opportunities to interact with their children and help them learn.

**HINT: Put down your phone.**

**Safety Corner**



Here are some tips to keep your child safe:

1. Now that your child can run and open doors, he or she can get away from you quickly! Your child does not yet understand how to stay safe. Stay near your child in stores, parks, and everywhere!
2. Be sure to keep all household products and medicines completely out of reach.
3. If your child does put something poisonous into his or her mouth, call the **Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222** or **dial 9-1-1**. Do not make your child vomit.
4. To prevent serious falls, use gates on stairways and install window guards if there is a second story or higher level.



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## Listen to Me!

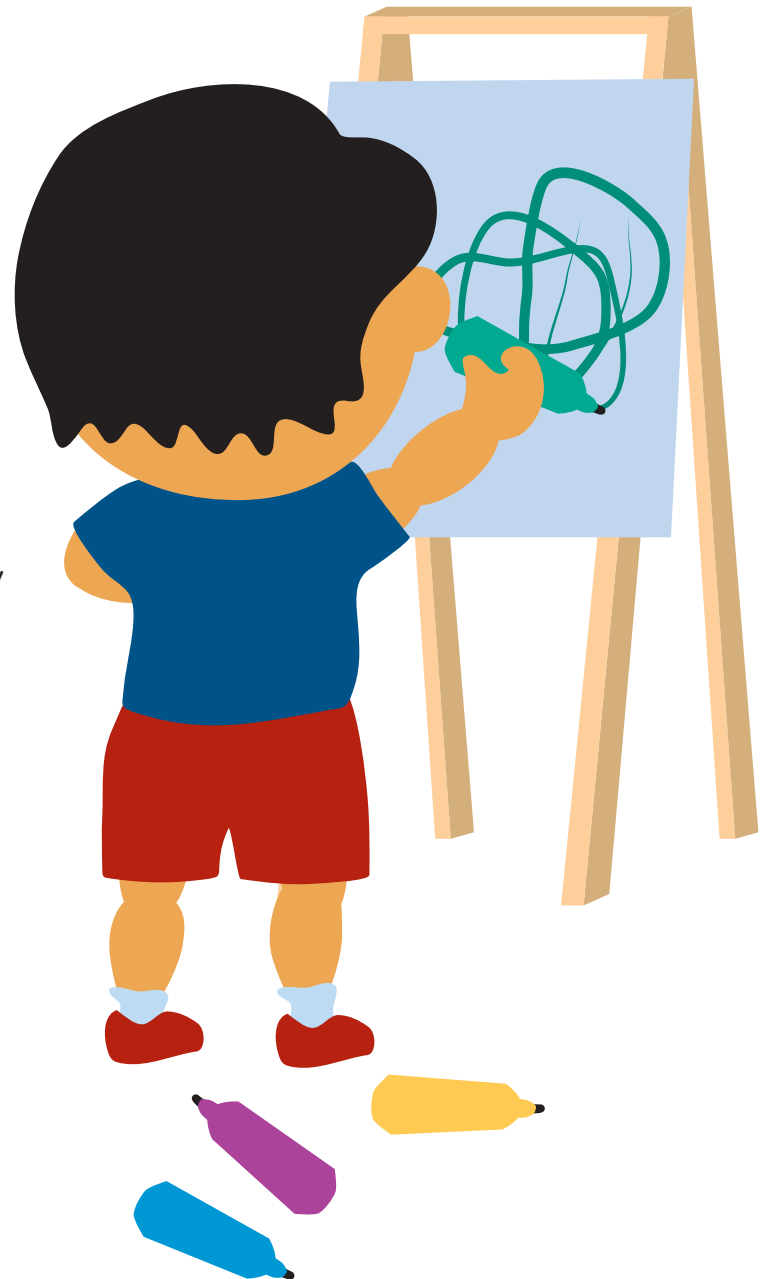
**Listen to me.** Your child is getting better at communicating. Communication includes talking and listening. Your 2½ to 3 year-old child understands and says more words and puts words together to make sentences.

**I am learning right from wrong.** Your child will learn to behave appropriately with your help. This kind of teaching is called **discipline**.

**I may be ready to use the toilet.** Many girls are ready when they are about 2 years old. Boys usually are ready later when they are about 2½ years old.

**I can build, draw, kick a ball, and climb.** Your 2½ to 3 year-old is able to do more and more things with his or her hands and body.

**My imagination is growing.** Your child is starting to pretend more and more.



**Read, read, read! I love when you read to me.** Reading to your child every day also helps your child learn to communicate. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

**QUESTION: How can I help my child learn to communicate better?**

**ANSWER:** You probably know how important it is to **talk** to your child. Talking to your child helps your child learn more words and how to put words together into sentences. It is also important to **listen** to your child. When you listen to your child, you are teaching him that he is worth listening to. Listening shows respect. You are showing your child how to have a conversation.

**Try this!**

Pay attention to **WHAT** you say to your child and **WHEN** you say it. You may be surprised to find out how many orders you give your child. Do you let your child finish a sentence before you talk? Do you interrupt your child? If you want to teach your child not to interrupt, show them how. Stop talking after you ask a question. Wait and listen to your child's answer.



**Try this!**

**What's in the Bag?** Collect objects from around the house like a comb, brush, toothbrush, sock, ball, pen, spoon or anything else that your child knows the word for. Have your child cover his or her eyes. Put one of the objects into a bag. Have your child put a hand inside the bag and guess what is inside by feeling it. Help your child guess by asking, "Is it hard or soft? Is it long or short? Is it round or straight? Is it rough or smooth?"

Your child will like this game even more if you take a turn guessing. Have your child put an object into the bag when you are not looking. Feel in the bag. Say what you are thinking out loud so that your child can hear. For example, if you feel a spoon, you could say things like, "Hmmm, this feels hard. One part is straight and one part is round. I know, it's a spoon!" The more excited you are, the more fun your child will have.

**QUESTION: I hear my child talking in bed, even when no one else is in the room. Do I need to teach my child that it is time to be quiet?**

**ANSWER:** Probably not. Young children often talk to themselves. That is part of learning to talk and part of pretending. Listen to what your child is saying. You may hear a story about what happened during the day. You may hear your child putting a stuffed animal to bed using the same words that you use. As long as the talking is quiet, it may actually help your child fall asleep.

**Try this!**

Take your child's sock and say, "I need to put this sock on my ear, right?" Give your child a chance to laugh and tell you, "No!"

Try to put it on your ear. Say, "Oh no, it doesn't fit! I know, I put this sock on my hand, right?" She will laugh because she now understands the words. You can add words to help your child learn even more.

Say the color of the sock, or add body parts like elbows and knees.

**QUESTION: My child says “pweeze” instead of “please.” How can I teach my child to say words correctly?**

**ANSWER:** Some sounds are very hard to learn to say. Even many five-year-olds still have trouble with the “L” sound and “R” sound. By hearing you speak correctly, your child will learn how to speak correctly over time. If your child says “pweeze,” you can respond by saying, “Thank you for saying PLEASE. I appreciate it.” This way you are teaching your child that you understand and you are also teaching your child how to say the word correctly.

**Try this!**

Use “please” and “thank you” when you are talking with your child. Hearing you use these polite words will help your child learn to be polite. When your child uses a polite word, show your child how happy it makes you feel. Remember that it takes time for children to learn to be polite. Keep encouraging them.



**QUESTION: How can I teach my child right from wrong? How can I teach my child to behave appropriately?**

**ANSWER:** Being a parent of a 2 year-old can be very hard. Your child is trying to learn limits. Here are some helpful ideas.

**Try** to say “yes” as much as possible, and save “no” for safety. Saying “no” tells your child to stop, but does not tell your child what to do instead.

**Make** a safe area where your child can play. Put play things in that area. Life will be easier for you if your child cannot reach the things you don’t want your child to touch.

**Distract** your child. When your child reaches for something breakable, give your child something safe.

**Move** your child away from things you don’t want touched.

**Tell** your child why you are moving him or her. You can combine these ways of helping your child learn. For example, say, “No, please don’t touch the stove. The stove is hot. You can play here.”

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- 3) When your child has used the toilet correctly a few times, you can try training pants. Having accidents is part of learning. If you punish your child for accidents, learning to use the toilet may become stressful for your child and may take longer. Instead, encourage your child when they use the toilet successfully.
- 4) Many children do not stay dry at night until they are at least 3 years-old. Be patient.

## Try this!

### RUN EVERY DAY

Your 2 1/2 to 3 year-old needs a chance to climb and run every day. This helps your child grow strong and healthy. Try to find somewhere safe for your child to run. If you can't go outside, turn on some music and dance and dance and dance!



## Try this!

### PLAY CATCH

Your child is very interested in throwing and catching. Take a ball to the park with you. You can throw, kick, catch, and roll it.

### QUESTION: Why does my child pretend so much?

**ANSWER: Pretending** is one of the best ways that children learn. Now your child is becoming even more imaginative. A block may turn into an airplane in your child's play. You can pretend with your child, too. Make a sock puppet. Put your hand in a sock and make a mouth with your fingers. Then bark like a dog and make the puppet look like it is barking. Your child will have fun and pretend with you.

Both boys and girls pretend to be mommy. By pretending to be you, your child practices taking care of stuffed animals or toys the way you take care of them. Children this age pretend to be the people they see around them. By pretending, they are learning about social relationships and friends. When you pretend with them, you are helping your child learn to talk and to understand the world around them. You are also helping your child learn about feelings and about how other people act. Pretend play is one of the most important parts of growing up!

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## Safety Corner



### Car Safety

- Never text while driving.
- Car crashes can cause severe injuries or death. To prevent these injuries, use a car seat every time your child rides in the car. The safest place for your child to ride is in the car seat in the back seat.
- Children left in a car can die of heat stroke because temperatures inside the car can reach very high levels in minutes.
- Children left in a car can be injured by power windows or knock the vehicle into gear.
- Children left alone around the car can be hit as they may not be seen in the rearview mirror or backup camera. Always walk behind your car to be sure your child is not there before you back out of your driveway.



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