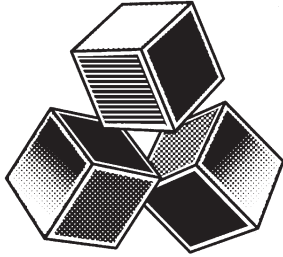


27 and 28
Months Old



PARENT EXPRESS

A Guide for You and Your Child

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Dear Parent:

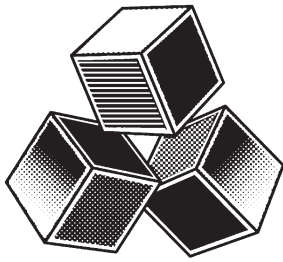
No one needs to tell you that your child's first three years are busy years.

They are busy right now for your 2 year old, who is into everything, and busy for you because you have to chase, protect, and train her.

With all this activity and stress, it may be hard to remember that these first three years probably are the most important time in your child's life. You have the opportunity now to help your child become a responsible, loving, accomplished person.

Try to enjoy these busy, important years. Be good to yourselves. Take time out when you can and share childcare with others when you need a break. Enjoy your child's development and celebrate her accomplishments with her. Reward yourself, too, for your successes, and don't be hard on yourself for mistakes. All parents make them.

When these busy years have passed, believe it or not, you probably will look back on this special time with pleasure and nostalgia. For now, do all you can to make the most of these important years.



It is tempting to use food to try to control your child's behavior, but it can backfire. Foods such as candies, cakes, cookies, chips, ice cream, and soft drinks are high in fat and sugar. You do not want these to become the most desirable foods to your child.

Turn Win-Lose into Win-Win

Your 2 year old's growing independence may be a big source of stress in your life right now. Sometimes you may feel like you're in a war with your child, trying to win every battle. Some battles end so that you both lose. When you're the one who wins, your child might fight back even harder. When he wins, you might feel angry, defeated, or guilty.

One way to reduce this type of stress is to handle these battles in a way that lets both of you win at least a little. Maybe you can't talk about compromise with a stubborn 2-year-old, but you can figure out how to end up with no one feeling like a loser. If you refuse to get caught up in a battle, then your child can't lose and neither can you.

For example, your son wants to help you frost that special cake, and you want to do it alone. Maybe you can give him a cupcake or a cookie to frost all by himself while you frost the big cake.

With a little imagination and patience, you can find a way to let you and your child both win. You'll both feel better for it.

A Question about Left-Handedness

My daughter feeds herself and reaches for toys with her left hand. I don't want her to be left-handed, but I've heard that if I try to keep her from using her left hand it may cause problems. Should I try to make her use her right hand?

Most children alternate which hand they use most often for several years before settling down to their prefer-

ence. The key word is preference. Most children settle into a left or right hand preference, but occasionally children continue to have equal skill in both left and right hands throughout their lives.

Don't try to make her use her right hand. Preference in using hands, feet, and eyes is already present in the child's brain at birth. If you pressure your daughter to change her preference, she may become confused. Forcing her to change also might affect her self-confidence and learning. If your daughter is really left-handed, she won't be alone. Ten percent of the U.S. population is left-handed.

Food Rewards Can Backfire

"If you behave at the shoe store, I'll buy you a candy bar." "Be a good girl at Grandma's house, and you'll get an ice cream cone." It is tempting to use food to try to control your child's behavior, but it can backfire. Foods such as candies, cakes, cookies, chips, ice cream, and soft drinks are high in fat and sugar. You do not want these to become the most desirable foods to your child. As your child gets older, she will have more control over what she eats. If she chooses a lot of these high sugar, high fat foods, her diet will be poor. This can lead to ill health.

Parents often mean well when they say, "You can't have dessert until you finish all of your vegetables." They think they are doing something good by getting their child to eat the vegetables. But the message the child hears is different. She hears: "You have to eat the bad vegetables in order to get the good dessert." You don't want your child to think of any healthy foods as bad. Let her eat what she wants and still have dessert. You can

make the dessert something low in fat and sugar, such as a fruit juice frozen pop.

So what is a parent to do? Do not use any food, even nutritious food, as a bribe or reward. Encourage your child to eat a wide variety of foods so she will get all the nutrients needed for growth and health. Reward your child with hugs, kisses, and praise. Saying, "You didn't fuss in the shoe store. That made Mommy and Daddy very happy," is a better reward than candy. This reward helps your child feel good about herself.

School at Home

How would you like to start a school in your home? If you're thinking about books, a chalkboard and rows of desks, that's not the idea. This school is not only *in* your home; it *is* your home, your family, and your day-to-day activities.

You might say, "But I don't know how to teach." You don't need a teaching degree or years of experience.

You just need to remember your ABCs:

- ▶ A child's first and most important teachers are his parents.
- ▶ Be alert to the new situations your child faces each day.
- ▶ Conduct short, simple lessons many times during the day.

Here is how to conduct your school:

- ▶ Keep learning fun! Teach by playing games and talking to your child in a friendly way.
- ▶ Teach colors and shapes. As you set the table, talk about the round dishes, the green tablecloth. As you sort the clothes, talk about the blue jeans, the white shirt. Talk about shapes of toys or furnishings in your home—the round mirror, the square table.

- ▶ Teach about similarities and differences. Help your child sort spoons and forks in the drawer.
- ▶ Teach about language and books. Show pictures and read short stories to your child again, again, and again. Talk with him about the stories.

Your child's first school is in your home. The lessons you teach prepare him to learn even more when he starts preschool and kindergarten. Children who have been taught at home enjoy learning and usually learn faster when they start school.

Make-Believe Play

Imagination is a wonderful thing, and we can help our children develop it. Children love to pretend they are someone important and powerful such as a superhero, a doctor, a teacher, or a parent. This is a good, healthy part of growing up. It helps children practice for the future. It gives them pleasure and comfort.

Imaginary friends can give a special type of companionship. Researchers have found that well-developed young children often pretend they are someone else—usually an adult. They have also found that most of these children receive a good deal of encouragement from their parents to engage in fantasy play.

Join your child in fantasy play. You will make this important play even more special for your toddler and will be encouraging her creativity.

Games for Growing

Sorting Game

Purpose

This game helps your child learn how things can be alike or different.

How to Play

- ▶ Find three or four items from about four different categories, such as four playing cards, four ribbons, four pebbles, and four leaves.
- ▶ Mix these objects up and put them in a pile or a bowl.
- ▶ Ask your child to sort them into piles of things that are alike.

If your child wants, you can take a turn at sorting too. To make the game harder, you can make all the things almost alike, such as four small paper squares, four medium paper squares, and four large paper squares.

Play this and any game only as long as it's fun for your child and for you.

Pretend You Are...

Purpose

This game helps your child use his body and his imagination.

How to Play

Ask your child to imitate familiar things such as a flower, a tree, a train, a dog, a boat, and driving a car. Take turns being the flower, the tree, the driver, and so on.

First Numbers

Purpose

This game helps your child learn the difference between one and two.

How to Play

Play a special game with your child showing her groups that have one, two, or many things in them. You can use small toys, books, paper cups, flowers, or other small safe things for this game. Encourage her to pick out the "group" of one. Put two objects together and ask her how many it is. Put one object out and ask her how many

it is now. Let her have a turn asking you how many. Play the game only as long as it is fun for both of you.

Homemade Toys That Teach

A Prop for Pretend Play

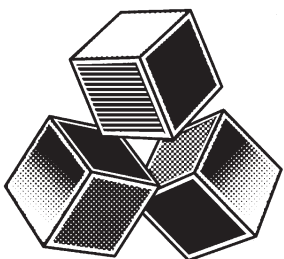
Isn't it nice to see your child's imagination develop? When he pretends he can be as powerful, as big, and as important as he wants to be, and this is a good feeling. He can practice being like a member of his family or a king, teacher, or police officer.

Imagination and pretend play are important. They help your child cope with his world and prepare for his future. They help him develop his creativity. And they are just plain fun. You can encourage his imagination and be a part of his pretend play by making a cardboard play place with him.

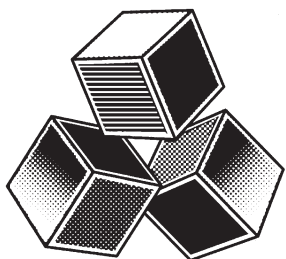
For the play place, you will need:

- ▶ A large cardboard box that you might get from a grocery or appliance store. The box should be large enough for your toddler to crawl inside
- ▶ Crayons, colored paper, streamers, balloons, and so forth for decorating the play place

The play place can be whatever your child wants it to be—a house, a spaceship, a boat, a cave, a fort, or all of these. Place the box so the open end is on the floor. Cut windows, portholes, or whatever he wants on the sides and back of the box. Let him decorate the play place however he wants. He may want you to write his name on the box or put a message or sign on it.



Your child's first school is in your home. The lessons you teach prepare him to learn even more when he starts preschool and kindergarten. Children who have been taught at home enjoy learning and usually learn faster when they start school.



Don't force your little one to get close to an unfamiliar or scary person or character. Let her take her time getting acquainted, and don't pressure her to participate.

Choosing Books for Young Children

The more you read to your child, the more he builds mental pictures in his brain. The more words and sentences your child understands, the more his language ability advances. You're taking advantage of the brain's wide-open window of opportunity for language development during this early childhood period—a wonderful, lifelong gift that will enable him to enjoy reading and learning. Read together often, every day if possible.

When you select books for young children:

- ▶ The subject should be familiar to your child. It should involve things in his world such as daily activities, interesting animals and plants, family relationships, playthings, and topics about which he might be curious.
- ▶ The storyline should be simple. Some books have only pictures and labels, which can also be fun for little ones. Your child will enjoy turning the pages with you, seeing the pictures, and talking to you about them.
- ▶ Two-year-olds enjoy counting books and alphabet books, as well as silly stories that appeal to their unique sense of humor. They like books that illustrate well-known children's songs. Nursery rhymes and fingerplays are also fun for children this age and older.
- ▶ The words in the book should be simple and clear, with just a few words on each page. Young children enjoy books in which the words are fun to say and are repeated.

- ▶ The pictures should be large, clear, and brightly colored. Very young children often like drawings better than photographs because they are easier to understand.
- ▶ Books made of sturdy paper or cardboard can be purchased inexpensively or borrowed from your library. Your child can turn the pages of these books more easily, and the pages will not tear.

Two Year Olds Show Their Feelings

Two-year-olds naturally show and tell you that they love you. Welcome and enjoy the expression of these feelings. You'll want to show your affection toward your little one too.

Show your child that you care for him even when he is angry, and that angry feelings are okay. Firmly prevent him from turning his feelings into angry action such as biting, kicking, and hitting. Do not give in to his unreasonable demands just to prevent angry outbursts. You might try to talk to him and find out more about why he is feeling angry. You may be able to change the situation that caused his anger or give him words to use to solve the problem himself.

Be patient. The good and loving relationship you have with your child will keep these angry times short.

Preparing Your Child for Special Occasions

Parents often are eager to have their children join in the fun of celebrations. But for the young child, these festive occasions may be happy, or they may be scary and upsetting.

Your young child may not want to talk to a strange Santa Claus or shake hands with a 5-foot-tall Easter bunny. She may not laugh when a neighborhood child in a witch costume swoops down upon her. She might not enjoy meeting new relatives at a family gathering. You can't protect your child from every frightening situation, but here are a few things you can do to prepare her:

- ▶ Talk to your child about where you are planning to go. Tell her what she will see and do there.
- ▶ Practice ahead of time, if possible. Show your child pictures of Santa before visiting him. Let her play with masks in preparation for Halloween. Before the family party, show her photographs and tell her about the relatives she may see.
- ▶ Before rushing into a gathering, observe the situation with your child from a safe distance. Let her watch other children meeting Santa or the Easter bunny, and give her reassurance with hugs and words. Don't force your little one to get close to an unfamiliar or scary person or character. Let her take her time getting acquainted, and don't pressure her to participate.

Keep Your Child from Choking

Children choke on small things they put in their mouths. Your child will explore his world by putting everything he can grab into his mouth. Here are some ways you can help your child avoid choking:

- ▶ Never leave small things in your child's reach, even for a moment.

- Do not feed your child small pieces of hard food such as nuts, popcorn, or hard candy.
- Look for small objects on the floor before you put your child down.
- Do not let your child run with food or lollipops in his mouth.
- Do not feed your child round food such as grapes or hot dogs cut into "coins." These round pieces can stick in your child's windpipe, cutting off his air supply.
- Do not allow children of this age to play with balloons.

Anemia

If your child seems pale and unusually tired, ask your doctor about anemia. Anemia is the most common warning of nutritional deficiency in children. Anemia can be a signal of disease or of a diet lacking in iron. Some forms of anemia are serious. They signal a problem with red cell production or major loss of blood. When you take your child to the doctor, ask about a test for hemoglobin or hematocrit to check your child for anemia.

Discipline with Time Out

When you use time out correctly, it can be a good way to handle those times when your child seems determined to disobey and nothing you do will stop her. Time out means putting your little one in a safe place away from you for a few minutes. This gives you a chance to calm down if you need to. It also lets your child know you are not going to let her continue her disobedient or naughty behavior. Time out should be used so that it does not make your child feel you don't love her or that you want to hurt her. Here are some important things to do to keep

time out as a guidance and discipline method, not punishment:

- Tell your child ahead of time, before a rule is broken, what time out is and how you will use it.
- Choose the time out place carefully. Use a safe, non-scary place such as a room, a chair, or part of a room. Never use a closet or place that is dangerous or frightening to your child.
- Let your child know why you are using time out and how long it will last. Explain to her before time out why she is being disciplined. Tell her you will come to get her when the time is up. Keep your promise.
- Keep time out short. For a young child, it should last one minute for each year of your child's age, no more than three minutes. Set a timer and be sure you follow your time limits. When the time is up, go in to your child and explain again in clear, simple words why she was placed by herself. Then, give her a hug and invite her to be with you or to go back to play with her friends.
- Try to stay calm. When you use time out or any type of discipline, be as calm as possible. Explain clearly to your child why you are limiting her. Follow through in a way that is firm but also shows that you love and care for her.

Other Responses to Misbehavior

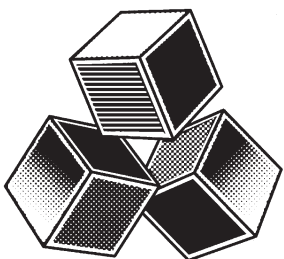
Any way you handle behavior problems must help your child develop self-control. First, be sure your child's actions are really misbehavior. Is she responding naturally for her age? Try to be realistic about your expectations. For example, she may hit, throw,

or bite because she can't express her feelings in words or can't wait to get what she wants. Here are a few tips for handling such situations:

- Fit your actions to the misbehavior; don't overreact.
- Supply another identical or similar toy if your child grabbed a toy. Young children often have trouble understanding ownership.
- Use "Do's" rather than "Don'ts." For example, say, "Please sit on your bottom," rather than "Don't stand on your chair!" Or, "Use your inside voice," rather than "Don't yell!"
- Redirect your child's attention. It doesn't matter whether you or your child wins the battle. In a power struggle, you lose! Avoid the battle by suggesting another interesting activity, such as climbing the library steps, going for an ice cream treat, or playing with another colorful object that makes interesting sounds.
- Keep a humorous, light touch. Get her to chase you into the clean-up area or toward the car to go home. Swoop her up into your arms, giggle, and nuzzle her tummy.
- Make the hated job into a game. One father took his child "shopping" for scattered toys with a shopping bag. Together they "bought" the toys that belonged to her, dropped them in the bag, and put away the "purchases" in the right places.

When There's Never Enough Time

Stress can be caused by a feeling that you have too much to do and not enough time. You can't even get all the necessary chores done, much less play with your child or take time for yourself. Managing your time better



Keep time out short. For a young child, it should last one minute for each year of your child's age, no more than three minutes. Set a timer and be sure you follow your time limits.

can help prevent stress. Here are some ideas:

- ▶ Make a list of everything you want to get done for one day or one week. Decide which things are most important and which ones can wait or don't have to be done at all. Be reasonable about the number of things you can do in the time you have.
- ▶ Write out a schedule for your day so you can aim for a time to finish each task. Think about how you'll do the task in the time you've planned.
- ▶ Group chores together if they need similar tools. Group all the chores that require going out or the ones that require someone else to care for your child.
- ▶ Figure out how much you really can do in the time you have. Make sure you build in time for two of the most important people in your life—your child and yourself.

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Contact

Carole A. Gnatuk, Ed.D., Extension Child Development Specialist

Adapted from a publication originally written by Dorothea Cudaback, D.S.W., and colleagues at the University of California Cooperative Extension.

Professionals at the University of Kentucky who have assisted in the preparation of the *Parent Express* series: Sandra Bastin, Ph.D., R.D., L.D.; Donna Clore, M.S.; Ruth Ann Crum, M.S.; Darlene Forester, Ph.D., R.D.; Starr Gantz, R.D.; Carole Gnatuk, Ed.D.; Peter Hesseldenz, M.A.; Janet Kurzynske, Ph.D., R.D.; Alex Lesueur, Jr., M.S.L.S.; Suzanne McGough, M.S., R.D.; Marilyn Peterson, R.N., B.S.N.; Larry Piercy, Ph.D.; Sam Quick, Ph.D.; Michael Rupured, M.S.; Tammy Stephenson, Ph.D.; Diane Strangis, M.S.; Janet Tietyen, Ph.D., R.D., L.D.



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