



Toy Guide

2025 - 2026



WESTERN**KIDS**HEALTH

Hello! I am Nicole



I am here to help you, help your little one thrive

I am an award winning paediatric physiotherapist and mum of 2 beautiful little ones. I have my Masters in Paediatric Physiotherapy and I am the managing director at Western Kids Health - My allied health community practice in Perth, Western Australia. I am the founder of the Baby and Toddler Play Academies, online memberships supporting your little ones development. I also host of the podcast Baby Banter. I am passionate about helping parents find opportunities to PLAY with their little ones. Why? Because play provides so many opportunities to learn to move, its FUN and motivating but most of all it provides a chance for connection.

I have many requests from parents and relatives for the best toys at certain ages. However there are a lot of toys on the market, which can make choosing one for your beautiful bub overwhelming. Will they like it? What is it meant to do? So each year I put together a toy guide which includes some development information to **help you understand what toy might meet your little one where they are at and support their development.**

Happy Playing!



@nicole_kidsphysio



WESTERN**KIDS**HEALTH

Buying Toys

Longevity

Will it grow with your child? If not, is it worth the investment?
Can it be used in different ways? Is it tough enough to survive my children and be passed on to cousins or friends?

Likeability

Things that go whizz, beep and light up are very likeable by baby, but will mum and dad appreciate the endless repetitive songs? Or that toy that goes off in the night, and scares the daylights out of everyone? Storage also comes into likeability - is it easy to store?

Learning

Is the toy meeting my child's developmental needs right now?
If not, will it very soon? Is it open ended? Can it be used in different ways to encourage different learning opportunities?

Cost & Safety

There are many many options for toys and the availability now allows options of similar toys to meet most budgets. Longer lasting, sturdier toys can be a bit pricier but might be worth the investment. Is it safe? Has it been made with safe materials? The Minderoo Foundation has fantastic information on what plastics to avoid and how they may be harmful ([click here](#)) including BPA, Phthalates, PCB's, PBDE's and PFA's. Is there a risk that it (or part of it) may be swallowed?



How the guide works

How do I use this guide?

How to Play



This guide is SO easy to use.

If you see a **QR code** this is EXCITING!

You can click it, the picture next to it or the  symbol and it will take you to a **short video** on **HOW** to use the toy **to play** with your little one to support development.

For any pictures of toys, just click or tap the image and it will link you straight to a shop to purchase (if you want).

Some are affiliate links, and by purchasing here you will be supporting me. Some will be from small businesses, and others through Amazon and other #affiliate links.



Alternatives

For each section I will showcase some of my favourite toys, old and new. Please supervise your child(ren) when playing and check the age recommendations. Toys can be expensive. Toys can feel overwhelming. You may feel like you have so many toys you just don't know what to do with them! If this is the case your baby may also feel this way. You do not need to buy all the toys! These are just ideas. Here are some alternatives:

Toy Library

There are so many different toy libraries, some have membership fees, some are run by businesses, some are community/volunteer run. It is difficult to get information that encompasses all the options so my best advice would be to google what is available in your area and what suits your needs.

Toy Rotation

Try to have between 5 - 10 toys available at any one time and store the rest. Pick toys from different categories (ie. fine motor, problem solving, sensory) and store the rest of the toys away. Rotate your toys available to baby each week.

Mothers Group Swaps

It might be worth committing in your mothers group to buying one quality toy each for each developmental period and rotating them through each week. Organisation, hygiene and wash-ability are big considerations here.

Buy Nothing

Get on your local Facebook buy nothing group, if you are looking for a particular toy, chances are it is gathering dust in someone's shed. Don't be afraid to ask!



@nicole_kidsphysio



WESTERNKIDSEALTH

What's in the Guide?

New Releases

06

Newborns

08

Pre-Rolling

10

Crawling & Walking

12

First Birthday

15

Toddlers: 1-2 years

16

Second Birthday

20

Toddlers: 2-3 years

22

Third Birthday

27

Pre-Schoolers

28

Sensory Play

33

Audio & Tech

34

Water Play

35

Outdoor Play

37



What's New

New Releases for 2025



15% off with NICOLE15



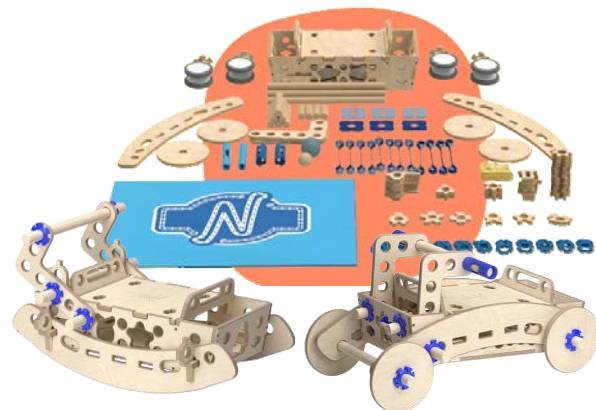
code: KIDSPHYSIO



Air Toobz Window Suction Cups



code: NKP20



The First 12 Months

Every month, every “is this normal” question

On my First 12 Months series I follow the journey of first time mums, Helen & Monique, as month by month they share the joys and challenges whilst asking all the “is this normal” questions. I met these two beautiful ladies and their boys, Seb & Gio, in the studio when they were just 1 month old. We invite paediatric experts along to make sure we get **the right information**.

Topics include:

- All things feeding with IBCLC Sarah Kocken
- Preparing for immunisations with Amanda Zaffino Child Life Specialist
- Baby communication, language and play with my team at Western Kids
- Preparing for solids AND we've started solids now what (2 episodes!!) with Dr Kyla Smith, dietitian and founder of Baby, Toddler and Family Mealtimes
- Partner relationships and communication with Dr Katie Parker
- All things sickness with Penny Blunden paediatric nurse, founder of Sick Happens
- All things Pelvic Floor and recovery with physio Taryn Watson
- Supporting transition to childcare with Elise Disher
- Attachment and sleep with Fiona founder of Mama Matters
- Child development and emotions with paediatrician Dr Aggie Bakowski
- Authenticity & gender equity with the amazing team from Level Playground
- and of course... all things milestones with ME!

[Listen Here](#)



Newborns

You are your baby's very first "toy" and playmate. Research shows that a caregiver's face and voice are the best stimulation for newborns, and early interactions help foster their social and motor development. By providing playful experiences along with security and guidance, you lay the foundation for your baby's connection and independent play.

Even newborns can learn about themselves and the world around them through play.

Play is crucial for a baby's cognitive, physical, emotional, and social growth. Even newborns start learning about themselves and their surroundings through simple play, often by reflex movements like kicking or arm-waving, and by using their eyes and ears. **Playtime doesn't have to be complicated: just a few minutes each day on the floor with your baby (or bringing them up to your eye level) to play, talk, or read can have a big impact.**

Remember these key points about newborn senses and their play environment: Babies will turn their heads toward sounds, especially familiar voices like their caregivers'.

- **Sight:** Newborns can focus only about 20–30 cm (8–12 inches) away and initially see mostly in black, white, and gray. Their eyes are sensitive to bright light, and red is often the first color they start to notice.
- **Hearing:** Babies will turn their heads toward sounds, especially familiar voices like their caregivers'.
- **Play Environment:** A safe, cozy play area (like a soft blanket on the floor) encourages your baby to begin exploring independently through short tummy-time or kicking. Gentle talking and singing during play also fosters bonding and learning.

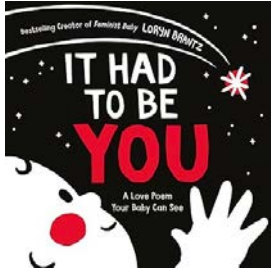
How to Play



Newborns

Contrast

Contrast cards, with black, white and red dominating, in geometric shapes, draw baby's attention easily. They stimulate visual development, helping to train vision, eye muscles and communication links in the brain



Surface

Soft but firm and warm. Apart from you, a sheepskin mat or playmat is a fabulous option for floor play. Mats that are waterproof, washable or wipeable are the best.

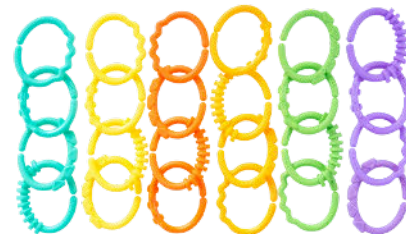
Gym

Baby Gyms are fabulous as you can hang high contrast toys or noisy toys from them for bub to look at or interact with. They also encourage baby to bring their hands together.



Look

Mirrors satisfy a baby's preferences for faces, support visual tracking and development of body awareness (especially as baby grows and realises it's them in the mirror).



Listen

Toys that easily make noise when they are kicked or knocked are also fabulous to draw babies attention and understanding of cause/effect - bubs start to understand when they move they make noise.



Staples

I cannot go past links and an O'Ball. They were the staple of my baby play kit. Both connect to each other, your baby gym, and are easy grasp toys. They double as mouths and are fab in the water.



Feel

Soft, lightweight, easy to grip toys are most suitable for this age group. Easy to grasp toys are fantastic for assisting development of hand muscles, proprioception (body awareness) and grasp/reaching. Different textures is a plus!



Bat

Toys that easily make noise when they are kicked or knocked are also fabulous to draw babies attention and understanding of cause/effect - bubs start to understand when they move they make noise.



Pre-Rolling

My main considerations for toys at this stage of development include:

- *Graspability*
- *Mouthability*
- *Cause & Effect*
- *Encourage weight shift but still within reach*

After 3 months of age, babies begin to develop colour vision and they are able to see further. Babies also start to recognise things, like you, milk in a bottle, and themselves in a mirror.

Bold and bright colours are wonderful as they are easy to see (imagine you've desaturated a photo by 70% to understand what your baby sees). They are also starting to understand how far away an object is and the size of an object – fabulous for hand eye coordination.

Reaching with an open hand begins around 3 - 5 months, however at times they might have difficulty letting go. Early on, light weight toys that can be easily grasped with lots of different hand or finger movements are ideal.

Around this time, baby may start to get bored being in the same place, even though they cannot move. Try rotating baby's toys, the room baby is in or heading outdoors or into some water play for some different stimulation for baby.

You have to expect that baby will put anything and everything in their mouth. A baby's mouth is their window to the world and mouthing allows babies to experience their world like no other activity. Mouthing begins around 4 months, so priorities to consider are safety (what is the toy made of?) and wash-ability.

Find out more about mouthing [here](#).



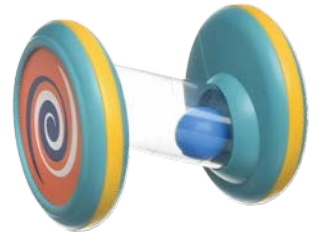
How to Play



3-6 months

Reach and Grasp

Toys designed to be easily grasped with two hands to encourage bringing the toy to the mouth and eventually passing hand to hand are initially what you are looking for.



code: KIDSPHYSIO

Move

In this developmental stage you want to pick toys that provide the right amount of incentive to move without causing too much frustration...meaning they don't roll away or knock over but they also make a sound when they are hit / grabbed / pushed. That's why we love wobble toys and suction toys that spin. These toys also encourage reaching from tummy - which leads to rolling.



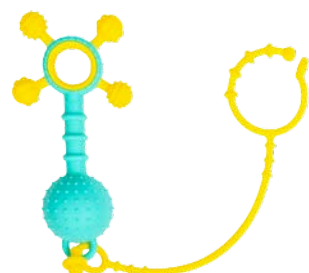
Water Mat

Water mats are fabulous in tummy time for reflux bubs but also for all babies to encourage reach and weight shift...hello rolling!



Mouthers

Food grade silicone is best here.



WESTERNKIDShealth

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

Crawling & Walking

This phase of babyhood is alllll about movement.

Your baby's vision from about 6 months has now developed for added depth perception and full colour. They can see how far away things are and changes in the floor level and start to compare the size of objects. Baby is no longer just reaching, they are also grasping, tugging, pushing, patting, shaking and squeezing objects. **Exploring cause and effect**, if I do this what will happen?

Although there is a lot more going on with the hands, fine motor skills are still basic, with baby using their whole hand to grasp rather than a **pincer (thumb and finger) grip**. Towards 9 months, the pincer grip will appear and baby may also start poking and banging objects together, including their hands! Baby will start to sit, and by golly now they can use both hands! They will start **passing objects from one hand to the other** and may start using gestures like **pointing and waving**. Initially they will reach with two hands at once and by 7-9 months they will be reaching with one hand.

They can also see a lot more in sitting – so if you are not already, now is the time to move toys away from bub to create opportunities for developing balance, movement and exploration.

By 9 months most bubs will **be on the move** in some way, shape or form whether it be rolling, creeping or crawling. Most will be also be taking weight through their legs. Repetition is everything at this age. Baby will **repeat** big movements and little movements to explore the world around them. By 12 months your baby will be exploring further and may even be up on their feet!

How to Play

Part 1:



Part 2:



Crawling & Walking

Puzzles

Your little one is working on understanding how things fit together. Start with just simple puzzles, like the pincer puzzle.



Fine Motor Skills

Toys that encourage pinching, poking, banging objects together and passing between are FAB.



code: NKP10



Cause & Effect

Your baby is now a little scientist "If I do this what happens?" Providing simple objects for bub to press, pull, shake or throw and objects that DO something is great.



In & Out, On & Off

Your little one will start pulling OUT and off first. Everything. Tissues out of tissue boxes, sock out of drawers, so follow their lead with toys that they can pull out of. Soon they'll start posting back in and on!



Knocking Down

At this age baby loves to knock things down. CRASH! Not so much building up but lots of knocking down which has some fabulous language foundations (see baby talk tips in the Play Academy).



WESTERNKIDShealth

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

Crawling & Walking



Move

code: NKP20



Between 6-12 months, your baby will discover how to move. Whether that be by crawling, bum shuffling or walking, this is the age where you need to have eyes in the back of your head. Toys that roll or move, such as windup toys, balls or electric toys are what you want. They also help baby's vision & motor systems as bub watches the toy move and coordinates their muscles to move after it. Large toys such as activity tables, play kitchens or work benches encourage bub to go up and down from lower levels to higher levels, strengthening their legs. Suction toys on glass sliding doors or large, safe magnets on fridges or baby gates to encourage cruising on an upright surface - so bub can't use their arms to move, which is great to develop balance for walking.



Music

From 6 months on, you will notice your little one may be interested in hearing and making music. All the musical toys from previous ages carry over, however these are my favourite for sitters, walkers and beyond.



Where has it gone?

Around 6 months, baby also develops "object permanence", this is the ability to know an object still exists, even if it disappears. Baby will look for a ball hidden under a sensory scarf, for food that was in their bowl or the cup they dropped off the side of the high chair. Toys that encourage this discovery, by showing baby that while things disappear for a moment they will come back captivate baby's interest at this age. Rhyming songs with puppets and books with flaps helps this skill too.



The Big Ones

First Birthday



Kinderfeets Tiny Tot+

My go to first birthday gift to suggest to parents is the wonderful Kinderfeets balance trike. My daughter received this exact trike for her first birthday from her aunts. I was SO impressed. Not only does a push trike assist with gross motor development... but it encourages outdoor and risky play. This particular trike grew with Miss C until she was 2.5 years old and too tall and we upgraded to a balance bike.



Cubbi Buddi Play Couch

We have had this for nearly 4 years now. It is used for active play, imaginary play, movie nights, sleepovers, sick kids and well my son is currently using it as a bed as his arthritis makes it tricky to climb up and down from his loft bed!



Mini2Go
Deluxe Scooter
Convertible



Learning
Tower



Toniebox2



Riababy Koala Playhouse

Perfect indoor risky play fun and will last a few years!

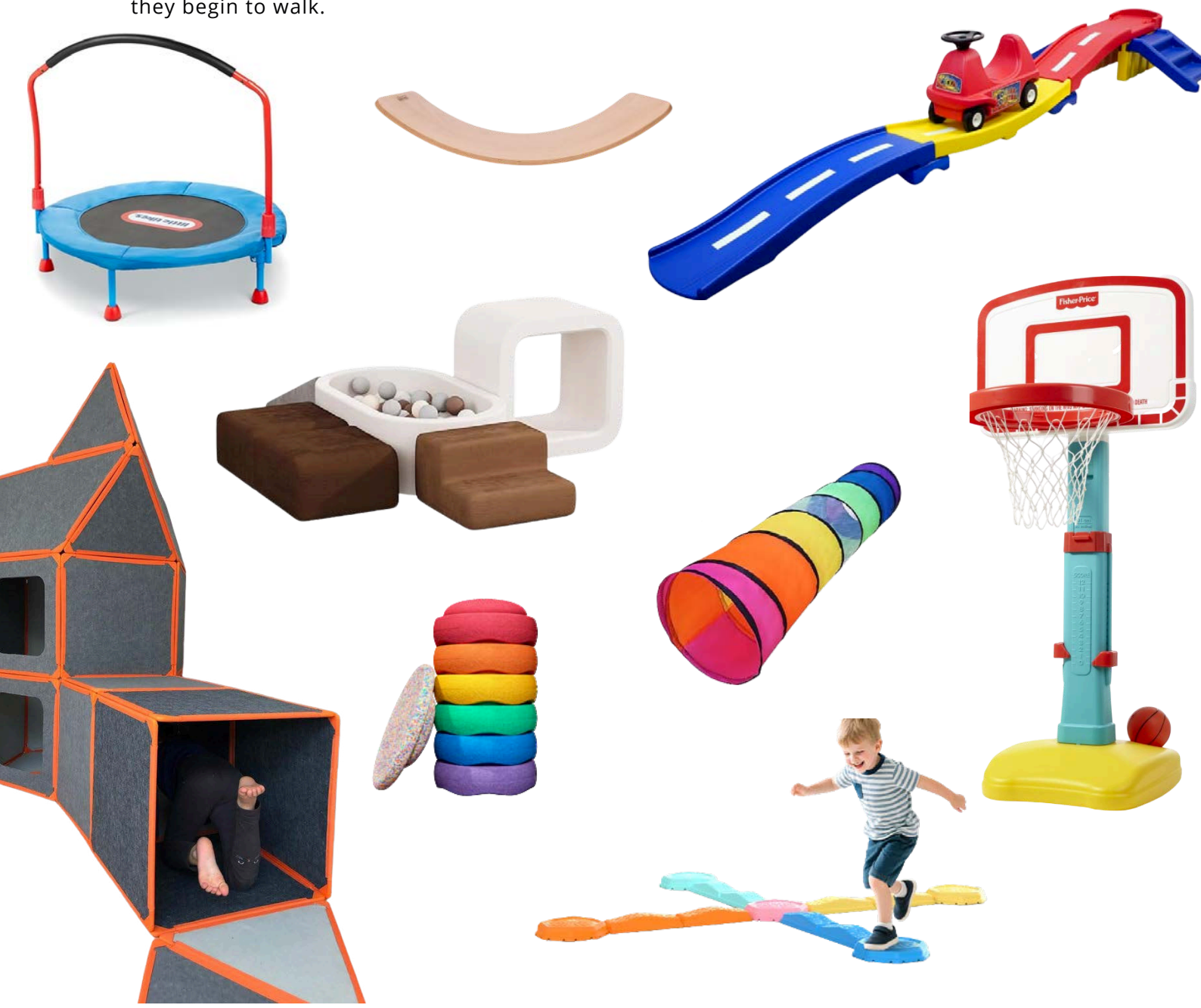


1 -2 years

First steps and first words open new doors

This age is often dominated by gross motor skills as baby increasingly wants to go more, see more, play more and interact more. Crawling, pulling to stand, cruising, walking with support and walking will happen in this time frame.

There is also climbing. Did we mention climbing? Oh dear. Your tiny infant is now scaling things and your heart can't take it. But let me reassure you, experienced 12-month-old crawlers gauge possibilities for crawling down slopes and drop-offs with near-perfect accuracy and avoid, slide down, or back down obstacles that are beyond their abilities—discriminating safe from risky slopes (Adolph 2014), so encourage this. Let them experiment and explore. Unfortunately these crawling skills don't carry across when they begin to walk.



Podcast - Baby Banter

Reframing Risky Play

A 12 part mini series for parents & care-givers

Are you find supporting your little one when they are testing out their new found skills, aka Risky Play, a bit tricky?

Then you can stop worrying because I have got you!

I have a whole podcast series on

- ✓ what risky play is
- ✓ what it looks like in babies & toddlers
- ✓ how you can support your little one
- ✓ what you can say instead of "Be Careful!" and "You are ok!!!"
- ✓ How to talk about it with grandparents and other care givers

My latest episodes explore the privilege in Risky Play and also give you 12 tips to build your little ones confidence in risky play.

Want to listen? Check out the link below!



[Listen Here on Spotify](#)



1 -2 years

Fine Motor

Toddlers' fine motor skills continue to improve, refining their ability to stack, bang, turn book pages, hold crayons, push buttons and help take off socks, shoes and pants. Your little one will start to practice scribbling. Thick crayons and chalk are super to support early grip. They will enjoy feeding themselves with more independence, using cups, spoons and forks (prepare for the mess!) Blocks are great, however baby will not begin to stack 3-4 blocks till closer to 18 months.



Puzzles

Use simple shapes initially, like the circle, which is easiest as it doesn't have any corners, and progressing to other shapes. Bub's hands and eyes have to work together whilst also working on shape recognition and positioning skills.



1 -2 years



Toddlers are building their bank of words, understanding routines and tasks and certainly exerting their will on the world!

With increased independence comes big feelings too. Frustration, anger, excitement, shame, possessiveness... expect your toddler to have important, overwhelming and unfamiliar feelings they need to express without all the well-developed language tools to do this very successfully.

Toddlers will use more gestures in everyday situations and will continue to copy like mad – extending this imitation into the beginning of imaginative and symbolic play – using napkins as baby blankets or blocks as phones, putting dolls to bed in containers.

Play can be repetitive – practicing tasks and schemas (connecting, positioning, rotating etc.) over and over to understand and make meaning of the world around them.

Toddler play should also be full of variety and scientific testing - “what happens if...” and moving between different toys and activities, showing interest in a range of opportunities available to them.

Toddlers will also start matching! Which means its a great time to introduce some games.

Early pretend play, imitation play, is when your toddler starts to mirror, repeat and practice the things you do! As they learn and discover more they will make believe with realistic items. For example, a toddler might feed a doll with a spoon or rock a doll to sleep. Two year-olds learn to use objects to stand for other things, for example, to use a block as a car by pushing it along the floor.

Involving your toddler in the daily practical aspects of life helps to build their capabilities. Safely cutting, helping with the chores, pouring their own drink... this type of “play” and learning builds confidence.



The Big Ones

Second Birthday



WESTERN**KIDS**HEALTH

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

Lovevery

Hence why I made this toy guide.

Lovevery is my favourite toy subscription. It is high end in terms of price, \$130 per play kit from 0-12 months (6 play kits in the first 12 months) or \$195 per play kit from 1-4 years (12 play kits over this time) however the quality of the toys is top notch, they are built to last, safe and sustainable. Plus you do not have to think at all. Lovevery has done all the work for you and you get stage appropriate purposeful, development optimising toys delivered to your door. Below are some of my fave kits.



Explore the Play Kits

2 - 3 years

Terrific twos !! What a wonderful year of discovery and growth! Development of big feelings remains a big part of what you'll see in your toddler here, as they continue to understand the world around them and their effect on it.

Around two, toddlers are fiercely curious and increasingly independent, but still rely on you to co-regulate big feelings. You'll typically see lots of parallel play, simple pretend (feed a doll, make "tea"), two-word phrases building toward short sentences, sorting/matching, steadier running, early ball skills (kick/throw), and walking up a few stairs with help. Many are keen to "do it myself," help with simple chores, and may show readiness signs for toileting.



Want all the Toddler milestones on hand? My wonderful team at Western Kids Health, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists, have come together to create this beautiful easy to read guide for you.

Language

Around 2, many toddlers use 2-3-word phrases, follow simple instructions and understand far more than they can say.

Towards 3, you'll often hear 3-5+ word sentences, clearer speech, lots of who/what/where/why, and short back-and-forth chats.

Toy Tips: Prioritise books (including wordless), story baskets (book + matching figurines), puppets and pretend phones; narrate play and gently expand what they say to feed vocabulary.

How to Play



2 - 3 years



Gross Motor Development

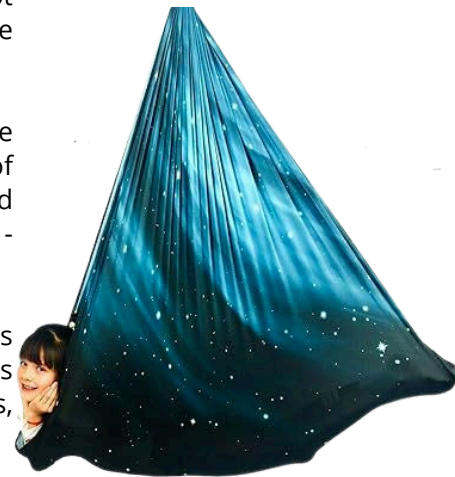
Around 2, running steadies; many start kicking, overarm throws, two-footed jumps, and walk up/down stairs with a rail, and brief one-foot balances pop up in everyday moments (like helping you with dressing).

Your little one will also be testing out those climbing skills - so pick toys that provide lots of opportunities for swinging, hanging and climbing (like the Tinnitots indoor gym - fabulous!!)

Towards 3, stair use is more confident, jumps get higher and smoother, and ball skills improve; interest in ride-ons, balance bikes, scooters and trikes often arrives now.

Toy Tips:

Pick soft balls, beanbags, balloons, a low "jump-down" step, simple balance paths (stepping stones/wobble cushion), tunnels, and get moving with balance bikes, scooters and trikes, aiming for plenty of active play spread across the day.



WESTERNKIDSHHEALTH

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

2 - 3 years

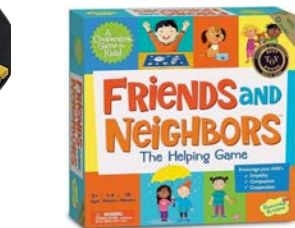


Social Play

Around 2, play is mostly side-by-side (parallel) with quick snatches of playing with you or a peer; sharing and turn-taking are brand-new skills and need lots of coaching.

Towards 3, children start to notice and join peers' games for short bursts and can manage tiny turns when the routine is clear (think: roll, catch, roll).

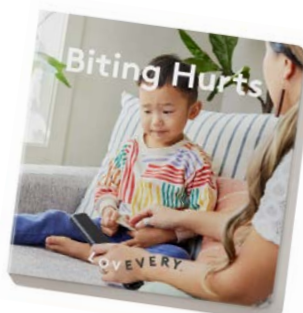
Toy Tips: Set up success with duplicates (two trucks, two scoops) and super simple back-and-forth games (rolling a ball, adding one block each) so toddlers can join without a fight.



Emotional Development

Around 2, big feelings and tantrums are common because language and self-control are still developing, so your calm presence and naming feelings do the heavy lifting. Towards 3, lots of children begin using simple feeling words and show early empathy, but they still need you to co-regulate and recover after storms.

Toy Tips: Use puppets/dolls and picture books to act out everyday emotions, and create a cosy calm spot with a favourite soft toy for cuddles and resets.



WESTERNKIDShealth

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

2 - 3 years



Thinking & Problem Solving

Around 2, you'll see lots of sorting and matching, cause-and-effect experimenting, and noticing features (colour/shape/size). Towards 3, children group and categorise with more confidence, remember steps, and use pretend play to test out ideas and solutions.

Toy Tips: Offer puzzles, shape sorters, stacking and nesting sets and matching cards; rotate a few favourites so kids can repeat, master, then tackle a tiny new challenge.



Fine Motor

Around 2, toddlers love scribbling, posting, turning knobs/buttons and feeding with a spoon/fork; they'll "help" with dressing and hand-washing.

Towards 3, drawings look more deliberate (lines/shapes), lacing/stacking improves, utensil use gets tidier, and independence blooms (hands washed, simple clothing on/off).

Toy Tips: Stock playdough with rollers/cutters, big paper + chunky crayons/markers, peg/knob puzzles, large lacing beads, posting boxes and child-sized helper tools (mini broom, easy-pour jug).



WESTERNKIDSHHEALTH

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

2 - 3 years



Role play & imagination

Around 2, pretend play blossoms—copying familiar routines like feeding a doll, pouring “tea,” or playing doctor with simple props.

Towards 3, pretend play links into mini-stories (shop → cook → feed), which grows language, social understanding and problem-solving.

Toy Tips: Choose open-ended props, dress-ups, dolls/figurines, toy food/tea set, doctors kit, bags/scarves and sturdy cardboard boxes, so play can stretch from copy-play at 2 to simple storylines at 3.



The Big Ones

Third Birthday



WESTERNKIDShealth

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

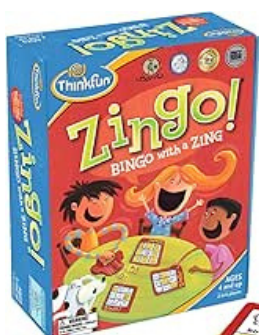
Pre-schoolers

Our preschoolers sure are spectacular little humans! There is an incredible amount of growth and development continuing to happen, they just astound us with some of the things they can now say and do.

Social Development

By the preschool years, children become more interested in playing with peers and start developing cooperative play skills. Around age 3, they are learning concepts like sharing ("mine" vs. "yours") and can participate in simple group play with guidance. As they approach 5, friendships become more important - they try to get along with others, follow simple rules, and even show empathy (e.g. feeling happy when others are happy).

Tip: Engaging in play that involves sharing and taking turns (for example, building a tower together or playing a board game) helps preschoolers practice social skills in a fun way.



Preschoolers - STEM



Language Development

Preschoolers' language skills expand rapidly during ages 3-5.

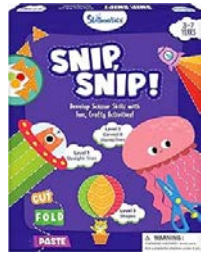
A three-year-old often speaks in short sentences of about 3-5 words and can be understood by others most of the time. By around 4 years old they know hundreds of words, and their sentences lengthen to 5-6 words; by 5 they're speaking in more complex sentences (sometimes 8-9 words long) and can carry on back-and-forth conversations clearly.

Children in this stage love asking "Why?" and telling simple stories as their understanding of language and grammar improves.

Tip: To support their growing language, read books together, sing songs and encourage storytelling. Set up play with loose parts, construction toys and open ended materials; these activities build vocabulary and comprehension and spark their imagination.



Preschoolers



Fine Motor Skills

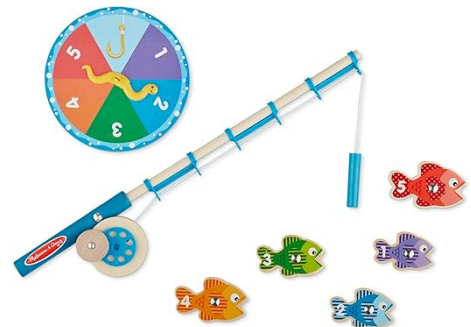
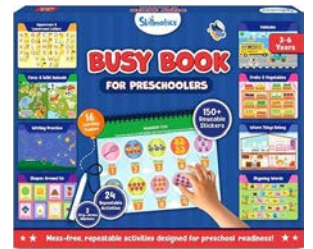
Fine motor abilities – the small muscle movements in hands and fingers – take a big leap during the preschool years. By age 3, children can use their hands with more precision: they start to draw simple shapes (like circles or squares), stack blocks into tall towers, and use child-safe scissors to snip paper (with supervision).

You'll notice they enjoy scribbling with crayons or painting – these activities strengthen their hand control.

Fast-forward to age 5, and many can draw people with detail, copy some letters or even write their name, and do up buttons or zippers on their clothes by themselves.

They also become pretty adept with utensils and tools (like using a fork or building with small LEGO pieces).

Tip: Offer lots of opportunities for hands-on play. Creative activities such as drawing, coloring, cutting and gluing crafts, as well as puzzles, beads to string, play-dough, or construction toys, are excellent for fine motor development. These fun tasks help improve their finger strength and coordination, which in turn supports skills like writing and self-care tasks (e.g. dressing) as they get older.



Preschoolers - Pretend Play



Imagination and Role Play

Imaginative play blossoms in the preschool years. Three- and four-year-olds often engage in make-believe games with dolls, animals or imaginary friends, and they enjoy pretending to be different characters (playing “doctor,” “teacher,” “mum/dad,”)



At this age, kids can have a hard time distinguishing fantasy from reality, a preschooler might truly believe in their pretend scenarios or fear imaginary monsters.



As they get closer to 5, they gradually learn what's real versus make-believe, and you may see imaginary friends fade as real friendships and cooperative play with other children become more prominent.

Tip: Encourage this creative development with open-ended toys and props. Dress-up clothes, play kitchens, tool sets, doctors kits, and action figures all allow children to act out stories and roles. Such role-play enriches their creativity, social skills, and problem-solving abilities.



Preschoolers

Gross Motor Development

Preschoolers are naturally active and on the move, and their large-muscle skills improve a lot from age 3 to 5. Around 3 years old, many children can run, climb furniture or playground equipment, walk up stairs with alternating feet, pedal a tricycle, and even hop or stand briefly on one foot. As they grow, their coordination and balance get better, by 4 to 5 years, kids can confidently throw, catch, and kick a ball, climb and swing with ease, and may learn to skip or jump forward in games. They're also gaining strength and endurance, loving any chance to jump, dance, or chase.



code: NKP20 = 20% off



Emotional Development

Between 3 and 5, preschoolers gain a better understanding of their own and others' feelings. A three-year-old can usually name basic emotions like happy, sad or angry and may show affection and concern for familiar people. It's common at this age to have fears of pretend or "imaginary" things (like monsters) as their imagination grows. By age 5, children typically have more self-control over their emotions and you'll likely see far fewer dysregulation or outbursts. They also begin to use words to express how they feel.

Tip: Pretend play is a great outlet for emotions, for instance, using puppets or dolls to act out feelings can help children learn to cope and understand emotions.



code KIDSPHYSIO



WESTERNKIDSHHEALTH

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

Sensory Play



JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

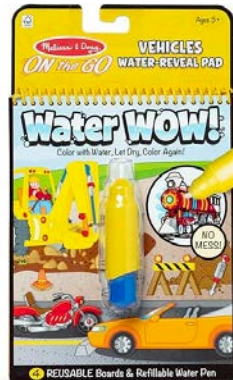
Audio & Tech



JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

Outdoor Play - Babies and Toddlers

Water Play



WESTERNKIDShealth

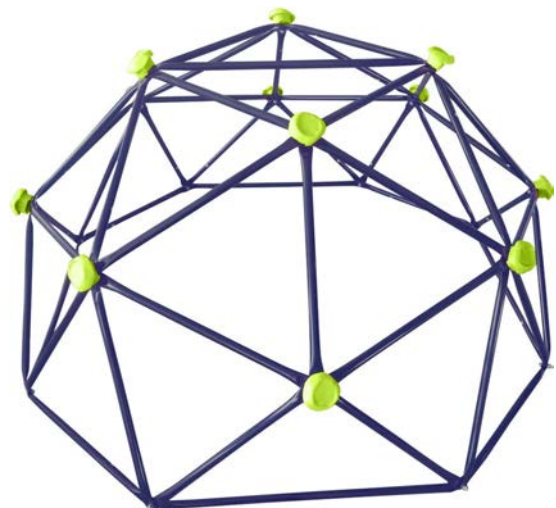
JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

Water Play



Outdoor Play - Babies & Toddlers

Outdoor Play



WESTERN**KIDS**HEALTH

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

Outdoor Play - Toddlers & Preschoolers

Outdoor Play



WESTERN**KIDS**HEALTH

JOIN THE PLAY ACADEMY

Western Kids Health

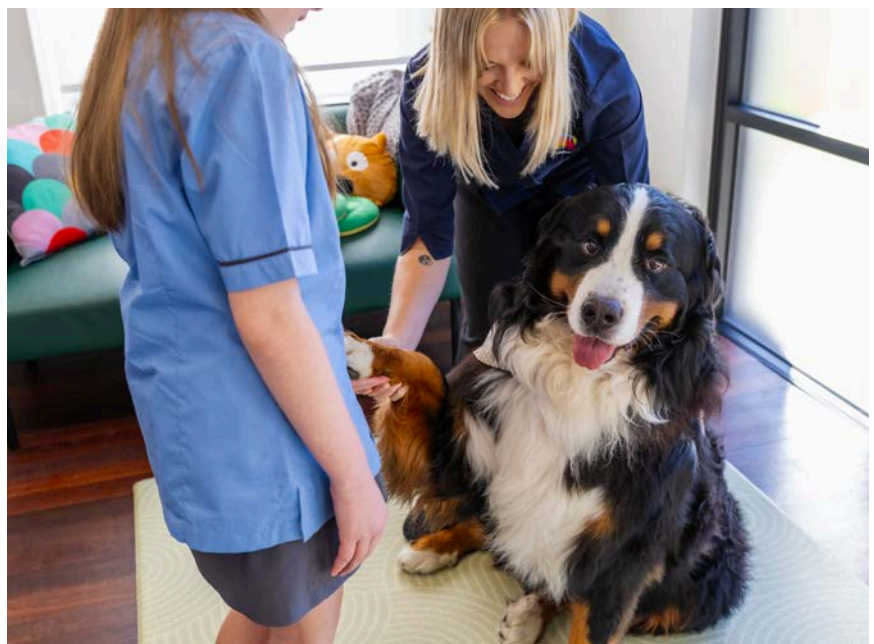


Integrated multidisciplinary healthcare to help your child thrive.

Western Kids Health is a Perth-based paediatric practice offering award-winning, fun, evidence-based, integrated care in a purpose-built environment designed for babies, children and teens. Our clinicians partner with families so therapy fits real life, celebrating each child's strengths and making progress feel playful and achievable. We prioritise connection before correction, turning everyday routines and play into opportunities for growth.

Across ages and stages, from newborn tummy time to teen sport, we tailor support to your goals as a family. Our multidisciplinary team, physiotherapists, psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists and dietitians, works together to deliver evidence-based, fun and meaningful therapy that's coordinated, practical and ready to use at home and school.

If you live in Perth, we are here for you. Don't live locally? We are fully set up for secure telehealth, helping families all over the world access expert guidance without leaving home. Virtual assessments, parent coaching and personalised home programs (including play recommendations that suit your space and budget) mean distance and time zones aren't barriers. Wherever you are, we'll meet you there so your child can explore, learn and thrive.



[BOOK NOW](#)



Disclaimer

This guide is designed to empower parents and caregivers through education on why toys might be beneficial and relevant at certain ages. You don't need to buy every toy and please look at the alternatives of DIYing, loaning and borrowing toys. Your child is exploring, full of curiosity and the confidence to give many things a go, with no idea what will happen. It is important that toys and play things are sturdy, made from safe materials and do not pose choking, entrapment or strangulation risks. The younger your little one is, the more supervision and support will be needed. Things like water, hammocks and strings need close supervision. We have not specifically tried every toy in our toy guide so please check the age recommendations, your child's individual capabilities and supervise for safety.

COPYRIGHT

This guide and the entire academy.westernkidshealth.com website is copyright © by Western Kids Health Pty Ltd. All Rights Reserved. This guide may not be copied or duplicated in whole or part by means without express prior agreement in writing. Some photographs in this guide may be property of others, all such material is used with permission of the owner.

2025 – 2026 Nicole Kids Physio Toy Guide

Thank you

I hope you have enjoyed this developmental toy guide. I hope that it has eased the mental load with choosing toys based on your bubs skill and stage. If you would like, please tag me on your Instagram. I would love to see you and your little one enjoying playing!



@nicole_kidsphysio



nicole@westernkidshealth.com



(08) 6112 2977



www.nicolekidsphysio.com or
www.westernkidshealth.com

