



**Royal Society for Blind Children**

# How can I help my toddler to learn?

It can feel like there is lots to consider when you are supporting your toddler with their learning. While your child might learn slightly differently to other children their age, with your help they will be able to learn about the world around them.

All children learn through play, and this is the best way to help your toddler to learn too. Your child may have limited visual access to information so will rely on verbal information, as well as information they can access through their other senses.

We have put together a list of activities you can try to help your toddler explore and learn. While we have separated out activities into different sections, it is always best if you can combine skills from different areas to maximise learning potential.

## Learning through play

Play can be anything, not just toys from the toy shop. It is great to give your child the opportunity to choose what and how they want to play. This can sometimes look different to how other children their age will play. That is ok, if they are safe!

## Learning through touch

Learning through touch will be an important way for your toddler to learn. You might notice that your toddler continues to use their mouths to

explore objects longer than other children. This is because like fingertips, lips and tongues are sensitive and provide lots of useful information.

Wherever possible encourage your toddler to safely explore items through touch. Here are a few suggestions to help them learn while they play:

- Name objects, clothes, and body parts when they touch them.
- Use hand under hand (place your hand under your toddler's hand) to guide your child's hand to show them different items.
- Talk about how things feel.
- Encourage your toddler to feel the full size of something so they can understand the scale of things.
- Encourage systematic hand movements when feeling or searching for things e.g. – starting at the top and moving to the bottom or going from left to right.

Tactile activities:

- Posting things into boxes – encourage your toddler to use their free hand to locate the gap before posting the item through with their other hand.
- feel the same?
- Sorting into categories and sizes – talk about shapes or textures.
- Tactile snap or matching pairs – can you match the items that
- Tactile craft – can you create some tactile artwork with household objects (sponges, cotton wool etc.)
- Read tactile books or play with tactile toys.

## Learning through sound

Learning through sound is another important way for your toddler to develop skills and understandings about the world. Here are some suggestions on how to incorporate learning through sound into your activities:

- Talk about what you are doing and provide information.

- Use noisy and musical toys when playing.
- Explain what new, unusual, or surprising noises are, these can be a bit frightening if you cannot see the source of the noise, so it is useful for someone to explain the cause and what it means.
- Take part in some musical communication, you make a sound or a rhythm and see if your toddler can repeat it back to you.
- See if your toddler can locate a sound source, if they are mobile, maybe they can travel towards the noise, if not maybe they can reach towards the noise.

## Language and concepts

One of the best ways you can help your toddler learn is through the language you use. Here are some tips on how to make sure the things you say are helping your child develop their understanding:

- Talk, teach and practice left and right! "The ball is on your left". "It is in your right hand". You might need to also give a gentle touch on the correct side too at first to help your child understand which side is which.
- Talk about things being in front, behind, underneath, on top and let your child feel what that means e.g., they are underneath the duvet!
- If you want your toddler to complete a task, break it down and give them step by step instructions. You can also let your child feel your hands completing the task at the same time!
- Where possible use real objects to reference things and not abstract items as this can be confusing. Sheep don't tend to be small, soft, and squishy things we find on our beds or in our toy farmyard, and lemons don't tend to be hard and plastic with no smell or taste. You could feel a real lemon and maybe even taste one! And while for most of us it isn't possible to bring a real sheep into the home, it is possible to talk about the difference, maybe feel some wool or fleece and maybe plan a visit to a farmyard in the future.

## Learning through vision

If your toddler has some sight, then with some support then they may be able to use it for learning. Here are a few tips for helping your toddler to learn through their vision:

- Place objects at a height or angle that your toddler is most likely to see them.
- Each child has unique lighting needs, make sure that if you are asking your child to use their vision you are presenting the task in adequate lighting.
- Place items against uncluttered backgrounds and don't put too many things out at once.
- Try and use high contrasting toys.

## Vision activities

- Tracking and following balls that are rolled.
- playing hide and seek with an easy to find teddy.
- using a magnifying glass or telescope
- using apps on a tablet – **find out more about apps at Wonderbaby**

## Development

There are lots of way to help your child's development.

The '**Developmental journal for babies and children with vision impairment**' explains the many activities you can do to help develop relationships, mobility, communication, playing and learning, all the way through to independent self-care.

If you have one, your Qualified Teacher for Vision Impairment (QTVI) can also provide support in helping your toddler learn, and they may be able to refer you to a Qualified Habilitation Specialist (QHS) who can also help your toddler develop practical skills.

Our families first team of family practitioners are here to support you through your child's early years and into the future.

## RSBC can help you with:

- practical advice about your child's development
- support when you feel overwhelmed.
- understanding your child's vision impairment better
- living as a family and being supportive of each other
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Call 020 3198 0225 or email [\*\*connections@rsbc.org.uk\*\*](mailto:connections@rsbc.org.uk)

