

The Rainy Day Toddler Play Planner

Forty low-prep play ideas, a weekly rhythm
and a play kit that lives in one box.

AGES 1-4 · LOW PREP · SCREEN-LIGHT

A play menu + six printable worksheets

STUDIO SAMPLE · GENERAL PLAY GUIDANCE, NOT MEDICAL OR DEVELOPMENTAL ADVICE



Play is the work. You just need a plan for the wet days.

Toddlers do not need more toys. They need a grown-up with a few ideas ready before the rain starts. This planner is that list, plus a rhythm to hang it on.

The CDC's milestone guidance for two-year-olds reads like a play list: ball play, problem-solving toys, pretend play, simple art, songs and outdoor exploration. [1] Early-years educators add that messy and sensory play builds fine-motor skill, focus and curiosity at the same time. [3] The AAP's advice on screens is about balance rather than a number: keep screen-free times and places so media never crowds out sleep, movement and play. [2] This planner turns all of that into a rainy day you can actually run.



By the end, you will have...

A one-box play kit, a menu of forty ideas sorted by energy level, a weekly rhythm, a toy-rotation tracker and a log of what your child actually loved, which is the only list that matters.

How to use this edition

Read pages 4-8 to set up the kit and the safety rules. Pages 9-16 are the play menu. Pages 17-23 turn it into a rhythm, with a worked week. Print the worksheets on pages 24-29 and keep the summary on page 30.

A STUDIO SAMPLE, READ THIS FIRST

Created by Forgewick in September 2026 to show the quality of our ebook work. It is general play guidance for typically developing children aged roughly one to four, not medical, developmental or safety certification advice: children differ, so supervise every activity, adapt materials to your child and talk to your doctor or health visitor about any developmental concern. A partner edition is built from the creator's own play ideas, age focus and audience questions.

Four sections. One box, forty ideas, no scrolling.

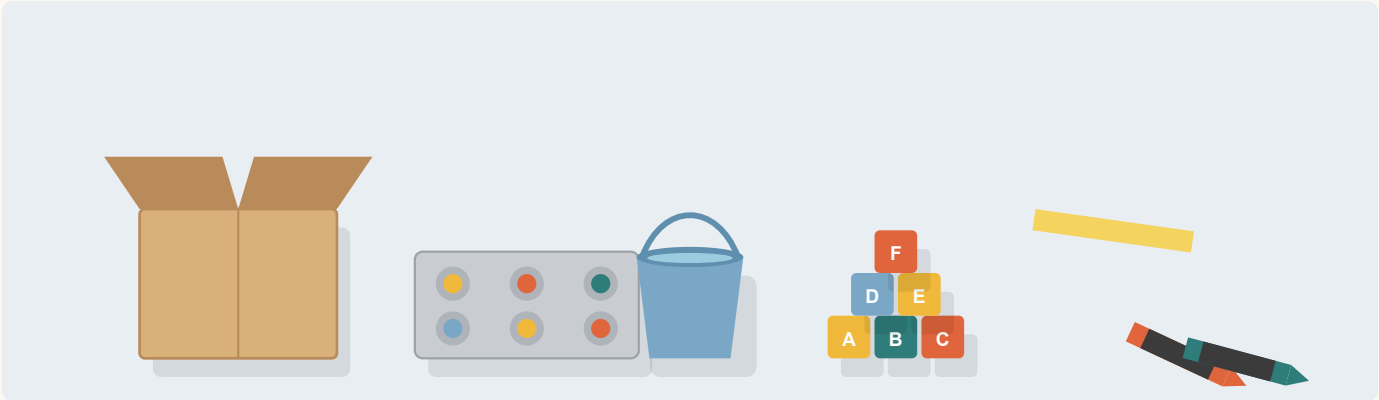
Follow the whole guide, or tap a section to go straight to what you need today.

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- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 01 | Set up for play | 04 |
| | The one-box kit, the safety rules and the fifteen-minute mindset. | |
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The goal is not a Pinterest-perfect craft. It is a child who is busy, a kitchen that survives, and a grown-up who is not scrolling for ideas.

The one-box play kit.

Everything on this list fits in one storage box. Most of it is already in the house.



Item	What it becomes
Cardboard boxes (2-3 sizes)	Car, house, tunnel, drum, posting box, painting surface.
Painter's or masking tape	Roads, balance lines, hopscotch, sticky wall, shape hunts. Peels off floors and walls.
Muffin tin + tongs or big spoon	Sorting, transferring, colour matching, pretend baking.
Plastic cups, jugs, funnel, a tray	Water play, pouring, ice rescue, bath-time science.
Scarves or tea towels	Peekaboo, dancing, dressing up, den roofs.
Chunky crayons, big paper, contact paper	Five-minute art, sticky collages, crayon rubbings.
Playdough (shop or home-made) + cutters	Squashing, rolling, hiding things, pretend food.
Soft ball, a basket, a few big blocks	Kicking, rolling, throwing into a target, stacking and knocking down.

Safety first, every time.

Simple rules that let you relax while they play.

01 The toilet-roll test

If something fits through a toilet-roll tube, it can fit down a toddler's throat. The CPSC's small-parts cylinder is about 1.25 inches across. Keep beads, buttons, coins, balloons and small food away from children who still mouth things, and supervise anything borderline. [4]

02 Water means eyes on

A tray of water is brilliant play and a drowning risk in the same minute. Stay within arm's reach, including at the bath. Empty containers when you are done.

03 Non-toxic only

Paint, dough, foam and slime ingredients that are safe if fingers reach mouths; sensitive-skin foam; nothing scented for skin-prone kids. Check labels. [3]

04 Contain the mess, not the child

A tray, a shower curtain on the floor, a bath. Small quantities. Towels within reach. [3]

05 Match the idea to your child

Every idea here has an easier and a harder version. If your child is younger, mouths things or has a sensory sensitivity, choose the gentler option or skip it.

NOT MEDICAL ADVICE

Milestones are a guide, not a test; children develop at their own pace. If you are worried about your child's development, hearing, speech or movement, talk to your doctor or health visitor rather than a planner. [1]

The fifteen-minute mindset.

Toddlers play in bursts. Plan for bursts, not projects.

01 Set up in under five minutes

If it takes longer to set up than they will play, it is a craft for you, not play for them.

02 Expect ten to twenty minutes

That is a good session at this age. Two or three short ideas beat one long one.

03 Follow the child

If the sorting game becomes a pouring game, it is still play. The goal is engagement, not the outcome you pictured.

04 Sit down for the first two minutes

Join in, then step back. Toddlers stay with an activity longer when it starts together.

05 Leave it out

A half-finished set-up often gets a second visit after a snack.

06 Then stop

End before the meltdown, while it is still fun. Note what worked on Worksheet 5.



Screens: a tool, not the plan.

What the paediatricians actually say, and how to make it easy. [2]

The American Academy of Pediatrics does not set one screen-time number for every child. It asks parents to think about the quality of what is watched, to watch together when they can, and to protect screen-free times and places such as meals so that media never crowds out sleep, movement and play. [2]

01 Decide the screen-free zones

Meals, the hour before bed, the car on short trips. Write them on Worksheet 6.

02 Use the menu first

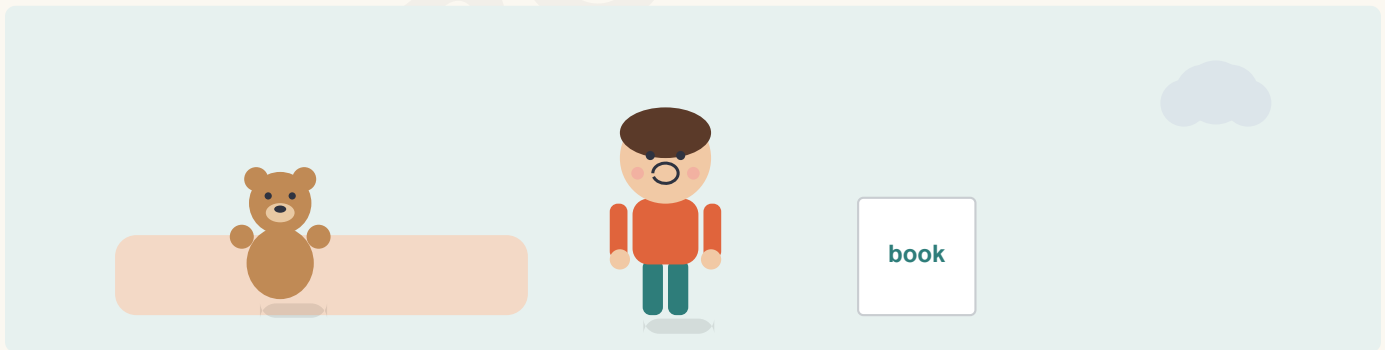
A rainy afternoon starts with a play idea; a screen is the break, not the whole afternoon.

03 Watch together when you can

A song or a short show becomes play when you sing, act it out or talk about it afterwards. [2]

04 Model it

Your own phone use is the loudest rule in the house. [2]



Reading the age.

The same idea, three ways. Every menu page has an easier and a harder version.

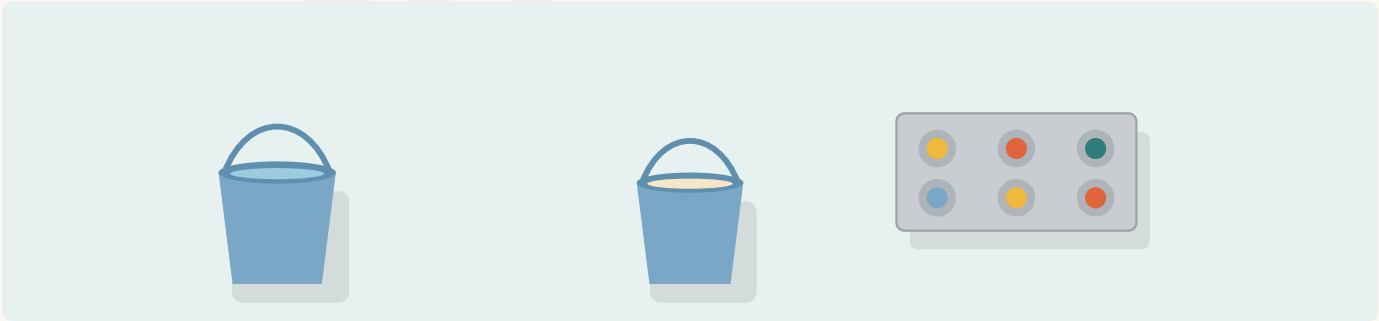
Roughly	What they love	Make ideas easier by...	Make ideas harder by...
12-18 months	Filling, dumping, banging, peekaboo, being chased.	Bigger objects, fewer pieces, sitting play, you doing the first go.	Not yet; keep it simple and repeat.
18-24 months	Posting, pouring, stacking, first pretend (feeding teddy). [1]	Two-step tasks with one step each.	Adding a colour or size to sort by.
2-3 years	Sorting, matching, obstacle courses, kitchen and shop play, two-word instructions. [1]	Fewer categories; doing it side by side.	Counting, patterns, a rule to follow.
3-4 years	Longer pretend stories, simple games with rules, cutting, building to a plan.	Shorter turns; a picture to copy.	A challenge ("can you build it taller than teddy?").

Ages are rough. Your child is the real guide; the CDC milestone lists are a helpful reference, not a test. [1]

Sensory and messy.

Contained, non-toxic, supervised. Towels first. [3]

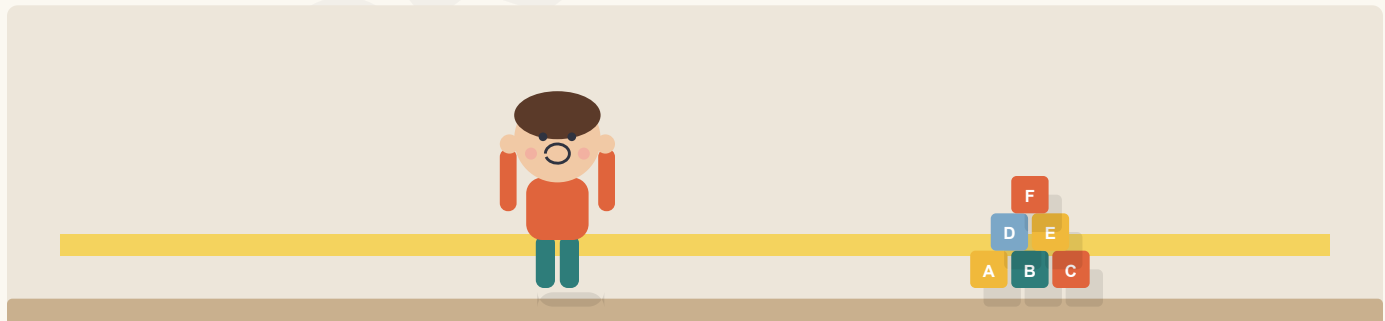
Idea	How	Easier / harder
Water tray	A tray or washing-up bowl with cups, a jug, a funnel and a few toys. Pour, scoop, sink, float.	Easier: fewer tools. Harder: which one floats? Add a sponge to squeeze.
Ice rescue	Freeze small safe toys in a tub of water; give a jug of warm water and a spoon to free them.	Easier: crushed ice in a tray. Harder: “which tool melts it fastest?”
Ice paint	Craft paint frozen in an ice-cube tray with a stick in each; paint on paper as it melts. [3]	Easier: two colours. Harder: guess what the colours make.
Cornflour slime	Cornflour, water and a drop of colour; stir slow, then fast, and feel it change. Bin it, never the drain. [3]	Easier: dry cornflour first. Harder: spoon it between bowls.
Foam tray	Sensitive-skin shaving foam on a tray with a few toys and a drop of colour. [3]	Easier: small blob. Harder: draw letters and shapes in it.



Movement.

Big muscles first: a run-around toddler naps better and listens better. [1]

Idea	How	Easier / harder
Tape road	Painter's tape lines on the floor: straight, zigzag, curvy. Walk, jump, drive cars along them.	Easier: one straight line. Harder: hop, tiptoe, walk backwards.
Sofa-cushion course	Cushions, a tunnel of chairs with a blanket, a box to climb into, a pillow to jump onto.	Easier: crawl-through only. Harder: add "first... then..." instructions.
Basket ball	A soft ball and a laundry basket. Roll, throw, kick from further back each time. [1]	Easier: roll and catch seated. Harder: count the goals.
Freeze dance	Music on, dance; music off, freeze. Take turns being the DJ.	Easier: just dance. Harder: freeze in a shape (tall, small, animal).
Animal walks	Bear crawl, frog jump, crab walk from one tape line to another.	Easier: copy you. Harder: draw a card and guess the animal.



Pretend.

From feeding teddy to running a shop. Pretend play grows fast between two and four. [1]

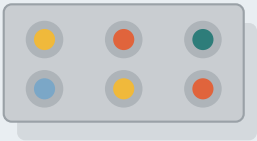
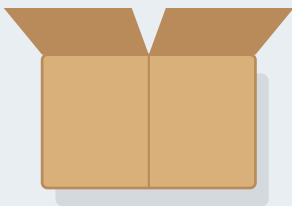
Idea	How	Easier / harder
Teddy's tea party	Cups, a teapot, a cloth on the floor, teddy and a doll. Pour, serve, wipe up.	Easier: you pour. Harder: take orders, "teddy wants two".
The box car	A big box, a paper-plate steering wheel, a scarf for a seat belt. Drive to the shop.	Easier: sit and "beep". Harder: where are we going? What do we need?
Kitchen helper	Real pots, wooden spoons, dry pasta in a pan; "make lunch" for the family.	Easier: stir only. Harder: follow a two-step recipe card with pictures.
Doctor's visit	A bandage roll, a toy thermometer, teddy as the patient.	Easier: copy you. Harder: teddy has a sore paw; what do we do?
Shop	Tins and boxes on a shelf, a basket, buttons or tokens as coins (older kids only). [4]	Easier: put things in the basket. Harder: a shopping list with pictures.



Building and problem-solving.

Stack, post, sort, fit. Two hands working together is a two-year-old milestone. [1]

Idea	How	Easier / harder
Posting box	Cut a slot in a box lid; post large bottle tops, blocks or pegs (nothing tube-sized). [4]	Easier: a wide hole. Harder: colour-coded slots.
Muffin-tin sort	Six cups, a bowl of big objects, tongs or a spoon; sort by colour or type.	Easier: two colours. Harder: match a picture card per cup.
Tower and crash	Build with blocks or boxes; count up, then knock it down. Repeat forever.	Easier: you build, they crash. Harder: copy a photo of a tower.
Lid match	A basket of jars, tubs and pots with lids; find the one that fits. [1]	Easier: three big ones. Harder: mix in sizes that almost fit.
Cardboard ramp	A box lid propped on books; roll cars, balls, a tin. Which goes furthest?	Easier: just roll. Harder: two ramps, a race, a measuring tape.



Art in five minutes.

Process over product. Nothing here needs to look like anything.

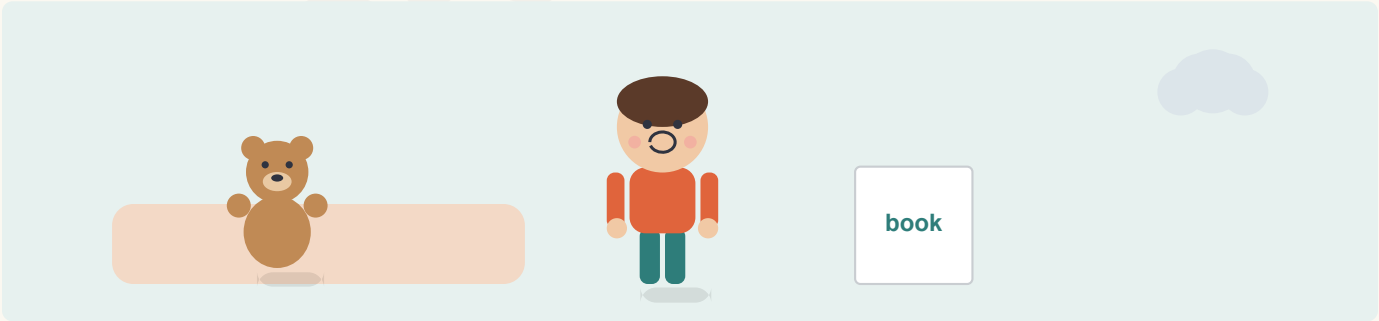
Idea	How	Easier / harder
Sticky wall	Contact paper taped sticky-side out at toddler height; press on scraps, leaves, pom-poms (supervised). [4]	Easier: big scraps. Harder: make a face, a pattern, a "garden".
Crayon rubbings	Paper over a coin, a leaf, a textured floor; rub with a chunky crayon.	Easier: you hold the paper. Harder: hunt the house for textures.
Sponge painting	Kitchen sponges cut into shapes, two paint colours on a plate, big paper.	Easier: one colour. Harder: print a pattern, name the shapes.
Bath crayons	Bath-safe crayons on the tiles; wash off after.	Easier: scribble. Harder: draw the family, then wash them away one by one.
Nature tray	A walk to collect leaves, sticks and petals; glue onto card.	Easier: just collect and sort. Harder: match leaves to a photo.



Words, songs and books.

Language grows in everyday talk. Two words together by two is the milestone. [1]

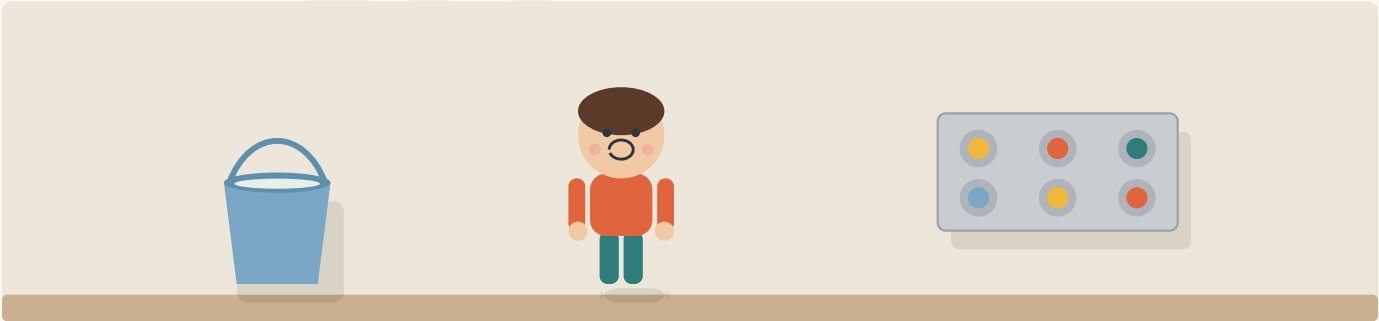
Idea	How	Easier / harder
Song time with actions	Wheels on the Bus, Row Your Boat, Head Shoulders Knees and Toes; big actions, slow and fast.	Easier: you sing, they watch. Harder: they choose the next verse.
Picture hunt	"Where is the bear?" in a favourite book; then hunt for a real teddy in the room. [1]	Easier: point together. Harder: give two clues.
Body-part game	Sticker on the nose, then the knee; say it, find it, laugh. [1]	Easier: three parts. Harder: "touch your elbow with your foot".
Puppet chat	A sock puppet asks questions and gets things wrong; the child corrects it.	Easier: puppet waves. Harder: puppet tells a story with a mistake to spot.
Book den	A blanket over two chairs, a torch, a pile of books.	Easier: you read. Harder: they "read" it to teddy.



Helping hands.

Real jobs are the best pretend play. They also fill the twenty minutes before dinner.

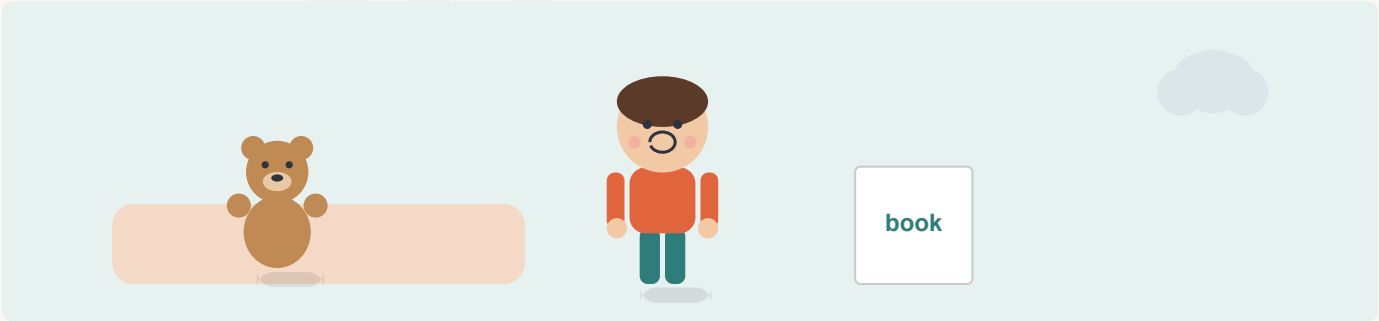
Idea	How	Easier / harder
Laundry sort	Socks in one basket, tops in another; find the pairs.	Easier: all socks in a pile. Harder: match by colour and size.
Wipe the table	A damp cloth and a spray bottle of water; “clean” every surface they can reach.	Easier: one cloth. Harder: a checklist of three things to wipe.
Stir and pour	Dry ingredients in a bowl, a big spoon; they stir, you bake.	Easier: stir only. Harder: count scoops.
Water the plants	A small jug, a plant, a towel underneath.	Easier: one plant. Harder: which ones look thirsty?
Tidy race	A timer, a basket: how many blocks can we put away before it beeps?	Easier: you race too. Harder: sort as you tidy.



Quiet time.

Low-energy ideas for after lunch, the sick day, or when you need ten minutes too.

Idea	How	Easier / harder
Calm basket	Board books, a soft toy, a fidget, a small photo album; brought out only for quiet time.	Easier: two items. Harder: they pack it themselves.
Audio story	A story or songs on a speaker (no screen) while they draw or build. [2]	Easier: familiar songs. Harder: act it out afterwards.
Sticker page	A sheet of big stickers and a piece of paper. That is it.	Easier: you peel. Harder: stick on the circles you drew.
Window watching	Sit at the window: count cars, umbrellas, birds; name the colours of the raincoats.	Easier: point and name. Harder: “I spy” with colours.
Photo look	A phone album of family photos, on your lap, named one by one.	Easier: you name. Harder: “where were we?”



A rainy-day rhythm.

Same shape every wet day. The ideas change; the rhythm does not.

When	What	From the menu
After breakfast	Movement first: fifteen minutes of big play burns the morning wriggles.	Movement (page 10)
Mid-morning	One set-up idea while you are nearby: water tray, posting box, sticky wall.	Sensory, building or art
Before lunch	Helping hands: they “cook”, wipe, sort.	Helping hands (page 15)
After lunch	Quiet time: calm basket, audio story, nap.	Quiet time (page 16)
Mid-afternoon	Pretend play or a second set-up; a short screen break is fine here if you want one. [2]	Pretend (page 11)
Before dinner	Movement again, then tidy race.	Movement, helping hands
Evening	Books, songs, bath crayons; screens off an hour before bed. [2]	Words and books (page 14)

Build your own version on Worksheet 2. Most families find two set-ups and lots of free play is plenty.

Toy rotation.

Fewer toys out, swapped weekly, beats a full playroom every time.

01 Sort into four boxes

Out now, next week, storage, give away. Keep out about a quarter of what you own.

02 Mix the types

Something to build, something to pretend with, something to move with, a few books.

03 Swap on a day you remember

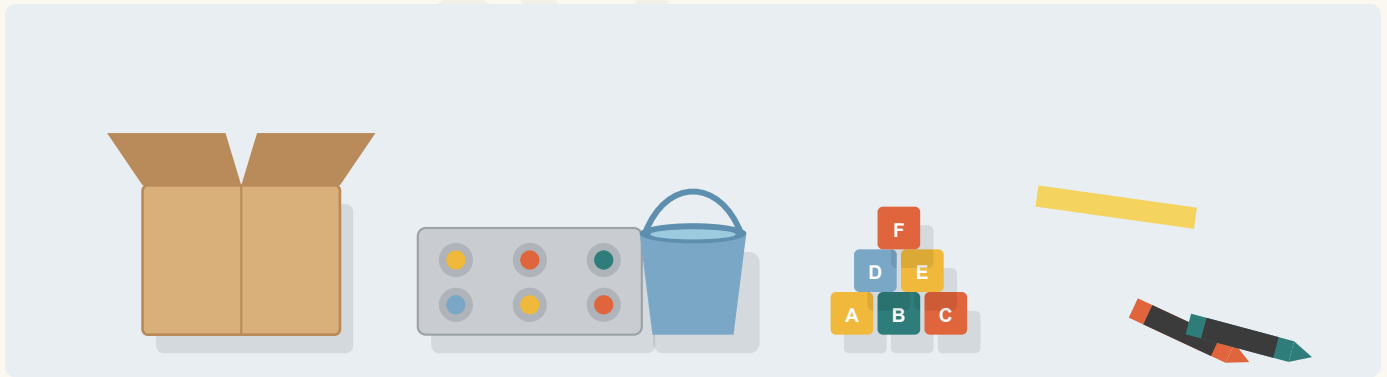
Sunday evening, with the tidy race. Log it on Worksheet 4.

04 Watch what comes back

A toy ignored twice can leave. A toy loved again after a month is a keeper.

05 The play kit stays out

The one-box kit on page 4 is not a toy; it is the rainy-day rescue.



A weekly plan.

One theme a day keeps you from planning every morning.

Day	Theme	Two ideas ready
Monday	Water	Water tray; ice rescue
Tuesday	Build	Posting box; tower and crash
Wednesday	Move	Tape road; sofa-cushion course
Thursday	Make	Sticky wall; sponge painting
Friday	Pretend	Box car; teddy's tea party
Saturday	Outside if you can	Nature tray; animal walks in the garden or hall
Sunday	Reset	Tidy race; toy rotation; calm basket refill

THEMES ARE FOR YOU, NOT THEM

If Monday turns into a building day, that is fine. The theme just means you never start from zero. Fill in your own on Worksheet 2.

Two children, different ages.

The same set-up, two jobs.

01 Give the older one the harder version

Every menu idea has one. The younger one gets the easier version of the same materials.

02 Parallel, not shared

Two trays, two bowls, two sets of tape lines. Sharing is a skill they are still learning. [1]

03 The big one is the helper

“Can you show her how?” buys five minutes and teaches both.

04 Separate the small parts

Older-kid materials (buttons, beads, small blocks) live out of reach of the one who still mouths things. [4]

05 Quiet time together

The calm basket and an audio story work for both.



When it isn't working.

Notice, shrink the idea, or change the energy.

You notice	Likely cause	Try
Walks away in a minute	Idea too hard, or too much set-up and not enough doing.	Easier version; sit down and start it together.
Dumps everything and leaves	Perfectly normal at 12-24 months: dumping is the play.	Give things worth dumping: a basket of scarves, big blocks.
Tips the water tray	Too much water, too small a tray, or it was a movement day.	Less water, bigger tray, movement first.
Melts down mid-play	Tired, hungry, overstimulated.	Stop; snack, cuddle, quiet basket. Try again after.
Only wants the screen	The screen has become the default.	Menu first, screen as the break; keep the screen-free zones. [2]
Says “no” to everything	Toddler. Also normal.	Offer two choices from the menu instead of one activity.

Persistent worries about play, language, movement or attention belong with your doctor or health visitor, not a planner. [1]

A worked rainy week.

A fictional example with a two-year-old in a flat. Adapt it; do not copy it.

Day	What happened	Worksheet
Mon	Water tray on the bathroom floor; 20 minutes, then ice rescue after nap. Logged “loves pouring”.	2, 5
Tue	Posting box from a delivery box; sorted bottle tops by colour with tongs.	2, 5
Wed	Tape road down the hall; freeze dance before lunch; calm basket after.	2
Thu	Sticky wall with leaves from the walk; a 20-minute show while dinner cooked.	2, 6
Fri	Box car to the “shop”; teddy’s tea party; both under 15 minutes, both repeated.	5
Sun	Tidy race, toy rotation (the shape sorter went away, the blocks came back), calm basket refilled.	4

Fictional teaching example. It does not describe a real family or a guaranteed result.

The notes that make you a calmer parent.

Every session teaches you something. Write it down.

What they loved

The only list that matters. Worksheet 5.

What the “harder version” looks like now

So the menu grows with them. [1]

Which toys came back to life

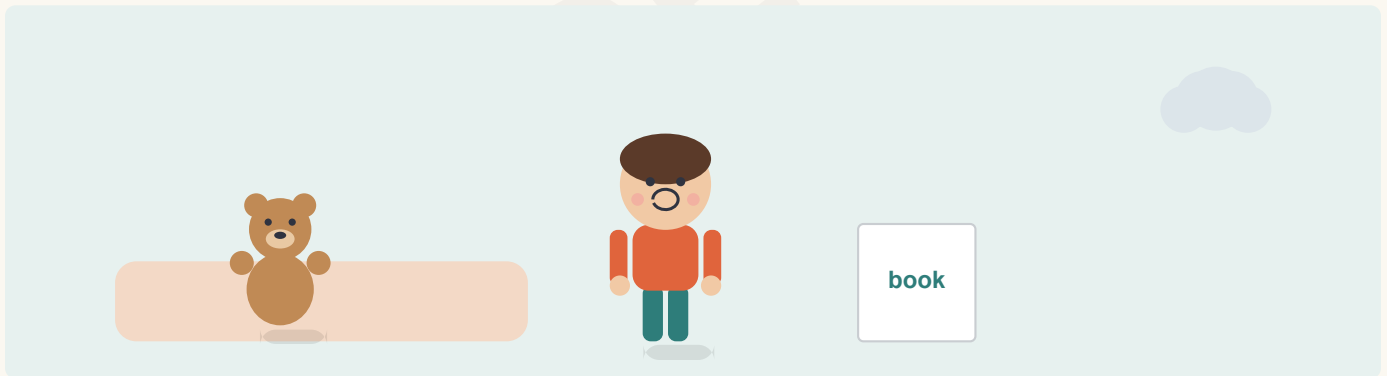
And which can go. Worksheet 4.

Your real rhythm

The one that fits your flat, your work and your child, not the internet's.

The screen-free zones you actually kept

And the one you dropped. Worksheet 6. [2]



My one-box play kit

Tick what you have; add what you need. Keep it in one box. [4]

Item	Have	Where it lives	Notes
Cardboard boxes (2-3)			
Painter's / masking tape			
Muffin tin + tongs or spoon			
Cups, jug, funnel, tray			
Scarves or tea towels			
Chunky crayons, big paper, contact paper			
Playdough + cutters			
Soft ball, basket, big blocks			
Towels + a shower curtain for the floor			
Calm basket (books, soft toy, fidget)			

Nothing that fits through a toilet-roll tube for a child who still mouths things. [4]

Our weekly play plan

One theme and two ready ideas per day. Fill in the clock for your rhythm.

Day	Theme	Idea 1	Idea 2	Done
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

See page 19 for a starter plan and page 17 for the daily rhythm.

Rainy-day menu

Our favourites, sorted by energy. Fill it in as you find them.

Big energy (movement)	Medium (sensory, build, pretend, art)	Low (quiet time, books)

Pick one from each column for a wet afternoon.

Toy rotation tracker

Swap weekly. Out, next, storage, give away.

Week of	Out now	Coming next	Ignored (twice = goes)	Loved again

Keep about a quarter of your toys out at a time. See page 18.

What they loved

One line per session. This is the list that matters.

Date	Idea	Mins	Loved / meh / no	What they actually did	Harder next time?

Follow the child: what they did is the play, even if it was not the plan.

Screen-free rhythm

Our screen-free times and places, and when a screen is the break. [2]

SCREEN-FREE TIMES (E.G. MEALS, HOUR BEFORE BED)

SCREEN-FREE PLACES (E.G. BEDROOM, TABLE)

WHEN A SCREEN IS THE BREAK (E.G. 20 MINUTES WHILE DINNER COOKS)

WHAT WE WATCH TOGETHER, AND WHAT WE DO AFTERWARDS

OUR OWN PHONE RULE (THE GROWN-UPS)

Balance, not a magic number; media should never crowd out sleep, movement and play. [2]

Rainy-day play, at a glance.

Stick it on the fridge or save it to your phone.



■ One box

Boxes, tape, muffin tin, cups and jug, scarves, crayons, dough, ball. Nothing tube-sized for mouths. [4]

■ Fifteen minutes

Set up in five, play in bursts, follow the child, stop before the meltdown.

■ Safety

Toilet-roll test, eyes on water, non-toxic, contain the mess. [3][4]

■ The rhythm

Move, set-up, help, quiet, pretend, move, books.

■ The menu

Sensory, movement, pretend, building, art, words, helping hands, quiet.

■ Rotate

A quarter of toys out; swap on Sunday.

■ Screens

A tool, not the plan; keep the screen-free zones. [2]

■ Worries

Milestones are a guide; talk to your doctor or health visitor. [1]

The useful fine print

Sources behind the specific statements in this studio sample, and what this edition is and is not.

[1] CDC Learn the Signs. Act Early: Milestones at 2 years [Open the source](#)

By 2 years most children point to things in a book, say at least two words together, point to two body parts, use gestures beyond waving, hold something in one hand while using the other, try switches and buttons, play with more than one toy at a time, kick a ball, run and walk up a few stairs. CDC tips for parents: help with word sounds, model sharing, encourage ball play and problem-solving toys, support pretend play, keep consistent sleep routines, use positive reinforcement, encourage outdoor exploration and simple art. Every child develops at their own pace; talk to a doctor if you are concerned.

[2] American Academy of Pediatrics: Screen time guidelines (Center of Excellence Q&A) [Open the source](#)

The AAP does not set one screen-time limit for all children; it recommends weighing the quality of media use, not only the quantity, and creating screen-free times and places (such as family meals) so media never crowds out sleep, physical activity and play. Parents modelling healthy media habits matters.

[3] Queensland Government Early Childhood Education and Care: Messy play ideas [Open the source](#)

Messy play builds fine-motor skills through hands-on exploration, strengthens sensory awareness and fosters curiosity, independence, problem-solving, investigation, concentration and focus. Example set-ups: ice paint (craft paint frozen in ice-cube trays with sticks), cornflour slime (cornflour, water, food colouring), shaving-foam tray play (use sensitive-skin foam). Supervise hand exploration, keep towels nearby, and never pour slime down the drain: let it dry and bin it.

[4] US Consumer Product Safety Commission: Small parts and choking hazards for children under 3 (16 CFR 1501) [Open the source](#)

A small part is anything that fits entirely inside a test cylinder 1.25 inches (about 3.2 cm) across and 1-2.25 inches deep, which approximates the throat of a child under three. Products for under-3s must not contain or shed small parts. For home play this means: no loose items smaller than about a toilet-roll tube opening for toddlers who still mouth things, and constant supervision with beads, buttons, coins, balloons and small food.

About this edition

Written, illustrated and designed by Forgewick, operated by Haris Sohail. Studio Edition 1.0, September 2026. All text, illustrations and worksheets are original. General play guidance for typically developing children aged roughly one to four; not medical, developmental or product-safety advice. Supervise every activity, adapt materials to your child, and talk to your doctor or health visitor about any developmental concern.

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THE RAINY DAY TODDLER PLAY PLANNER

One box. Forty ideas. A rhythm for the wet days.

Low-prep play for ages one to four,
with six printable worksheets.

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