

MINOT INFANT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER

As spring approaches, toddlers often show interest in doing more on their own. Whether it's feeding themselves, choosing clothes, or helping with simple tasks, building independence is a gradual process that looks different for every child, & it requires patience as skills develop.

Self-Help Skills

Independence develops gradually across many areas:

- **12 to 18 months:** May help with dressing by pushing arms through sleeves; may drink from an open cup with some spilling with an adult's help; may indicate when their diaper is wet
- **18 to 24 months:** Tries to wash hands; removes loose clothing; uses spoon with increasing skill; helps put toys away
- **24 to 36 months:** Puts on simple clothing; washes & dries hands with help; uses fork; follows two-step directions

Every child develops at their own pace. The goal isn't rushing to independence, but providing opportunities to practice.

Want more ideas? Read this [article!](#)

Try This At Home

Choose **one daily task** your child can help with, like putting toys away or carrying their cup to the table (*Looking for more ideas? [Zero to Three](#) has great tips!*)

Break tasks into **small steps** & offer **just enough** help for success

Use **encouraging** language: "You're working so hard!"

Celebrate **effort**, not just completion: "You tried to put your shoe on by yourself!"

Be **patient** with the extra time these tasks take; it's an investment in your toddler's growing skills

REMEMBER: what feels frustratingly slow now is building skills that will make life easier later

Be Ridiculously Predictable

When toddlers know what to expect, they can participate more independently:

Use the **same sequence** every time. *First this, then that.*

Give warnings before transitions. "In two minutes, we'll clean up for lunch."

Use **visual** or **verbal** cues. *Show the next step or describe what's coming.*

Allow **extra** time. *Independence takes longer, so build that time into your routine.*

EXAMPLE: "First, we'll put toys away, then we'll wash hands, then we'll have lunch!"

Read more: [Why Predictability Matters](#)

Pyramid Model Spotlight

The [Pyramid Model](#) supports independence by creating environments where toddlers feel safe to try new skills. When we offer encouragement, break tasks into manageable steps, & provide predictable routines, toddlers develop confidence & competence.

Supporting independence doesn't mean they do everything alone; it means giving them opportunities to try while knowing you're there to help when needed.

Pyramid Principle: "Do with, not for" - help toddlers do tasks together rather than doing everything for them

Giving Support vs Taking Over

It can be hard to know when to help & when to let children struggle a bit. Here's a guide:

- **Step in when:** Your child is getting truly frustrated (not just challenged), safety is a concern, or time is genuinely limited
- **Step back when:** Your child is engaged & trying, even if progress is slow
- **Offer support when:** You can break the task into smaller steps, demonstrate once, or provide hand-over-hand guidance

Trust yourself. You know your child best.

Tip of the Month:

Encourage Effort Over Perfection

When we focus on *effort* rather than results, children learn that trying is valuable, even when things don't go perfectly.

Small opportunities to practice help skills grow over time. The spilled water & mismatched shoes are part of the learning process!

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Resource Corner

These [visual supports](#) help toddlers learn predictability (i.e., they know what is coming & when) & consistency.

[Transition cards](#) help prepare toddlers for transitions, engage them in the change, & move to the next activity.

This [story](#) helps children understand the steps to problem-solving.

[Sesame Street](#) has a ton of free printable sheets for all areas.

