

back on the shelf with the other blocks. At the same time, toddlers have no need to be thorough, efficient, or exact. Even in a well-organized and labeled play space, toddlers participate in putting toys away in their own particular manner (“Me do it!”) and at their own pace, as the following anecdotes illustrate:

At the end of choice time, Mario’s caregiver suggests, “Let’s put these books back on the shelf, Mario.” Mario picks up an armload of books from the pile of cushions where he and several other children have been looking at them, carries them over to the low bookshelf, and places the whole armful in a pile on the shelf.



John picks up the empty food containers, plates, and utensils he has spread out on the table in the house area; puts them into the wooden refrigerator; closes the door; and looks with satisfaction at the now empty table. “Aw gone!” he says.



Lydia stands at the sink with several paintbrushes. She holds each brush under the running water for quite some time, watches the colors swirl down the drain, and then “paints” the counter next to the sink with water.



Blake loads some blocks he has been playing with into a wagon, pulls the wagon to the block shelf, turns over the

wagon, dumps out the blocks next to the shelf, rights the wagon, and heads back to load some more blocks into his wagon.

Putting toys away works best when caregivers put toys away along with the children and are willing to accept toddlers’ ideas about how to do things. Caregivers should remain calm and positive and not expect toddlers to handle the cleanup process all on their own or even to completely pick up any one area or group of items. With patient support and encouragement, toddlers can participate in the process of cleanup and enjoy the contact, interaction, and satisfaction it affords. After a good effort on everyone’s part, caregivers move on to the next part of the day. After all, they can always complete cleanup while children nap or after they have left for the day.

Understanding Outside Time

At outside time, two nonmobile infants, Tabor and Lizzy, are wiggling and cooing as they lie on a blanket. Sheila, their caregiver, sits next to them on the grass holding a third infant, Kaylee, who is sucking her thumb and gazing at Tabor and Lizzy. “Here we are outside, looking all around,” Sheila sings to all three babies as she gently rocks Kaylee.





Outside time allows infants and toddlers to extend their exploration and play to an outdoor setting.

Hans and Thomas, who are both at the creeper-crawler stage, sit on a blanket spread under a tree on the playground. From a basket of objects beside them, Hans chooses a large pine cone to hold, and Thomas picks out two hand-sized rocks to hold and bang together. Sandy, their caregiver, sits next to them, watching as they explore. She also watches Emma, a nonmobile infant who is lying on the blanket and looking up at the leaves on a low-hanging branch.

“You see the leaves, Emma,” she says softly. Emma waves her arms and kicks her legs.

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Sarah, an older infant, crawls over to the chainlink fence that surrounds the play yard. She sits next to it, grasps one of the links, and wiggles the fence back and forth as she watches the preschool children playing in the tree house in the adjacent play yard. In

the meantime, infant Amanda crawls to Robin, her caregiver; sits in Robin's lap; and watches Sarah at the fence. Looking up at Robin, Amanda points in Sarah's direction. "You see Sarah over at the fence," Robin comments. Amanda leaves Robin's lap to crawl across the grass toward Sarah. Close by, Alejandro, another infant, crawls up the two low steps of the deck, sits on the deck for a bit, crawls back down the steps, and crawls back up again. As he pauses again on the deck, Robin says, "Alejandro, you've been crawling up and down the steps!"



At outside time, Tessa, a young toddler, throws balls into an empty plastic wading pool. When all the balls are in the pool, she climbs into the pool with the balls, sits down, and throws the balls out. She bangs on the empty pool with her hands and her heels, climbs out, retrieves each ball, and throws it into the pool again.



At the sandbox, Riley, a young toddler, scoops handfuls of sand into a bucket while Carole, his caregiver, holds the bucket steady. When Carole puts one hand into the bucket, Riley laughs as he pours sand over her hand. Joel, an older toddler, sits on the edge of the sandbox near Carole, shoveling sand into a small bucket he has placed between his feet. When the bucket is full, he dumps out the sand and starts over again.



Crane and L.J., two toddlers, travel back and forth between the foot of the beech tree, where they have discovered some stones, and Carole, their caregiver, who is perched on the edge of the sandbox holding Riley's bucket. On each of their trips, they bring Carole a stone. "Big," says Crane, handing her a stone. "This is a big stone," Carole agrees. "My big," says L.J. "Your stone is big too, L.J.," she says. The children pile their stones in front of Carole and then head back to the beech tree for more.



Toddlers Maria and Samuel each climb into one of the two child-sized cartons they have helped their caregiver carry outside. They laugh as they first squat down in their carton, jump up, and then climb out. They repeat the same action sequence several more times.



Nanette, a caregiver, and two of her toddlers, Lindy and Peter, spread out a long sheet of white butcher paper on the grass. Nanette puts a rock at each corner of the paper to help hold it in place. Then Peter pulls the "paint wagon" over to a spot near the paper (the wagon contains some containers of tempera paint, a bucket of water, and several kinds of brushes). Peter and Lindy each select a brush, dip it into one of the paint containers, squat next to the paper on either side of the paint wagon, and paint. They use whole-arm motions to make large painting strokes.

Outside time allows infants and toddlers to extend their exploration and play to an outdoor setting. As at choice time indoors, children make choices about what to do outdoors. Children find the outdoors rich in sensory-motor experiences for constructing new knowledge. At outside time, infants and toddlers begin to gain a sense of distance as they experience what is up close — spiders, worms, grass — and what is far away — the treetops, the house next door, the clouds. They have the rare opportunity to be big compared to ants, grasshoppers, birds, squirrels, and dandelions. They can freely move, throw things, and play in water and snow. They gather and collect leaves, twigs, rocks, walnuts, and seed pods. In the sunlight, they soak up the vitamin D they need to absorb calcium for strong bones and teeth.

Overall, spending daily time outdoors in all seasons positively affects the way even very young children eat, sleep, and feel. Properly dressed, they need to spend time outside every day in all but the most extreme weather conditions. Whether a child care program is in a cold, hot, or moderate climate, caregivers can find an appropriate time each day to take the children outdoors. Where this time period occurs in program's daily routine may shift with the change in seasons. Midday, when the sun is at its height, might work best when it is cold, while early morning may be most comfortable in climates where the heat builds up later in the day. Some programs have outside time at the very beginning and/or end of the program day to minimize the number of times children

have to get (un)dressed in outdoor gear. Caregivers ask families to provide adequate outdoor clothing to keep children dry as they slosh through a puddle, protect their heads from the sun as they splash about in a wading pool, or keep them insulated as they roll around in a mound of soft snow. Caregivers should also have adequate outerwear so that concerns about their own comfort do not overrule their judgments about what is best for young children.

Outdoor play spaces appropriately designed and equipped for infants' and toddlers' outside time were described in Chapter 4. To sum up, for infants the play space includes materials and equipment that encourage movement, things that flutter in the wind, a variety of crawling surfaces, water-play materials, and things that are visually interesting. For toddlers the play space includes natural features like hills and boulders; things to climb and swing on; things to get inside of, crawl through, and balance on; sand and water; toys to rock, ride, push, and pull; and items such as balls, beanbags, chalk, and painting materials. Occasionally at outside time, caregivers, infants, and toddlers take a walk around the block, to a nearby park, a neighbor's garden, or a local shop.

During outside time, infants and toddlers observe, explore, and play on their own or with others at their own pace and level of interest and development. Depending on temperament, some children cautiously approach outdoor sounds, textures, sights, and sensations, while



You never know what excitement you'll encounter during outside time! These toddlers love to watch and hear the nearby construction workers and trucks behind the safety of a fence.

others take to outdoor play with energy and curiosity about every new creature and experience.

Nonmobile infants like Tabor, Lizzy, Kaylee, and Emma (p. 359 and p. 362) spend most of their outside time lying on their backs while gazing at nearby sights, wiggling, stretching, and reaching for or grasping at objects. They enjoy feeling the warmth of the sun and the movement of

the air. They also move from place to place in their caregiver's arms or in a stroller.

Mobile infants like Hans, Thomas, Sarah, and Alejandro (pp. 362–363) sit and explore objects or materials and examine growing things. They crawl across the grass, up and down steps, over small hills, and into large boxes. They pull themselves up to stand by holding on to a low bench, a picnic table, or the edge of the sandbox.

During outside time,



a nonmobile infant lies on her back and moves her arms and legs while looking at the sky,



a young toddler discovers a bug, and



older (and more mobile) infants are gently pushed in a swing,



an older toddler rides a tricycle.

With help, they swing in a swing or go for gentle wagon rides.

Young toddlers use the clear expanses of the outdoor play area for walking, carrying, pushing, climbing, throwing, and exploring. While their movements may be awkward, outside they have lots of space for maneuvering, falling down, and picking themselves up. Older toddlers, who have become pretty steady on their feet, take advantage of the outdoor space to run, ride, climb, swing, slide, throw, dig, paint, play in water, fill and empty, collect stones, make up simple games, and grapple with problems — how to cover the picnic table with a sheet to make a house, how to get the riding toy back up the hill, and what to do when two toddlers want to fill the same dump truck with walnuts.

How Caregivers Support Children at Outside Time

Caregivers pay close attention to children's outdoor exploration and play, offer children physical and emotional support, and interact with children in enjoying all the features of the outdoor environment. The following specific strategies help them carry out this role:

- Provide loose materials for children's comfort and play.
- Provide a variety of experiences for nonmobile infants.
- Use the same general support strategies used at choice time.
- Observe nature with children.
- Bring outside time to a gentle close.

Provide loose materials for children's comfort and play

Nonmobile infants spend most of their time outdoors lying on blankets spread on the ground, so caregivers keep some clean blankets in a basket or diaper bag that they can easily grab on their way out to the play yard. Because some older, mobile infants may at first be hesitant to crawl or cruise around outdoors, they often appreciate being given a basket of interesting objects to explore while sitting on a blanket, until they work up their courage to move across the grass, up the steps, or over the stone walkway to find their own things to explore.

The baskets of playthings for mobile infants can be kept ready by the door to the play yard. Caregivers can place other loose playthings or materials in wagons so toddlers at the “Me do it!” stage can help to transport them outside, as Peter does when he pulls the paint wagon outside (p. 363). Caregivers can also provide small buckets, baskets, or cloth bags with handles, and toddlers can use these to carry out their sand toys, tennis balls, streamers, bubble-blowing equipment, and playground chalk.

Provide a variety of experiences for nonmobile infants

While mobile infants and toddlers generally find lots of things to explore and play with outside in the presence of their trusted caregivers, nonmobile infants depend on caregivers to put them in some location where they can easily stretch and wiggle and watch interesting things.