Little ones under 3

Pack 1: Choices & communication

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 1.1

This or that?

Toddlers (1–3)

Hold up two real things (“Teddy or ball?”). Wait at least 10 seconds. Accept a look, reach, point, sound or sign as the answer, then name it: “Ball! You want the ball.”

For babies (0–1)

Hold two objects apart, one each side. Watch which one the baby looks at or reaches for, then give it to them and name it.

You’ll need

Two favourite toys, or two snack options such as a cup of milk and a cup of water.

Safety

Both objects bigger than a 2p. Food only at your child’s normal eating stage, sitting down.

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 1.2

Copy me, copy you

Toddlers (1–3)

Copy your child's sound, movement or play action (tapping, rocking, a "brrm"). Pause and see if they do it again. Your child leads.

For babies (0–1)

Face to face, copy the baby's coos, babbles, smiles or hand movements, then pause.

You'll need

None.

Safety

No special risks. If your child turns away, that means "finished".

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 1.3

Song choice cards

Toddlers (1–3)

Offer two to four picture cards, one per song (a star for “Twinkle Twinkle”, a bus for “Wheels on the Bus”). Your child picks by pointing, looking, handing you a card or making a sound.

For babies (0–1)

Sing a favourite song and pause before a key word or action, so the baby can show they know what comes next (a kick, smile or sound).

You’ll need

Drawn or printed cards, laminated or covered in sticky-back plastic.

Safety

Postcard size or bigger. Throw away any card that peels.

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 1.4

Peepo

Toddlers (1–3)

Hide your face, or a large toy, under a cloth and let your child pull it away. Some children prefer to do the hiding.

For babies (0–1)

Cover your face with your hands or a small cloth and reappear: “Peepo!”

You’ll need

A muslin square or tea towel.

Safety

No bigger than a tea towel. Never over the baby’s face, never left in a cot. No long scarves.

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 1.5

Sharing a book your way

Toddlers (1–3)

Let your child choose the book, turn the pages, skip pages or keep going back to one favourite picture. Comment on what they point at rather than asking lots of questions.

For babies (0–1)

Look at a board book together. Chewing and patting the book are fine.

You'll need

Board books, picture books, wordless books, your free Bookstart Baby pack.

Safety

No books with stuck-on eyes or other small parts.

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.

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**