

Infant sleep

Safe sleep is very important. There have been recent reports about the dangers of napping/ sleeping in the Fisher Price Rock and Play. Sleep should only be on the baby's back with no pillows and limited blankets. The baby should sleep on a flat surface in the same room as another person but in a separate sleep space. Don't fall asleep with the baby lying on their tummy while you are sitting with the baby on the couch.

Play opportunities for your toddler

Toddlers learn social skills in addition to learning whatever they are introduced to in community based classes and play groups such as library story hour, art and music for toddlers and swim class.

Language skill building occurs with many songs with associated finger plays such as "Wheels on the Bus" or "Head, shoulders, Knees and Toes". Use the Observe – Wait- Listen or OWL approach whenever possible during songs, reading together or even when your child is making a request. Pause and wait for them to fill in what comes next. If that does not happen, say what they should say and then pause, waiting for them to say it. Narrate your activities with simple clear phrases. Give a prompt and then pause such as "Open, please".

Toys should promote language development, learning cause and effect and functional/ symbolic play. These include push-pull toys, nesting and stacking toys, shape sorters, puzzles, pop up toys, blocks and shape sorters, bath toys, soft dolls, stuffed animals, puppets, simple musical instruments, echo non-electric microphones, cars/ trucks and books. Toys that encourage pretend play are toy kitchen, toy telephones and stuffed animals or dolls. There is more detail at www.zerotothree.org.

Technology is creeping into play opportunities more and more which decreases learning opportunities. Try to limit exposure of screens to very young children under 3 years old. There are studies suggesting that e books tend to be thought of a singular activity so there is less interaction and more focus on the actual technology. Learning in 3 D also has been shown to provide a stronger learning experience which is more long lasting. For instance, 12 month up to 2 year old who reads a book about going to the doctor's office will then later pretend and remember more of the multistep instructions they heard. There is a transfer deficit of information if they simply see this on a show. It also demands more attention if shown in a 2 dimensional format such as television program or even an E reader. Time limits should be set up from whenever your family decides they will start technology. Consider the 3 C's including whether it is right for your child, whether the content is meaningful and is the context allowing interaction and socializing. Read more at www.common sense media.org or www.cmch.tv.