



BATHTIME FOR TODDLERS

DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



ABOUT THIS ROUTINE:

Bathtime is a great opportunity to support STEM learning for your toddler! Talk about STEM ideas and use STEM words as you bathe your child.

Narrate what your toddler is experiencing, describing the **properties** of what they **touch, see, and feel**. Talk about the water, how it's **warm, wet, and moves when they touch it**. Talk about the washcloth, how it's **soft**, and gets **heavy** when it soaks up water. Talk about bath toys together, describing their colors, textures, and what happens when they go in the water. Do they sink or float? What happens when they squeeze them?

"The soap is so **slippery**! Is the water **warm or cold**? Your washcloth is really **wet and squishy** now!"

As you bathe your toddler, encourage them to interact with the water. Ask questions like, "What happens when you squeeze the sponge?" or "Can you **fill** the cup and **dump** it out?" When they **repeat an action**, like pouring, splashing, or squeezing, they are **investigating**! These are the ways your toddler shows you they are curious and experimenting.

STEM LEARNING AREAS:

Physical Science: Concepts related to objects or things, what they do, and how they move

- **Structure and Properties of Materials:** Understanding characteristics of things and how those characteristics impact what things do
- **States of Matter:** Everything around us is made of matter, which can be a solid (like ice), a liquid (like water), or a gas (like steam).

Engineering: Figuring out how things work and using materials to design, build, test, and improve solutions to problems

Every child is different. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested daily routine. These are only suggested activity adaptations. Consider consulting your child's care team first.



Follow your child's lead and interests. Enthusiastically ask your child questions about what they are doing and what they like.



Answer your child's questions. If you do not know the answer, work together with your child to discover the answer.



Encourage your child to participate in the activity as much as possible. Praise your child's efforts and successes.



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ADAPTATIONS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

DO NOT leave children unsupervised during bath time or while playing with water. Children can drown in 1 inch of water.

GENERAL BATHTIME TIPS

- Test the temperature of the water before placing your child in the bathtub or basket
- Ensure there are no electronics nearby that could accidentally fall in the bathwater
- To prevent mold growth, be sure to use child AND water safe toys
- For an infant with no or very little head control or who has rigid muscle tone, consider using a cleaning wipe instead of soap and water as an alternative

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENT

- To help position your child for bath time, place your child in a plastic basket or child bathtub
- Add a waterproof plastic mirror to the edge of the bathtub or basket
- Add grippers to the bottom of the basket or bathtub

MATERIALS

- Use long or bigger handled toys for easier grasping
- Put household objects and toys into a basket or container within reach of your child
- Offer high contrast household objects and toys for better visual discrimination
- For easier grasping, adapt water toys by building up the handles or creating grip straps using household items (pool noodles)

INTERACTIONS OR INSTRUCTION

- Provide hand-over-hand support to help your child explore water better
- Narrate/sign your child's actions as they experiment with the water ("Wow! The spoon disappeared under the bubbles when you dropped it.")
- Use a variety of methods of communication (sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage your child
- Use pictures or icons to signal next steps or each step of a sequence
- Communicate with your child at eye level
- Speak or sign slowly, emphasize keywords, and wait for a response
- Praise your child's efforts with words, facial expression, or body language
- Make eye contact and smile as you talk to your child



Adaptations are simple changes you can make to your child's space, toys, or activities to help them stay engaged and learn STEM ideas and words during daily routines.

Quick Tip:

Communication may include the use of words, signs, gestures, and different types of cues, such as touch, object, movement, or visual.





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ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

1 – WATER TEMPERATURE INVESTIGATOR



Description: Help your toddler recognize **temperature** by talking about **warm and cool water**. Whether bathing your child in a bathtub, sink, or basket, add warmer or cooler water or **ice cubes** to the bathwater and invite your toddler to notice how the **water feels** and **changes**.

What My Child Is Learning!

Children learn best by interacting with people and objects. Introduce STEM words, ask questions, and encourage them to make connections between words and real-life experiences. This helps children develop fundamental critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Before helping your toddler into the bath, let them **touch the water with their hand**. Ask: "How does this water feel? Is it **warm or cool**? Then run a little **cool water** and let them touch that too. Ask: "Which one do you like better?"

As you bathe your child, adjust the **water temperature** and describe what is happening: "I am adding cooler water. How does that **feel** now? Is it still **warm**?" Try adding **ice cubes** to the water and encourage your toddler to touch them. Narrate what they are experiencing: "The **ice is cold**! What happens to the **water** when we put the **ice** in? Is it **cooler** now?"

Connect the experience to weather and the world outside: "Remember when we felt the **cold rain**? Water can feel lots of different ways! What does our bathwater feel like today?"

Watch for your toddler's cues. They may show curiosity by turning toward an object, pointing, or wanting to add more ice and **pour again and again**. When they repeat an action, they are investigating! Use open-ended questions to encourage them to explore what interests them most: "What do you think will happen if we add more ice?"



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ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

2 – WATER VOLUME INVESTIGATOR



Description: Help your toddler recognize **volume** by **measuring how much water** is needed to **fill different sized** cups and containers. As your toddler plays with pouring water from one container to another, talk about **full** and **empty**, **more** and **less**, and which containers hold **more** or **less** water.

What My Child Is Learning!

Children learn best by interacting with people and objects. Introduce STEM words, ask questions, and encourage them to make connections between words and real-life experiences. This helps children develop fundamental critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as math skills.

Before bathtime, gather a few containers of **different sizes**, like cups, bowls, or plastic containers. Let your toddler look at them and hold them. Ask: "Which cup do you think is **bigger**? Which one is **smaller**? Which one do you think **holds more** water?"

During bathtime, encourage your toddler to **fill** and **pour** between containers. As your toddler explores, introduce words like **full**, **empty**, **more**, **less**, **half full**, and **overflow**. Ask open-ended questions to encourage them to **predict** and **investigate**: "What **would happen** if you poured the water from the **bigger** cup into the **smaller** cup?" "Which cup holds **more water**? **Less water**?" "How many scoops do you think it will take to fill the **big cup**?" Introduce a colander or strainer and ask: "What do you **think will happen** when we **pour** the water through this?"

Watch for your toddler's cues. They may show curiosity by reaching for a new container, pointing to the water, or **pouring again and again** to see **what happens**. When they repeat an action, they are investigating! Follow their lead, give them time to explore, and use open-ended questions to keep the conversation going.



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ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Consider taking these explorations outdoors in a pool or water table
- Check out these books about bathtime:
 - *Time for a Bath* by Phillis Gershator
 - *Bathtime* by New Holland Publishers
 - *Good Night Bath Time* by Adam Gamble & Mark Jasper
 - *Splish! Splash! Bath Time* by Little Hippo Books

