

allow children to play with a variety of toys that foster creative thinking (such as blocks, dolls, and clay), rather than passive toys that the child observes (battery-operated or mechanical). Active play time should be encouraged over the use of computer or video games. Toys should not be substitutes for the attention of devoted caregivers, but toys can enhance these interactions.

Certain aspects of play are related to emerging linguistic abilities. Talking is a form of play for toddlers, who enjoy musical toys such as “talking” dolls and animals, and toy telephones. Children's television programs are appropriate for some children over 2 years old, who learn to associate words with visual images. However, total media time should be limited to 1 hour or less of quality programming per day. Parents are encouraged to allow the child to engage in unstructured playtime, which is considered much more beneficial than any electronic media exposure ([American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Communications and Media, 2011](#)). Toddlers also enjoy “reading” stories from a picture book and imitating the sounds of animals.

Tactile play is also important for exploring toddlers. Water toys, a sandbox with a pail and shovel, finger paints, soap bubbles, and clay provide excellent opportunities for creative and manipulative recreation. Adults sometimes forget the fascination of feeling textures, such as slippery cream, mud, or pudding; catching air bubbles; squeezing and reshaping clay; or smearing paints. These types of unstructured activities are as important as educational play to allow children the freedom of expression.

Selection of appropriate toys must involve safety factors, especially in relation to size and sturdiness. The oral activity of toddlers puts them at risk for aspirating small objects and ingesting toxic substances. Parents need to be especially vigilant of toys played with in other children's homes and toys of older siblings. Toys are a potential source of serious bodily damage to toddlers, who may have the physical strength to manipulate them but not the knowledge to appreciate their danger. Ride-on toys (i.e., tricycles, wagons, scooters) and early exploratory toys (i.e., blocks, stacking toys, building sets) were the most common type of toy causing injury to children younger than 5 years old ([Abraham, Gaw, Chounthirath, et al, 2015](#)). Government agencies do not inspect and police all toys on the market. Therefore, adults who purchase play