

Tool Time for Toddlers: 24-36 Months

Crayons, spoons and paintbrushes are tools for toddlers. Using them and similar objects will help your child:

- Strengthen the small muscles used for writing, buttoning or zipping
- Build coordination needed to dress, eat and cut
- Become more independent in taking care of his basic needs

Ideas to try with your child:

- Provide your child with foods that require a spoon and some that require a fork. Expect that he will still use his hands occasionally to put food on the spoon.
- Let him practice serving himself from the serving bowl. Simple foods that cling to a spoon, like yogurt or potato salad, are great places to start. Guide his hand at first and expect spilling.
- Make a “rice bin” with a dish pan and a few pounds of uncooked rice. Provide measuring cups, large and small spoons and plastic bottles to fill and dump.
- Offer small rolling pins or plastic cookie cutters for use with play dough. Homemade dough can be economical! Look for recipes at: <http://www.playdoughrecipe.com/>

If your child is struggling:

- Paint water on the fence or sidewalk with a paintbrush.
- Use large pieces of chalk to make marks on large paper (like newsprint or cardboard) or use the sidewalk.
- Digging in the dirt with child-sized trowel or shovel can be great fun!

Going further:

- Make time to do simple writing. Your child will simply scribble lines on the paper which is an important pre-writing step. You can show him how to make lines and shapes as well.
- Give your child a chance to spread jam on toast or butter on a muffin using a spoon at first. Praise his accomplishment!

The WA State Department of Early Learning and the Richland School District believes that parents, families, and caregivers are young children’s best teachers. This resource guide, part of *Strong Foundations for School: Resource Guides for Parents of Young Children*, highlights a key developmental skill for **children ages 24-36 months** that parents can help improve at home.



Adapted from *WA State Early Learning and Development Guidelines, 2012*: “Use tools such as spoon, crayon, toy hammer.” Touching, Seeing, Hearing and Moving Around Ages-16-36 months, pg. 46