



PARENT *handout*

Baby Bytes: Computers and Your Toddler

Computers have changed our way of life. Your child will need computer skills in school and, later on, in her job. You may be wondering if and when you should introduce your toddler to the computer.

Before age 2½, your child may only be interested in banging on the keyboard. She may like to listen to the sounds the computer makes and see bright colors on the screen. Wait to introduce learning activities until she has enough eye-hand coordination to use the mouse and keyboard.

Between 2½ and 3 years of age, you can expect your toddler to learn how to:

- > Move and click the mouse.
- > Use the keys.
- > Go from one screen to the next.

After age 3, your child can use these skills to navigate sites and programs that teach matching, sorting, numbers, and letters.

On-screen games also improve her spatial ability – the same skills she learns building with blocks and playing with balls.

Choosing games

To get the most out of computer time, choose software or online games that introduce concepts your toddler can understand. Some programs “grow” with your child – that is, you can change the difficulty level depending on what she needs.

Good programs for toddlers make learning fun. They give your child enough time to answer a question, prompt her with clues, offer help when she is having difficulty, give her several choices in order to get the right answer, and offer praise when she does the right thing.

Make computer time special

Your child learns best when she has happy experiences with you and other people. Playing on the computer is an activity that you can share together.

When introducing the computer to your child:

- > *Sit with your child so you can teach her to use the computer correctly.*
- > *Explain what she is doing. Let her know why an answer is right or wrong. Always offer praise for every answer.*
- > *Play along with your child as she uses the computer.*