

One and two year olds: serve-and-return activities

Your toddler's brain cell connections are forming very quickly and this will continue for many years. Your child's experiences help these connections form. The more often an experience happens, the stronger the brain connections become. You will know their brain is developing by how:

- they play and explore their world
- their language skills are growing
- they learn about their emotions and how to get along with others
- their body grows and moves with more skill

Brain cell connections become stronger when you and your toddler engage in serve-and-return interactions. Here are some examples of what this might look like.

Activities

Sharing and taking turns (12–18 months)

Your young toddler serves when they:

- Grab a ball from you or others

You return their serve when you:

- Use the language of sharing in a positive way. When rolling a ball back and forth, say "Your turn," as you roll it to your toddler. As your toddler rolls the ball back say, "My turn."



It takes time for toddlers to learn to share. Give them lots of practice taking turns with things like sliding down the slide and turning pages in a book. You can help your toddler learn to share by offering some toys like balls to encourage them to interact and take turns.

Exploring emotions (18 months–2 years)

Your toddler serves when they:

- Like simple games and rhymes

You return their serve when you:

- Spend time saying rhymes and playing games they enjoy



Sing songs to help your toddler learn the names of emotions. Try a song like *If You're Happy and You Know It* and do the actions.

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands! (*Clap hands*)

If you're sad and you know it, cry out loud, boo hoo! (*Rub eyes*)

If you're mad and you know it, stomp your feet! (*Stomp feet*)

If you're excited and you know it, shout hooray! (*Hands in the air*)

Let's pretend (2 years)

Your older toddler serves when they:

- Pretend play with others

You return their serve when you:

- Follow what your toddler does. It lets them know their ideas are important.



Toddlers often want to imitate what you do. They learn about life and develop their imaginations by pretending. They may pretend to take a nap, feed their stuffed animals or give their doll a bath. Take turns and play pretend with them in everyday activities.