



12–36 Months

Cognitive: Problem-Solving¹

WHEN INTRODUCED: Block 2

BEHAVIORS TO OBSERVE²

- Takes apart and puts together objects that connect
- Sorts and matches objects (24–36 months)

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

This *Guide* uses 12–24 months and 24–36 months age designations in relation to when specific types of emerging skills often can be observed. The age parameters are not firm; the timing of developmental pathways and milestones varies considerably across children.

Behaviors may be observed during a care routine, playtime, or guided activity. Pertinent ELM activities (Cognitive) are cited in parentheses. The activities pertain to the age group indicated in the example.

Takes apart and puts together objects that connect

- 12–24 months:
 - takes apart several connected objects (Block 2, Options 1–3; Block 10, Options 1 and 2)
 - takes apart connected objects and puts them back together (Block 10, Option 3)
- 24–36 months:
 - takes apart several connected objects (Block 2, Option 1)
 - adds objects to a set of connected objects (Block 2, Option 2)
 - connects and disconnects objects (Block 2, Option 3; Block 10, Option 2)

Sorts and matches objects (24–36 months)

- sorts counters by color (Block 4, Options 1 and 2)
- sorts counters by type (Block 4, Option 3; Block 8, Option 1)
- identifies picture cards that are the same (Block 8, Options 2 and 3)



EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP LEARNING SUPPORTS

Reintroduce

Takes apart and puts together objects that connect

- 12–24 months: Adapt Block 2, Option 1 by offering connected objects (star builders or snap beads) that are of interest to the toddler. You may wish to demonstrate how to pull apart the objects before providing the toddler with his/her set of connected objects. Begin with two connected objects. Repeat Block 15, Option 2 for practice in putting together small blocks or links. Putting together objects is generally more challenging than taking apart a set of connected objects.
- 24–36 months: Offer an option in Block 2 that is responsive to the toddler's current skill in working with a set of connected objects. Each of the options offers a different type of experience with the connected objects. Use objects (star builders or snap beads) that are of most interest to the toddler. Emphasize the concepts of shorter and longer, as suggested in the activity plan.

Sorts and matches objects (24–36 months)

- Repeat and adapt Block 4, beginning with the option that is of most interest to the toddler: sorting by color (Options 1 and 2) or by type of animal counter (Option 3). It is not necessary for a toddler to know colors in order to sort by color. Sorting by type of animal involves noticing differences in the animal images on the counters.
- Provide experiences in sorting identical items by repeating and adapting Block 8. Emphasize the first segment of Option 1 (sorting by color and shape) and support the second segment (making a collage) if this is of interest to the toddler. Offer Option 2 as a one-to-one experience. Initially use fewer than 12 matching picture cards in Option 3.
- If appropriate, offer practice in sorting different types of toys by repeating Block 12 offered for younger toddlers (12–24 months). Provide two (Option 1) or three (Option 2) different types of toys, depending on the toddler's skill level and experience. Block 25 for younger toddlers (12–24 months) also may be appropriate in reintroducing sorting and matching. Options 1 and 2 draw attention to characteristics of shapes without introducing shape names.
- During a snack or mealtime, draw attention to how the color or some other characteristic of two cups or plates is the same or different.



Reinforce

Takes apart and puts together objects that connect

- 12–24 months: Emphasize the use of two hands to take apart connected objects (Block 10, Option 1). Demonstrate and support an upward pull for removing a connected object (Block 10, Option 2). Adapt the Block 10, Option 2 activity by creating a long chain of connected objects for a toddler to take apart (Option 2). Toddlers who readily take apart and put together objects that connect may enjoy the challenge of working with star builders that can stand on their own (Block 10, Option 2).
- 24–36 months: Offer 3–4 Bristle Blocks® for a toddler to connect and pull apart (Block 10, Option 1). Consider offering a story inspired by *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* as a toddler adds a snap bead to a set of connected beads (see second Enrichment tip in Block 10, Option 2). Promote a toddler's use of a long chain of connected beads for comparing to his/her height (see last Enrichment tip in Block 10, Option 2). Support a toddler's exploration of objects by offering open-ended play with objects that connect (Block 10, Option 3).

Sorts and matches objects

- Enhance the sorting and matching task of Block 12, Option 1 by offering a toddler two baskets with 3–5 toys in each. The challenge is to work from both baskets in finding toys that are the same. Variety can be added to the Block 12, Option 2 activity by offering different wooden puzzles. The appeal of the Block 16, Option 1 and 2 activities is matching pictures of objects to similar or same real objects. The matching experience in Block 25, Option 1 can be enriched by providing adult and baby animal figures that a toddler can match by type of animal after locating the place where the toy figures sleep. This provides two steps in matching items.
- Promote awareness of the concept of one as part of a matching activity. Block 7 may be offered as a one-to-one experience. Option 1 involves a toddler making a play dough creation for each of his/her two hands. Option 2 involves making one pretend play dough treat for each of three bear counters. Block 21 is more advanced, focused on the concepts of one and two. If appropriate, repeat Block 7, Option 1 or 2 offered for younger toddlers (12–24 months). Option 1 supports picking one toy for one teddy bear and Option 2 adds slightly more challenge by encouraging a toddler to pick one toy for each of four teddy bears.



EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

We support play with items that connect, especially star builders and snap beads, to support children's problem-solving skills. Jolinda easily pulls apart a set of connected snap beads. She has a little difficulty pulling apart a set of connected star builders but always persists. I will continue to provide experiences with items that connect, including star builders. I also will support Jolinda in learning how to put together star builders and snap beads when she seems ready.

Jadon enjoys playing with animal counters. He likes to sort the counters by color. This past week I encouraged Jadon to sort the counters by type of animal. He had fun looking at the different animals in the counters but sometimes worked a little too fast in sorting by type of animal. He quickly saw the mismatches when I invited him to look closely at what he had put together. I will encourage Jadon to slow down when he sorts by a characteristic that takes a little more time to look at. Taking time to concentrate is a self-regulation skill that influences many things we do. Jadon often smiles when I say, "Take your time, Jadon. This is not a race!"

Endnotes

- 1 The categories and behaviors to observe are informed by the following source: Bricker, D., Capt, B., & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (2002). *Assessment, evaluation, and programming system for infants and children, 2nd ed., Vol. 2: Test, birth to three years and three to six years*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- 2 You may wish to observe a toddler's progress in developing object permanence, a skill emphasized in Birth–12 month activities. There is an opportunity to observe progress in developing object permanence in guided activities that feature a peekaboo book (Block 3, Options 1–3) and a puppy that hides (Block 23, Options 1–3) with younger toddlers (12–24 months). There also are guided activities related to object permanence for older toddlers (24–36 months) in Block 3 (Options 1–3).