Little ones under 3

Pack 2: Routines & transitions

Five play ideas for babies (0–1) and toddlers (1–3), at home or at nursery.

How to use these cards

Each card has a toddler version and a simpler version for babies. Children develop at their own pace, so go by what your child is doing, not just their age. These are invitations, never tests.

Keeping it safe

Stay within arm's reach the whole time. Anything smaller than a 2p coin can choke a young child, so check every object against a real 2p if you're unsure.

A look, reach, point, sound, sign or walking away all count as answers. Stop or change the activity if your child seems overwhelmed, and offer more if they're seeking more.

I'm a parent navigating the SEND system, not a lawyer or a doctor. I share what works for us and translate the rules to save you time. Sources for these ideas are listed on the **Little ones under 3** page at little-wires.co.uk.

Idea 2.1

Now and next picture cards

Toddlers (1–3)

Show two pictures: “Now: bath. Next: milk.” Turn over or put away the “now” card when that part is finished.

For babies (0–1)

Use the same short song or phrase every time for the same routine (a “nappy song”), so the baby can start to predict what happens.

You’ll need

Photos of your own routines, or printed cards. Blank Now / Next templates are at the back of this pack.

Safety

Large, sturdy cards. No pins or Blu Tack within reach; fix wall cards above your child’s reach.

A look, reach, point, sound, sign or walking away all count as answers. Stop or change the activity if your child seems overwhelmed, and offer more if they’re seeking more.

Idea 2.2

Warning before change

Toddlers (1–3)

Give a warning before stopping, using your child's name: "Sam, two more goes, then coat on." A sand timer held by the adult, or a "finished" sign, can help.

For babies (0–1)

Tell the baby what is about to happen before you pick them up or change them ("Up we go…"), and pause.

You'll need

None, or a large sand timer kept in the adult's hand.

Safety

Sand timers have small parts inside. Adult holds it; keep out of reach.

A look, reach, point, sound, sign or walking away all count as answers. Stop or change the activity if your child seems overwhelmed, and offer more if they're seeking more.

Idea 2.3

Comfort object comes too

Toddlers (1–3)

Let your child bring a chosen comfort item through changes: to nursery, in the car, at the doctor's.

For babies (0–1)

Keep their comforter or familiar blanket nearby during changes, at awake times only.

You'll need

Your child's own comfort object.

Safety

Check for loose eyes, buttons or shedding fur. Nothing loose in the cot: "a clear cot is a safe cot".

A look, reach, point, sound, sign or walking away all count as answers. Stop or change the activity if your child seems overwhelmed, and offer more if they're seeking more.

Idea 2.4

A calm corner

Toddlers (1–3)

Set up a quiet, softer space (cushions, a blanket over two chairs, low light) your child can choose to go to. Never used as a punishment.

For babies (0–1)

A quiet cuddle spot with dimmer light and less noise when the baby is overwhelmed.

You'll need

Cushions, a blanket, a favourite book.

Safety

Nothing heavy that could fall. Don't tie den blankets with cords. Babies don't sleep on soft cushions. Don't make glitter or bead "calming jars" for under-3s.

A look, reach, point, sound, sign or walking away all count as answers. Stop or change the activity if your child seems overwhelmed, and offer more if they're seeking more.

Idea 2.5

Body-part game at changing time

Toddlers (1–3)

While dressing or changing, name and point to body parts: “Where’s your nose? Here’s my nose.” Let your child point to yours if they’d rather.

For babies (0–1)

Gently name and touch the baby’s toes, hands and tummy during changes, watching for signs they enjoy it or want it to stop.

You’ll need

None.

Safety

Never leave a baby on a raised changing table; change on the floor if you can. Respect “no touch” signals; some children find light touch uncomfortable.

A look, reach, point, sound, sign or walking away all count as answers. Stop or change the activity if your child seems overwhelmed, and offer more if they’re seeking more.

Blank Now / Next cards

Draw, write or stick a photo in each box. Cut along the lines if you like.

Now	Next

Now	Next

The 2p rule

Anything smaller than a 2p coin can choke a young child. Check every object, every time.

Worried? Talk to your health visitor or GP.

If something worries you, including your child losing skills they used to have, or how they move, communicate, play with others, hear or see, you don’t need to wait for a review.

More free guides and activities at **little-wires.co.uk**