
Promoting Young Children's Reasoning Skills

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, "Thinking and Play: Toddlers," from the Raising Children Network (Australia) Limited. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Discuss how young children develop reasoning skills through play.
- ◆ Discuss effective strategies for facilitating children's reasoning skills at home and within the learning environment.
- ◆ Plan to partner with families to support infants' and toddlers' reasoning skills through play.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ Use the questions below to reflect on effective ways to support infants' and toddlers' reasoning skills.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support infants' and toddlers' reasoning skills.

Children at play are experimenting, thinking, solving problems, and learning all the time.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?
- ◆ The article mentions that play is vital for toddlers' cognitive development – that is, the child's ability to think, understand, communicate, make memories, imagine, and work out what might happen next. Notably, as children begin to communicate, try to figure out how things work, and attempt to explain their thoughts, they begin to develop reasoning skills. Therefore, play helps children develop reasoning skills. Reflect on your current practice.
 - How do different children in your care display these early reasoning skills?
 - What play-based activities do you provide to help children develop reasoning skills? How do you think the children benefit from these experiences?
 - What have families shared about their children's reasoning skills? What are they noticing as children play at home?
- ◆ The article shares practical play ideas to support young children's thinking and learning. Ideas such as sorting materials, playing with toys that cause things to happen, and putting puzzles together all promote children's reasoning skills.
 - What materials or activities suggestions can you share with families to help them promote reasoning skills at home?
 - What strategies can families try to support reasoning at home?
 - What support or additional resources may families need? How can you help them access these?
- ◆ The author emphasized following children's lead during play and asking questions to help children to reason and begin to resolve problems.
 - How do you encourage children to lead play experiences? How does this support their ability to reason and start to problem solve?
 - Even though infants and toddlers are not always able to answer questions, adults can model asking and answering questions. How do you use questioning to help children reason and solve problems?
 - What strategies might you use to encourage families to allow children to lead play activities? How can you be intentional in encouraging families to use questioning to support children's reasoning skills?
- ◆ Plan a play-based experience, in which educators and families support children's reasoning skills together. Note that some family members may feel more comfortable observing as you model the strategies while others may want to immediately participate along with children.
 - What preparation might families need to make the most out of the experience (e.g., background information about the activity and reasoning skills, examples of questions to ask, skills to encourage)?
 - What specific steps might you take to partner with families to support children's reasoning skills during the experience?
 - Implement the steps identified, monitor children's progress, and adjust the plan as needed to support children's reasoning skills.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about infants' and toddlers' reasoning skills:

- ◆ **Source:** Zero to Three
- ◆ **Article:** Developing Thinking Skills from 24 to 36 Months.
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/developing-thinking-skills-from-24-to-36-months/>
- ◆ **Description:** This article offers practical suggestions for facilitating toddlers' thinking skills, such as exploration and sorting of materials, problem-solving, and engaging in pretend play experiences. Share this article with families to encourage them to promote children's reasoning skills.

- ◆ **Source:** First Cry Parenting
- ◆ **Article:** Reasoning Skills in Young Toddlers
- ◆ **Link:** <https://parenting.firstcry.com/articles/reasoning-skills-in-young-toddlers/>
- ◆ **Description:** This article describes how young children develop reasoning skills as well as strategies parents can use in promoting children's reasoning skills. Use this article to support families in facilitating children's reasoning skills.

- ◆ **Source:** Bright Horizons
- ◆ **Article:** Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Kids
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.brighthouse.com/resources/Article/developing-critical-thinking-skills-in-children>
- ◆ **Description:** This article offers practical strategies for promoting children's critical thinking skills. Strategies outlined include asking open-ended questions and allowing children opportunities to experiment and problem-solve. Share tips from this article with families to promote children's critical thinking and reasoning skills.