

# Playing Ball with Your Two Year Old..What's the Catch?

A typical motor skill you can look for around the age of 2 years, is the ability for your child to attempt to overhand throw and catch a ball. The ability to play catch can be helpful for the child to develop other skills, such as hand-eye coordination and interaction with the environment while tracking an object. This playful skill can also help the child begin to find their preference for "handedness" – either right or left hand dominance. Ball play, while a seemingly simple activity, can be extremely beneficial in the development of various skills for your growing toddler! Here are some fun additions to a game of catch that can encourage development across multiple domains.



## Cognitive Skills

- Have your child follow a two-step command such as "Pick up the ball and throw it."
- Instruct your child to throw a specific ball out of many choices. For example, "Throw me the big green ball."
- Practice counting the number of throws with your child.



## Fine Motor Skills

- Use smaller balls to encourage use of small muscles in the hands.
- Encourage your child to alternate hands when throwing the ball.
- If available, you can include balls of various textures to allow your child to explore. This could include baseballs, rubber bouncy balls, or whiffle balls.
- Allow your child to use various forms of movement patterns when playing.



## Social Skills

- Catch is a great way to learn to play with others and to practice taking turns.
- Encourage children to learn others' names by stating something like, "Throw the ball to Darius!"



## Speech and Language

- Ask your child to name the ball they want to play with (i.e. "small red ball").
- Play the "Name Game," where your child says the name of the person they are throwing to.
- Encourage your child to follow verbal instructions, such as "throw now!" and "catch the tennis ball!"
- You and your child can narrate what you are doing together, like "catch ball" or "throw to Mom."

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## References

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