



What's That? Everyday Science

Children are full of questions and excited to learn. Exploring lets your child learn about different objects and how to solve problems. It helps your child answer his own questions about how things work. As he makes new discoveries, share your joy and excitement with your child!

- When she puts something in her mouth, your baby is testing what she knows. *As long as there's no danger to your baby*, let her put clean toys and other objects in her mouth. **Be sure she cannot choke on or swallow the object.**
- Take time to stop, look, and listen with your child. Be aware of what he sees and hears, and focus conversation on where he is looking or listening. When your toddler points or asks, "What's that?" don't stop with a simple answer. Find out what he thinks or imagines and what else he might want to know. Add more information, observations, or questions to keep the conversation going.
- Help your child understand that he can make things happen. Dropping a spoon on the floor makes a noise. Your child will do this again and again to confirm that it always makes a noise! He may also try dropping different things—or dropping the same thing gently and then banging it or throwing it hard—to see how he can make the noise sound different.
- Even before your child can talk, she will be asking questions through her actions. *What does that shiny new object feel and taste like, and what can I do with it? How many stuffed animals can I carry at once? Can I fit under the couch? What is that moving thing in the sky and where is it going?* When you can't let her *safely* discover the answers herself, use words and demonstrations to satisfy her curiosity.
- Whenever possible, take your baby to new environments and give her a variety of experiences: noisy markets, quiet libraries, outdoor concerts, or indoor play spaces.

- Offer your child opportunities to solve all kinds of problems. Let your baby reach for her own toys in her crib. Let your toddler make a riding toy move by herself, get something from a shelf using a stool (with supervision), or build a block tower. Ask your toddler questions about her problem to get her thinking about how she solved a similar problem before. Offer support and suggestions, but don't be too quick to help, especially if you haven't been asked.
- Show your toddler how simple things work, like a wind-up toy or the strap on his shoe. Name objects and parts of objects, and explain how they fit or work together. When you show him how to do something or help him to solve a problem by himself, talk through the steps in the process.
- Provide toys and objects such as empty boxes, bowls, and blankets for your child to play with that let him make choices and test how things work. Hand him a bowl and he may think: *What is this? What can I put in it? Should I put it on my head? What else can I do with this? I can use it to make noise!* These are all ways your child already thinks like a scientist!
- You are responsible for what and where your child explores. Make sure that she has comfortable places where she can *safely* examine and play with all kinds of interesting things. Make sure, too, that she not only has interesting things to find out about, but interested people who will answer her questions, share her delight in her discoveries, and help her learn more.
- Share your own experiences and expertise about anything—animals, clouds, the moon, cars, gardening, guitar playing, and so on. Your child will be excited to learn about what you know! But you don't have to know all the answers. It's okay to say, *I don't know*, and to try to find out online, in a book, at the library, or at a local park, museum, or zoo. Include your child in the process of finding out.