

Brain Building **TIPS** that Support Early Learning Domains



TODDLERS 1-3 YEARS

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vrom™



Creative Expression

Language & Literacy

Math & Science

**Motor Skills &
Physical Development**

**Social & Emotional
Development**



Toddlers are eager to explore the world around them, and you can help their brains grow strong! Toddlers learn best through back-and-forth interactions and joyful play during everyday routines with you. **Try these fun Vroom Tips™ to support these areas of development:** physical, cognitive, social and emotional, language and literacy, and creative expression.



Brain Building TIPS

that Support Early Learning Domains

 CREATIVE EXPRESSION



Tip

1-3
YEARS

Paper Exploration

Give your child a piece of paper and encourage them to explore things they can do with it. Can they fold it? Rip it? What other ideas can they come up with? Talk back and forth about what they notice. What are they doing? What does the paper look like now?

Brainy Background™

When you focus on how your child is creating, and not just what they create, you encourage them to be an active learner and to keep trying. Exploring materials firsthand helps them see the impact they have on the world around them, which supports their independence.

Tip

1-3
YEARS

Making Marks

As your child explores writing or drawing, comment on what they're doing, instead of how pretty it is or what it looks like, "You made a big red mark!" These types of comments draw their attention to the process of making marks and ask them to talk about their drawing.

Brainy Background™

When you let your child freely explore writing and drawing and praise their effort (not what it looks like), they feel supported to keep trying and learning. The more opportunities they have with mark making, the more confident they will be to try drawing and writing later.

Tip

1½-3
YEARS

Music Makers

Add uncooked beans or pasta to a container that has a lid, tape the lid closed, and show your child how to shake the container to make music. Try shaking fast and slow. You can say, "Go!" to start and then, "Stop!" See what other instruments you can make from what you have at home.

Brainy Background™

As your child explores music and rhythm, they become more familiar with all kinds of sounds, which will help them as they begin to talk. They're also building self-control when they practice how to shake and stop.

Tip

2½-3
YEARS

Treasure Box

Give your child a small box and tell them it's a "Treasure Box," made to keep very special things. With their help write their name on top of the box. Talk back and forth about things they might keep inside. Store it in a place they can reach so they can use it.

Brainy Background™

Your back-and-forth conversation about treasures gives your child the chance to express their ideas and build their vocabulary. With conversations like these, you're helping them become a better communicator.



Brain Building TIPS

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 LANGUAGE & LITERACY



Tip

1-2
YEARS

Words All Around

Your child learns best from what you say and do, so read everything you can out loud. Read signs outside, recipes, or ads in a paper or magazine. Be sure to point at what you're reading too. Do they imitate any of your words or sounds? Do they point, too? Go back and forth with them, pointing and reading out loud.

Brainy Background™

Introducing your child to different things to read helps them make the earliest connections between written words and what they stand for. These kind of back and forth chats, even before they have words, build their communication skills too.

Tip

1-2
YEARS

Sing, Rhyme, Repeat

Help your child recognize patterns and familiar words by singing simple songs with lots of repetition or rhymes. Can't remember one? Make up your own! Encourage them to join in by repeating the words or by adding their own ideas.

Brainy Background™

The more you sing with your child, the more they're able to predict sounds and words and join in. Songs and sound games are great for building early language and reading skills. They make connections between sounds and words and build their vocabulary in a fun and playful way.

Tip

1-2½
YEARS

Multiplying Words

When your child starts to say words or make sounds that could be words, connect them to more words. If they say "nose," you can say, "There's your nose and there's mine." If they say "beep, beep," you can say, "The horns on the car go beep, beep." Later you can ask, "What sound do cars make?"

Brainy Background™

Children learn to speak by hearing you connect the sounds they make with words. And they learn more words when you add your words to theirs. In this way their brains become more efficient and faster at processing sounds—the building blocks of speech.

Tip

1½-2½
YEARS

Missing Word

Does your child have a favorite story you tell them or song that you sing? When they do, play Missing Word. Tell the story or sing the song and leave out one of the words like, "Row, row, row your ____?" Can they fill in the missing word?

Brainy Background™

"Missing Word" helps your child pay attention to what you're saying and it builds their vocabulary and working memory. You can make the game more complex by leaving out a word in the middle of the sentence or song, not just the last word.

Brain Building TIPS

that Support Early Learning Domains

 MATH & SCIENCE



Tip

1-2½
YEARS

Fitting Cups

Give your child safe containers of different sizes to play with. You can use measuring cups, bowls, or whatever is handy. Encourage them to try placing some of the containers inside others. Talk together about what they're doing. "Two cups fit inside the big pot." "Which others fit? Which ones don't?" Ask questions to keep it going!

Brainy Background™

Your child learns ideas like numbers, shapes, and sizes by using them in simple ways like this. Talking about what your child is doing also helps them learn new words. Plus, it motivates them to keep exploring and learning!

Tip

1-3
YEARS

Nature Builder

Use outside play as an opportunity to explore how things work. Encourage your child to find natural building blocks like small sticks, rocks, and leaves. Take turns placing the objects on top of each other and talk about what you notice, "The leaf won't stay on top. What else could we use?"

Brainy Background™

As your child builds, they're thinking like a scientist and testing out ideas to learn more about balance, size, and cause and effect. Asking questions promotes critical thinking skills. They're more likely to remember and use what they learn when they're engaged in hands-on learning.

Tip

1½-3
YEARS

Texture Talk

Use objects to explore the sense of touch. Ask your child, "Is this avocado rough and bumpy? What about this banana? Is it smooth?" Find other things for them to touch, like a cracker or bread, and ask if they're bumpy or smooth.

Brainy Background™

Children learn from their senses. When you give children experiences exploring how things feel, you help them organize and put words to their experiences. If you let them explore and come to conclusions, you help them learn like a scientist.

Tip

1½-3
YEARS

Animal Bites

Sometimes mealtime can be a challenge. Encourage your child to eat by offering them choices about how they eat. You can say something like, "Do you want two big dinosaur bites or four little bird bites?" Count the bites together and ask them to think of their own "Animal Bites" eating ideas.

Brainy Background™

When you help your child to make their own choices, you show them they can do even difficult things. This helps them take on challenges and develop confidence. Counting "Animal Bites" together is a fun math experience for them too!

Brain Building **TIPS** that Support Early Learning Domains

MOTOR SKILLS & PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



Tip

1-1½
YEARS

Exercise Buddy

Invite your child to help you exercise. Hold them while you do sit-ups, first fast and then slow. Talk about your speed with them. Do leg lifts and raise your leg above their head then back to the ground, talking about their size as you do. What else can you do?

Brainy Background™

Exercise and other physical play deepens your relationship with your child, building the trust and love between you. Your loving relationship is fuel for their brain.

Tip

1-1½
YEARS

Foot Walking

Before you put on your child's shoes, have them go foot walking with you by putting their foot on top of yours and walking together. Can you walk fast and slow? Make up word games for foot walking, like, "go, go fast, fast; go, go slow, slow."

Brainy Background™

"Foot Walking" helps your child improve their balance. It also helps them learn about size—your feet are bigger, theirs are smaller—as well as about speed. Together, you can go faster or slower.

Tip

1½-2½
YEARS

Body Dance

Turn on music or sing with your child and dance with different parts of your body! "Let's dance with our fingers" as you move your fingers across the table. "Now, let's dance with our arms" as you move them over your head. "Can you make your feet dance?" Can they make their face dance? Have fun coming up with different moves and take turns copying one another.

Brainy Background™

It takes focus and self-control for your child to concentrate on moving only one part of their body. Switching among movements also takes flexible thinking. Children learn these skills best by being active and having fun.

Tip

2-3
YEARS

Up and Over

Ask your child to find an object like a stick or rock and place it on the ground near you. Encourage them to explore different ways of moving over it: Can they jump? Hop over on just one foot? Run and then jump? Take turns jumping with them and talk together about how far you both go.

Brainy Background™

It takes focus and self-control for your child to manage how their body moves, as well as flexible thinking to come up with different ideas. Fun experiences with math ideas like space and distance help them develop a foundation for learning now and in the future.

Brain Building TIPS

that Support Early Learning Domains

SOcial & EMoTional DEvELOPMENT



Tip

1-3
YEARS

Peek-a-Mood

Does your toddler shout “No!” whenever they’re angry? Naming their feelings can help. In a calm moment, try this. Cover your face and then reveal a big expression. It can be angry, surprised, or happy. Ask your child to guess the feeling. Take turns. Talk about times you have each felt that way.

Brainy Background™

Your child can learn to manage angry feelings. Putting words to emotions lets your child share with you how they feel. Through practice, your child can learn to recognize and express their feelings. They can also learn to understand how other people might feel.

Tip

1½-2½
YEARS

Pretend Laugh

Ask your child to “pretend” laugh and laugh with them. Then you can do “pretend” cry and ask them to pretend to cry along. There is no end to the pretending you can do—pretend angry, sad, surprised, sleepy, and so on.

Brainy Background™

With this simple game, you help your child pay attention and learn to “read” different emotional expressions. This skill is important in learning to understand the likes, dislikes and views of others, which helps improve social relationships.

Tip

1½-3
YEARS

Show Me Happy

Stuck waiting somewhere? Make a happy face and say, “That’s happy.” Then ask your child, “Can you show me happy?” How many ways can they express happy on their face? What about sad, curious, or surprised?

Brainy Background™

With this game, your child is learning to “read” and understand the emotional expressions of others and themselves. Understanding how faces express feelings is a foundation for understanding the perspectives of others, which is an important skill in life and in school.

Tip

2-3
YEARS

Use Your Words

Does your child get upset and start to cry or whine? Gently remind them to use their words to say what is bothering them or what they want. If they’re too upset to talk, try to guess what they want to say until they let you know you got it.

Brainy Background™

Helping your child learn to use words to share upset feelings is one of the best tools you can give them. This helps your child managing these feelings and express them in ways that others can understand and responded to.



Visit [GrowYoungBrains.org](https://www.GrowYoungBrains.org) for more information on brain-building resources for child care programs.