

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

# Busy All the Time!

**I TALK and TALK.** Most children say at least 40 words by the time they are 23 months old. Your child is learning new words every day.

**Playing is how I learn.** Playing teaches your child about the world. Books, toys, and activities are best. It is too soon to introduce screen time.

**I like to be near other children.** You are still your child's best playmate, but your child is interested in other children. Children this age like to play near each other, but do not really know how to play with each other.

**I CAN go up and down stairs.** Your 21-23 month-old is very busy walking, running and moving more easily.

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



**READ, READ, READ!** Your child may have a favorite book. Let your child choose the book and turn the pages. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

## Try this!

Children enjoy walks around the home or neighborhood where you tell them the names of what they see. For example, say things like, "That's a **BOOK**. Do you like that **BOOK**? That's my **PLATE**. I **EAT** my dinner from that **PLATE**. That's a **BIG POT**. We **COOK** in it. That's a **BROWN DOG**. Do you like the **DOG**? That's a **BABY**. See the **BABY'S BLUE HAT**?" Your child is very interested in learning new words.



## QUESTION: How should I talk to my child?

**ANSWER:** Talk a lot! Your child will understand you best if you speak slowly and clearly and use short, easy sentences. Your child is learning pronouns like, "me, you, he, she, I, him, her." This means that your child understands more when you describe what you do and what your child does. Talk about everything you and your child are doing.

## QUESTION: My child calls all animals "DOG." Should I worry?

**ANSWER:** This is normal. When children are first learning to talk they often use one word to mean more than one thing. "Dog" can mean dog, cat, giraffe, or any animal. Soon they will begin to use the correct words. "Apple" can mean, "Give me an apple," "I see an apple," "I have an apple," or something else about apples. Your child is probably starting to put two words together to say "Want apple" or "See apple."

## Try this!

Your child is beginning to learn about time. Use words like **before, after, soon, and later** when you talk to your child. You can talk about everything you do and everything your child does.

**Remember, this is the best time for your child to learn more than one language. If you speak more than one language, talk to your child in all of the languages you know. You can speak one language and someone else can speak another language. Also, sing to your child in all of the languages you know.**



## QUESTION: How can I help my child learn to play nicely with other children?

**ANSWER:** Most 21-23 month-olds want to be around other children. If another child is playing with a ball, your child may want a ball. If your child is reading a book, the other child may want to read a book. 21-23 month-olds still are too young to share toys, but they like to do what other children are doing.

## Try this!

Bring enough books and balls for all of the children. Your child does not know how to share yet. Don't worry. In a few months your child will learn to share.

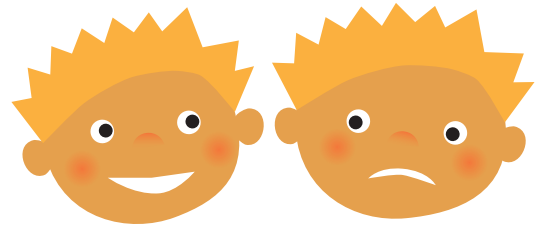
**QUESTION: What if a child is biting or hitting other children?**

**ANSWER:** If one child bites or hits another child, move the biter or hitter away. Say, “Hitting or biting hurts and you cannot play with other children until you stop.” When the children are together again, stay close and try to stop a bite or hit before it happens. 21–23 month-olds do not bite to be mean. They do not understand that it hurts when they hit or bite.

Some parents bite or hit their children back because they want their child to learn that these hurt. Doctors say that you should not hit or bite your child. Biting or hitting your child teaches your child that bigger people are allowed to hurt smaller people.

**QUESTION: How coordinated should my 21-23 month-old be?**

**ANSWER:** Your 21–23 month-old can use his or her hands to carry things while walking. Your child can walk backwards, sideways, and can even run. Your child can jump. When your child wants to pick up a toy, they can bend down and pick it up. Your child can walk up and down stairs holding onto a railing or the wall, and putting both feet on each step before moving to the next step. Even though your child may seem to have better balance now, make sure that your child can’t get to the stairs without an adult close by.



**Try this!**

You can help your child learn words for feelings too. Tell them how you feel. Use words like happy, sad, excited, angry, and other feeling words. Children who can use words to explain their feelings do not hit or bite as much as children who do not know those words.



**Try this!**

Turn on some music and jump and move to the beat. Give your child a plastic bowl and a spoon and let him or her play along.

**QUESTION: Why does my 21-23 month-old take off his or her clothes?**

**ANSWER: Because your child can!** This is a new skill and they are practicing. Your child takes off all of their clothes and can put some of them back on. Zippers and buttons may still be hard for your child. It will be a couple more years before your child can tie their shoes. Many children this age really like to be naked. They also are interested in exploring all parts of their bodies. This is normal.

**QUESTION: My child makes a big mess when eating or coloring. What can I do to help?**

**ANSWER:** When eating, use a plastic mat under the plate and a shower curtain on the floor. Using a spoon or fork and drinking from a cup helps children learn to control their hands. You can tell from the mess they make that they are still learning. Scribbling with a crayon helps a child’s fingers grow strong. Scribbles will not look like letters, but scribbling will help your child write in Kindergarten.

**Remember, now that your child can run, they can get away from you more quickly. They do not yet understand how to stay safe. Stay near your child in stores, parks, and everywhere.**

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

**ANSWER:** Children who are trained to use the toilet before they are 2 years old are more likely to still have accidents when they are 4. Waiting until your child is really ready will make it easier for both of you. Here are some signs that can help you know when your child is ready to use the toilet.

- 1** Is your child noticing when he or she is peeing (urinating) or pooping (having a bowel movement) in a diaper? Does your child pull on his or her 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 them to point when they need to go to the bathroom.
- 2** Does your child like to put things where they belong? You can tell your child that urine and bowel movements (or BM’s) belong in the toilet. Use the words that you are comfortable with.
- 3** 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!**

**Make a puzzle! Glue magazine pictures to cereal boxes, cardboard or heavy paper. (Make sure that you use non-toxic, child-safe glue.) Cut the picture into two pieces and let your child put it back together. You can make this puzzle as hard or easy as you want. When your child can put two pieces together, cut it again into three or four pieces. Make sure that the pieces are not small enough to fit through a toilet paper roll. Your child could choke.**

**QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for 21-23 month-old children?**

**ANSWER:** Crayons, play dough, and other art supplies give your child a chance to practice new finger skills. Stacking cups, shape-sorters, and simple puzzles are still great toys for this age. 21-23 month-old children like to play with balls and to push or pull toys.



Any media use should be very limited and only when an adult is standing by to co-view, talk, and teach. Remember, screen time includes TV, cell phones, computers, tablets, and other hand-held games and devices.

**Safety Corner**



Your child is busy exploring. Make sure the area around your child is safe. Always keep an eye on your little one as he explores around the home.

Here are some tips:

- Do not place toys on top of furniture.
- Place furniture away from windows.
- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Help your child climb up and down the stairs by holding his hands.
- Make sure stairs are clear of toys and other objects.
- Keep windows locked when they are closed.



**First 5 LA**

First 5 LA is a child advocacy and grant making organization created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues in programs for improving the lives of children from prenatal through age 5 in Los Angeles County. First 5 LA champions health, education and safety causes concerning young children and families. For more information, please visit [www.first5la.org](http://www.first5la.org).



**The WIC Program**

WIC provides nutrition and health education services, breastfeeding support, referrals to community agencies and healthy food to eligible women, infants and children under age five. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For more information, please visit [www.wicworks.ca.gov](http://www.wicworks.ca.gov).