



Bath Time & Your Baby:

Loving and learning while getting clean

12-18 Months

Bath time is about so much more than cleaning up after a messy day in the trenches. For your toddler, the bathtub is her personal water park, and a great opportunity for you to connect with her and teach her all sorts of important skills. Check this out:

I just loooove playing in the water with my best friend —You! I feel like such a big girl when you give me a pitcher and let me pour water over your hands and wash you up just like you wash me. I can also take care of my little rubber ducky by giving him a big drink of water when he's thirsty. And who would have thought I could read books in the bath? You give me the kind that don't get messed up when I get water all over them. I turn the pages and you read the words to me. Now I know how to say, 'pop!', when I swat at the bubbles, like the little girl in the book who is taking a bath just like me. I hate getting out of the bath when I'm having so much fun. You make it easier when you let me take ducky with me. You know just what I need.

Playing in the bath with your toddler and providing her with lots of props like pitchers, cups and books boosts her learning and nurtures her bond with you. She develops self-confidence when she can take care of you and her ducky, and when she figures out how to pop the bubbles. Her thinking skills are boosted as she uses her imagination while playing pretend, and when she makes connections between what she sees in books and her own "real" life. She builds language skills and the muscles in her fingers and hands when she turns the pages of the book and learns new words as you read together.

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What you can do

What your child is learning

Social-Emotional Development

Ask your toddler if she'd like to try washing herself.

→ That she can take care of herself and that she is a good helper.

Delight in your toddler's discoveries and accomplishments. Let her know what a good job she does, for example, cleaning and taking care of her ducky.

→ That she is important and capable.

Help her cope with transitions by giving her notice before bath time ends and letting her take a favorite toy with her.

→ That her feelings are important and that you will help her manage difficult situations.

Language and Thinking Skills

Explore bath books together. Invite him to point to familiar objects. Show him the connection between what he sees in the book and things in his "real" world.

→ New words and to love books and reading, anytime, anywhere.

Talk with your toddler about what you are doing together during bath time. Ask him questions: Is ducky thirsty? Does ducky need to get washed?

→ That he is a good communicator. That he can develop his own ideas.

Help your toddler become a good problem-solver, for example, by guiding him in how to soap up the sponge or find the page he's looking for in his book.

→ That he can tackle the challenges he faces.

Physical Development

Offer your toddler lots of different safe objects to explore in the bath.

→ How to use her fingers and hands to make things work, such as grasping the pitcher firmly and dunking it in the water before pouring.

Notice the way she uses her body to make things happen, like popping the bath bubbles.

→ That she has a good, strong, body that can do so many great things. This builds positive self-esteem.



Always remember, part of keeping bath time fun is making sure your toddler is safe. This means never leaving her unattended, even if she is in a bath seat. So gather all the things you will need for the bath beforehand and let the phone ring over to voicemail. Also, be sure to set your water heater below 120 degrees to prevent the possibility of scalding.

For more information about bath safety, go to AAP.org.

For more information on child development, go to zerotothree.org.



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