

Guide to
Games
and
Activities

for 0-5
Year-Olds



Barnardos

EVERY CHILDHOOD LASTS A LIFETIME

In association with



ABOUT BARNARDOS

Barnardos is Ireland's leading children's charity. Each year we work directly with over 12,000 children and families throughout Ireland. Barnardos also raises issues through our advocacy programme to make Ireland the best place in the world for all children in Ireland.

Barnardos responds to the real difficulties of families. We meet children's needs, providing services that challenge disadvantage, and offer new hope for children's futures. We have a long tradition of services and we set ourselves high standards. But we could not do it without the support of our many donors, funders and supporters.

We deliver services from over 30 locations in 14 counties as well as nationwide services such as the National Children's Resource Centre, Beacon Guardian *ad Litem* service and Sólás – our bereavement counselling service for children.

Having launched an ambitious 12-year plan in 2005 Barnardos' vision and mission are to make Ireland the best place in the world to be a child and a place where all children are cherished equally.

Barnardos' National Children's Resource Centre provides publications, information and training for parents. For further information contact your local NCRC.

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For further information about Barnardos' services or how you can support Barnardos please check out www.barnardos.ie or call **1 850 222 300**

Guide to Games and Activities for 0-5 Year-Olds

Play is essential for learning and the singular central activity of childhood, occurring naturally at all times throughout a child's day. While playing, children explore their world, learn about their bodies, test their skills, communicate and interact with others. Through play children learn to share, make their own choices and develop their independence. Play can be active, exploratory or imaginative, occurring individually, in groups or simply side by side. Children are naturally curious and self motivated, seeking out new experiences in their world. Parents and carers, being their earliest, most important teachers can provide safe, stimulating and varied opportunities to explore and learn at home.

The games and activities in this booklet are simple and cost effective. In many cases, the items needed are everyday objects from the home.

I haven't put ages on the sections as children progress at different rates – it's as appropriate for a three year old to enjoy lullabies as it is for a one year old to enjoy finger painting!

Elaine Guiney

Child and Family Development Worker, Barnardos, Loughlinstown

Whoever coined the term 'child's play' must never have understood what a powerful tool play can be in the physical, mental and emotional development of a child. Someone once said that children have a power to imagine that is almost magical when compared to an adult. The purpose of the Guide is to show us adults, with our somewhat more limited imaginations, just how much fun can be had when some ordinary household items are mixed with a large dollop of 'make believe'! We are delighted to be involved with Barnardos once again in the development of this booklet, the latest in a series of helpful guides for parents. Enjoy!

Aileen Regan

Infant Nutrition Manager, Cow & Gate Ireland

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE FIRST YEAR

Facial Expressions & Mirror Play

Newborns are more interested in human faces than any other visual object and enjoy spending time simply looking at the face of a parent or carer. Choose a time when your baby is alert and receptive. Introduce some facial expressions – opening and closing your mouth, raising eyebrows, blinking, sticking out your tongue. Repeat each, pausing and allowing your face to relax in between. The youngest of babies may mimic what you do.

Add sounds, sing or hum. Extend this experience by using a large mirror: Make a scrapbook of faces to look at, enlarging family photographs or using varied magazine pictures.

During these activities, your child builds visual and listening skills. By exploring the social nature of faces, s/he develops emotional awareness. More importantly, such games cultivate secure attachments and bonding between you and your child.

Songs, Music & Clapping Games

All children respond to music and familiar songs. Babies progress from turning towards music to swaying, bouncing, imitating sounds, clapping, and jumping with whole body movement. Play calming music during relaxing activities such as bathtime or baby massage.

Children enjoy the repetition of nursery rhymes along with being bounced to the beat or gentle skin tapping. Fascinated with hand movements, your child will enjoy watching as you clap or wave while singing. Incorporate familiar words such as family names, into your songs, emphasising by singing loudly.

Baby massage calms and relaxes your baby. Gentle strokes, light tapping and making circles with your fingertips stimulates circulation and body awareness.

Bouncy balloons & rippling ribbons offer tactile and visual stimulation for your newborn. Hold a shiny helium balloon close to your child or tie lengths of coloured ribbons to a wooden spoon. Gently blow and move close to their face and arms. Remember – your child may reach out to swipe – never leave unattended.

Experiment with whispers, high or low tones. Whether you sing or speak the words, your child will delight in the rhythm and tone you use.

Older babies will enjoy simple musical instruments – a wooden spoon and a basin to drum, pot lids to clang together, rattles or rice-filled bottles to shake.

By experiencing music and rhymes, your child develops visual, language and listening skills while building vocabulary. There are opportunities to explore and experiment with sound while developing rhythm, balance and body awareness. Music brings with it elements of play and affection, soothes, calms and encourages social & emotional growth.

Tickly Game

Slowly, slowly,
Creeps the garden snail.
Slowly, slowly,
Up the wooden rail.

Quickly, quickly
Runs the little mouse.
Quickly, quickly
Round about the house

Throughout the Day

To tune of Frère Jaques

Baby (Peter), Baby (Peter),
Where are you, where are you?
(Sitting in your high chair,
Sitting in your high chair),
I see you,
Yes I do!

Or: Lying on the changing mat,
playing in the bath, etc.

**Boost
vocabulary and
sing songs about the
body, e.g. Head,
Shoulders, Knees & Toes.
Point to and touch
body parts (baby's
and yours) as you
sing.**

Peek-a-boo Game

Clap-a-clap-a-handies,
(Teddy)'s come to play,
Cover up your little eyes,
**Help child cover his eyes
While he hides away!**

Where's Teddy?
Where's Teddy
BOO!

Any other toy or a family member
could also hide during this song.

Others:

- Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
- Hickory, Dickory, Dock
- Pat-a-cake
- Hush Little Baby
- Incy Wincy Spider



Treasure Basket (8 mths+)

Make a 'treasure basket' of everyday household items for your child. The basket should be large enough to store a variety of items, low enough for the sitting child to reach into and strong enough to lean on. Many household items are safe for your child to play and experiment with through banging, touching, tasting. Change the basket contents to vary experiences.

Stay with your child to create a sense of security as s/he explores and to ensure safe play.

Always bear safety in mind while choosing objects and check regularly.

Ask yourself:

- Is the object too small? Are there choking hazards?

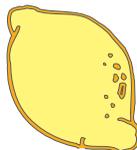
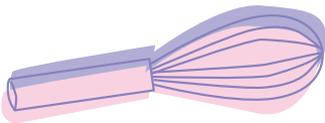
'Choke Testers' are available to buy at the Early Learning Centre.

- Could there be a toxic coating?
- Are there small pieces that may fall off?
- Can it be cleaned between uses?
- Are there sharp edges?

The treasure basket offers rich, sensory experiences through sight, touch, taste, smell, sound and movement. While your child investigates and explores, s/he develops concentration and learns about cause and effect.

S/he can choose to use the objects in a variety of ways learning to problem-solve while developing hand-eye co-ordination.

Listening games heighten hearing awareness. Hide a musical toy under a blanket or cushion and encourage your child to crawl towards the sound.



Ideas for your child's treasure basket

Natural Objects

- Large fir cones
- Large pebbles
- Large sea-shells
- Citrus fruits (unpeeled)
- Large corks
- Piece of loofah

Wooden Objects

- Small boxes
- Curtain rings
- Spoons
- Spatula
- Egg cups
- Small bowls
- Castanets (unpainted)

Paper & cardboard

- Greaseproof
- Cardboard
- Postcards
- Toilet roll tube
- Tin foil tube
- Board books
- Small boxes

Other

- Puppy bone
- Toothbrush
- Beanie bags
- Marble eggs
- Tennis ball
- Cloth (various textures)
- Funnels

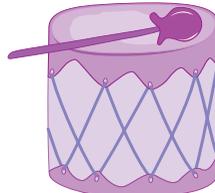
Metal objects

- Spoons
- Egg whisk
- Small tins
- Bells
- Tin lids
- Tea strainer
- Egg cups
- Large keys (on large key ring)

Listening objects

- Small drum
- Wind up toys
- Rattles
- Dry rice in bottles
- Castanets
- Harmonica

The treasure basket can be used for a number of years as a fun play source. Add/take away items as your child develops. Ideas for the older child – music boxes, wind up clock, torch, padlock and keys, magnets, screws and nuts, magnifying glass, egg timer, Russian dolls, prisms... the list is endless.



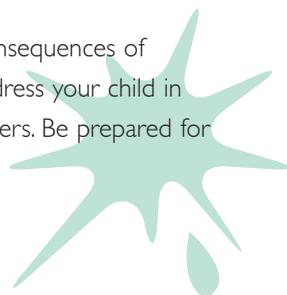
GAMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR TODDLERS



Messy Play

All children enjoy squeezing, squelching, prodding, poking, stretching or moulding with materials. While doing this, they learn about their various properties and changing states. There is no right or wrong way during this type of play and your child can be free and creative, using materials over and over. Messy play can be a soothing and relaxing activity through the toddler years and beyond.

Children need to be able to explore without worrying about the consequences of getting messy or dirty – if that is something that would bother you, dress your child in old clothes. Use an easy to clean area and cover surfaces with bin liners. Be prepared for sticky hair and messy faces! Join in – you'll love it!



Fun with Scarves

Dance with scarves to music – this offers opportunities for creative movement, develops confidence and is a fun way to exercise.



Play dough

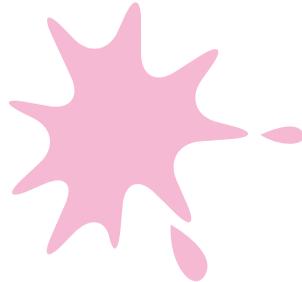
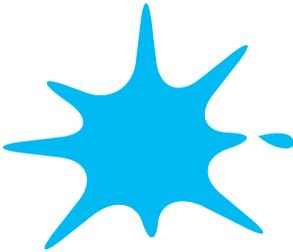
Mix 3 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 3 tablespoons oil and 1 cup water. Add non-toxic paint/food colouring. Use lids, child scissors, pegs, lollipop sticks, buttons, etc. to shape and pattern. Wrap in film & refrigerate for up to 3 days (safe to taste).

Shaving foam

Suitable for older toddlers who understand it's not okay to taste. Smear foam on smooth surface. Create squiggles, shapes, zigzags and pictures in the foam. Foam for sensitive skin is best.

Gloop

Mix cornflour and water in a large basin or deep tray. Pour using jugs, bowls and spoons. Change the consistency of the gloop by adding flour or water (safe to taste).



“I can do it!” Simple Activities to Promote Independence

Toddlers like independence and choosing for themselves. Some small changes at home can facilitate this while providing practical, fun activities for your child.

Set aside a kitchen cupboard as theirs. Include all the items they need and use. Your toddler can busy himself at cooking time and help at tidy up, appealing to his need for order. S/he will be proud to have an active role within the family routine.

In the bedroom, help your child identify where things belong by labelling. Place pictures or photos on the outside of drawers within reach, e.g. a picture of a jumper on the jumper drawer; socks on sock drawer; etc. This allows for choice making, showing preferences and builds self-esteem. It also builds early math skills as s/he sorts and matches items.

You can use this in other parts of your home also. By labelling toy boxes, for example, tidying up becomes a fun activity whereby your toddler feels in control, responsible and capable of completing tasks.

Puppets

Make stick puppets with your child – draw simple faces on card and tape onto lollipop sticks.

Draw surprised, sad, angry, happy, scared, sleepy, laughing faces, etc.

It's good to talk...

Offer your child verbal support during play. Comment on activities, e.g. “I see you're stacking the bricks higher and higher.” This develops vocabulary, clarifies actions and shows you value what they do. Opening conversations with a comment instead of a question, invites the child to continue and take the conversation in the direction s/he wants it to go.



Sand and Water

More messy fun much loved by toddlers! Sand and water play have all the benefits already discussed in 'Messy Play' and can happen inside or out. Toddlers will enjoy mixing, heaping, filling, emptying, pouring, patting, sifting, splashing, as well as making pretend cakes, houses, roads and lakes.

During water play, use plastic bottles, squeeze washing up bottles, funnels, jugs, cups, sieves, spray guns, sponges to squeeze, corks to float, stones to sink, dolls to wash. Add bubbles or food colouring. Water play can happen in a basin, baby bath or during bath time.

In the sand tray, your child will enjoy digging and hiding objects, using spoons, cups, buckets, spades, plastic plant pots, cars, trucks, cake tins, etc. If you don't have a sand tray, a large basin or baby bath will be just as good. As a variation, you can use dried lentils or rice.

Cultivate your toddler's natural interest in movement and exercise. 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes,' 'Ring Around the Rosie,' and 'The Hokey-Cokey' are action songs your toddler will enjoy and creative ways to ensure essential daily exercise. Try 'Animal Actions' together – crawling like a crab, jumping like a rabbit, pouncing like a tiger, hopping like a frog, etc.



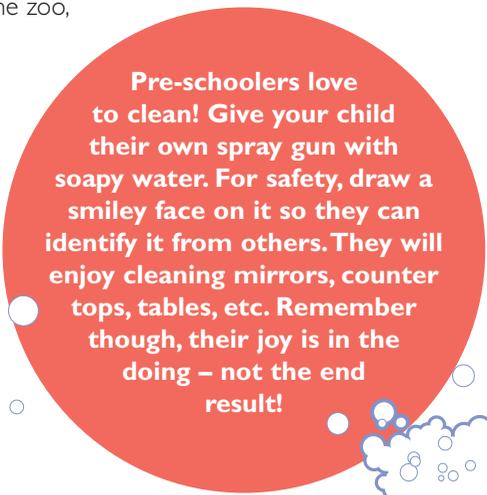
GAMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS

Dress-up & Role Play

'Make-believe' – pretending to be an animal, a princess, a doctor – is how children represent what they know about people, animals and situations. The child acts out everyday events, imitates reality and combines it with imagination. Imaginative play helps in making sense of the world and can be a highly social activity developing communication and language skills. By providing props, observing, taking part and following directions, adults support their communication and co-operation skills as well as the play itself.

Develop games into real life experiences. If your child likes to play cooking games, plan a simple cooking activity. Children who like to play shop will enjoy an active role on shopping days – draw a shopping list for your child and have him/her find some items at the supermarket.

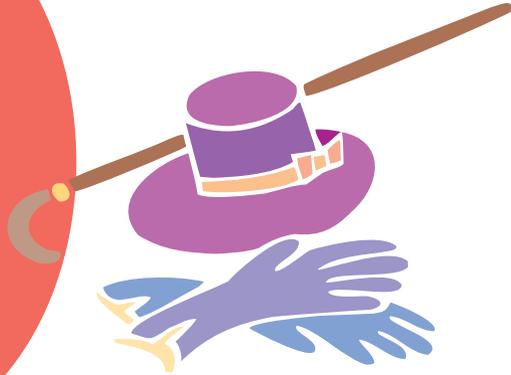
Develop role play by reading related books or making day trips, e.g. to the farm, the zoo, natural history museum, etc.



Pre-schoolers love to clean! Give your child their own spray gun with soapy water. For safety, draw a smiley face on it so they can identify it from others. They will enjoy cleaning mirrors, counter tops, tables, etc. Remember though, their joy is in the doing – not the end result!

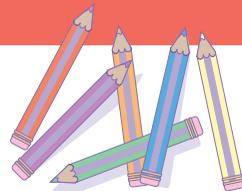
Dress-up Props

Clothes
Scarves
Old hats
Sarongs
Garden gloves
Swim wear
Wellington boots
Old nighties
Tinsel
Apron
Curtain material
Slippers, shoes
Towels
Old shirts



In choosing props, your child will prefer real items instead of plastic, e.g. cooking utensils or work tools. Ensure items are safe and a suitable size for your child to play with.

Help prepare your child for school and make a 'Big School' prop box for dressing up and role play. Fill the box with school items, e.g. school bag, copy books, pencil case, a school tie or second hand jumper, lunchbox, etc.



Storytime Fun

From birth, storytime offers comfort, security and a chance for one to one parental interaction. Young children enjoy simple picture books, board books and books with different textures. Older children will enjoy stories focusing on familiar events. Books with rhythmic words or repetitive text are also popular. Through books and stories, the pre-schooler learns about the wider world outside of his/her home, pre-school and everyday environment. They are able for more complex text, in-depth characters and will enjoy experiencing a variety of different subjects from fairytales to fact-filled, non-fiction.

Audio books are great for car trips, develop listening skills and encourage imagination. Don't forget, visiting your local library adds to the fun associated with books and reading while providing a rich supply of books for free!

Storytime Activities

Storytime with Props

Everyday items from the home can be used to broaden storytime experiences. For example, some teddies, a doll, bowls, etc. can be used while reading the story of Goldilocks. If your child is familiar with the sequence of the story, s/he will enjoy playing it out as you read. Together you can improvise and find suitable household items for storytime props.



More Storytime Fun

- Use a tape recorder and record storytime together, add sound effects. Bring along on car journeys.
- Together, make an 'all about me' book telling your child's story so far – use baby photographs, drawings, paintings & family pictures. Write about important family events, favourite things, etc.
- Use a torch and read books under the bedclothes or in a tent of blankets.
- Make storytime a sharing experience by taking turns to tell or 'read' familiar stories.

Telling Your Own Stories

Your pre-school child will delight in hearing you tell or make up stories. Choose topics of interest, e.g. animals, a story where a child is the hero, fun things your child likes to do, e.g. getting dirty. You can make your child and his friends the characters within a story. Talk about their feelings and describe settings to help your child create a clear image. Through short, simple stories, you can help prepare your child for new situations, e.g. going to school, a newborn in the family.

Your child will delight in hearing stories from your own childhood also. The possibilities are endless....once you begin storytelling, you will be surprised at how creative you and your child can be!



Painting

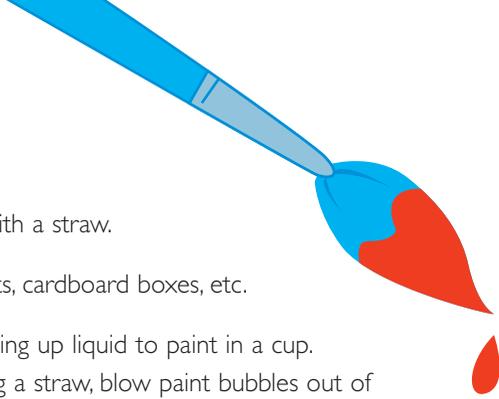
Painting need not only happen at an easel or on a page. Your child began painting when first s/he smeared food or juice on the tray of the highchair. Right up into the school years, your child will enjoy using his/her hands to experiment with shape, pattern and texture in this manner. Finger painting is an ideal activity to cater for this – but remember – finger painting on a page will probably progress into hand painting, painting of arms, faces, etc! Having the freedom to explore and experiment in this way makes for a more enjoyable play experience. For the pre-school child, the joy of painting is in the activity itself and not the final product. Instead of asking “What have you made?” or “What have you painted?” comment on the colours your child has used, e.g. “I see you mixed these two colours to make this new one.”

Always use child-safe, non-toxic paint



Painting Activities

- Pour paint on a page and blow with a straw.
- Decorate stones, shells, cones, nuts, cardboard boxes, etc.
- Add extra water and a little washing up liquid to paint in a cup. Place the cup on a page and using a straw, blow paint bubbles out of the cup and onto the page.
- Using an old toothbrush, paint can be flicked onto paper with the bristles.
- Use paint rollers, paint brushes and sheets of old wallpaper to make extra large creations.



A Little Maths

Encourage early mathematical concepts and skills. Sort fruit, cutlery or toys together – classification. Sort socks by size – Daddy's biggest to baby's smallest – seriation. Use mathematical language with your child – some, few, heavy, long, under, smallest, more, less.



OUTDOOR PLAY

From babies up, outdoor play is an essential part of development. For the young baby, the outdoors offers varied experiences appealing to their sense of sight, touch, smell, hearing and movement. Give your child opportunities to explore outdoors – crawling in the grass, playing at the beach, etc.

Set aside a section of your garden where your child is free to dig and grow using his/her own tools and watering can. Use a window box if you have limited space.

Children love to hide in cosy places. A blanket, a torch and a little imagination is all you need for simple indoor fun!

Older children will collect shells, flowers, leaves, etc. Hunting for insects under logs, digging for worms, splashing in puddles – all of these are invaluable play experiences and opportunities for you to explore and share nature with your child.

While outdoors, children are free to express themselves and exercise in ways that are generally not available inside.

Your local playground offers excellent opportunities for this – helping develop muscles, spatial awareness, body control, etc. Also, they learn about sharing, taking turns and safety.

Go on a scavenger hunt together. Make a list of things to collect on a nature walk – a seed, a feather, something round, a blue flower, part of an egg, a long twig, etc.

Outdoor Activities

- Nature walks at the forest
- Garden hunts
- Outdoor hide and seek
- Planting seeds or growing their very own tree
- Bubbles
- Kites
- Setting up a bird table/feeder
- Building huts and dens
- Teddy bear's picnic
- Trips to your local playground

SUGGESTED READING

The books suggested here are available for reference in Barnardos' National Children's Resource Centre in Dublin.

Books for Parents and Carers

Baby Massage – Expert Know-how at Your Fingertips

MQ Publications, 2005

Baby Play – 100 Fun-filled Activities for You and Your Baby to Enjoy

Weldon Owen, 2004

Brain Games for Babies, Toddlers and Twos – 140 Fun Ways to Boost Development

Hamlyn, 2000

Car Games – Over 100 Games to Avoid “Are We There Yet?”

PRC Publishing, 2004

Creative Play for 2-5s – Recognise and Stimulate Your Child's Natural Talents

Hamlyn, 2005

Fit Kids – A Practical Guide to Raising Healthy and Active Children

Dorling Kindersley, 2004

For the Kids – A Family Friendly Guide to Outings and Activities for Children in Ireland

Liffey Press, 2004

Learn to Swim – Step by Step Water Confidence and Safety Skills for Babies and Young Children

Dorling Kindersley, 2005

Practical Parenting – Party Games: 100 Games to Make Your Child's Party Go with a Swing.

Hamlyn, 2003

Word and Music Games for Toddlers and Twos – More Than 150 Brain Boosting Activities

Hamlyn, 2004

100 Language Games for Ages 0 to 3

Scholastic, 2004

Books to Share with Your Child

Craft: 10 Minute Activities

Priddy and Bicknell, 2002

I'm Bored – Over 150 Inspiring Ideas for Hours of Fun with Your Kids

Bloomsbury, 2003

I'm Bored ... Again – Over 100 Inspired Seasonal Games for Hours More Fun with Your Children

Bloomsbury, 2005

Gardening with Children

Collins, 2005

Kids' First Cook Book – A Life Size Guide to Making Fun Things to Eat

Dorling Kindersley, 1999

My Art Class – Creative Fun for Little Hands

Dorling Kindersley, 2003

My Daddy is a Pretzel – Yoga for Parents and Kids

Barefoot Books, 2004

Suggested Listening

Children's Favourites – 60 Minutes of Fun Songs

Children's Party Games

Classical Chimes – Soothing Classics in a Music Box Style

Classics for Babies – Soothing Music for Your Child

Hands, Fingers, Knees and Toes – Action Songs

Tumble Tots for Everyone – Action Songs

Listen, Learn and Grow with Bach

Lullaby – The Rainbow Collections

The Mozart Effect – Music for Children

Nursery Chimes – Gentle Rhymes in a Music Box Style

Postman Pat – 20 Favourite Television Theme Songs

Tumble Tots Action Songs Volume 2

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YOU CAN PLAY YOUR PART BY:

- Donating monthly by direct debit (see direct debit mandate →)
- Becoming a volunteer
- Donating goods to our shops
- Shopping at Barnardos

WHAT A REGULAR GIFT TO BARNARDOS COULD BUY:

€10 – as little as this could buy a toy for one of our toy libraries

€25 would provide a first aid kit for a family support project

€50 would provide breakfast for a week in one of our breakfast clubs for 15 children at risk of early school leaving

Thank you for your support.

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Yes I would like to make a monthly donation to Barnardos of:

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I would like to include a donation of € _____

* Donations to Barnardos can now go even further. Donations of €250 or over in a year (that's €21 a month or €4.85 a week) are now eligible for tax relief.

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK TO PAY DIRECT DEBITS

Please complete parts 1 to 4 to instruct your bank to make payments directly from your account.

Originator's Identification Number 3 0 1 9 3 9

Originator's Reference

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

1. The Manager Bank

(Full address of your bank branch)

2. Name of account holder

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4. Your instruction to the Bank, and Signature

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The amounts are variable and may be debited on various dates. I understand that Barnardos may change the amounts and dates only after giving me prior notice. I shall inform the bank in writing if I wish to cancel this instruction. I understand that if any Direct Debit is paid which breaks the terms of the instruction, the Bank will make a refund.

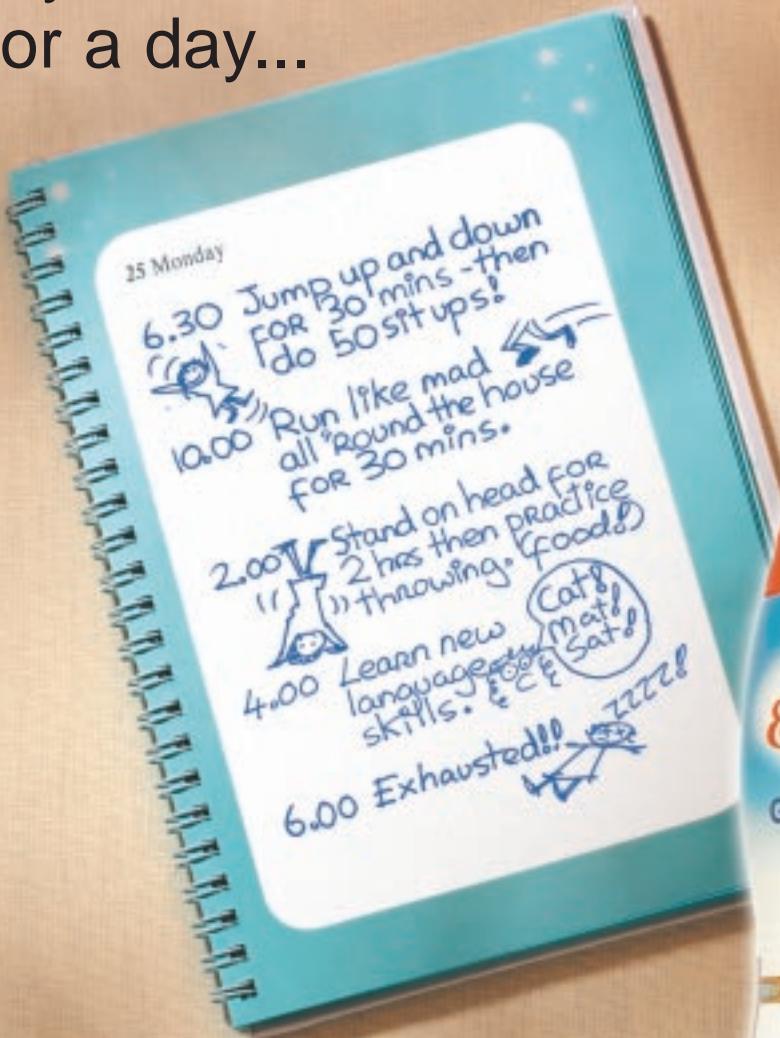
Signatures(s) _____ Date _____

Banks may decline to accept direct debits from some type of accounts.

If you would prefer not to receive information on Barnardos in the future, please tick this box.



If you were a toddler for a day...



25 Monday

6.30 Jump up and down
FOR 30 mins - then
do 50 sit ups!

10.00 Run like mad
all round the house
for 30 mins.

2.00 Stand on head for
2 hrs then practice
throwing (food)

4.00 Learn new
language skills.
& CE

Cat's
Mats
Sats

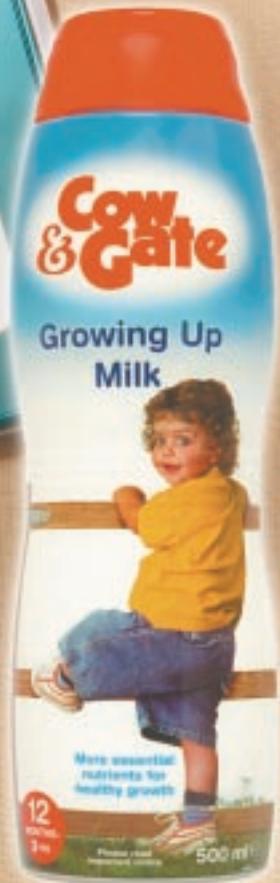
6.00 Exhausted!! zzzzz

...you'd know why toddlers need more essentials.

From 12 months old your toddler works harder than you do. Developed by nutritionists, Cow & Gate Growing Up Milk contains more of what your toddler needs for his busy schedule. More iron, vitamins and other minerals than cow's milk to help build strong bodies and natural defences. You've nothing to add but love, for a happy and healthy toddler.



Because being a toddler requires more essentials



Ready to pour.

Important Notice: Breastfeeding is best for babies. Growing Up Milk should only be used as part of a mixed diet and not as a breastmilk substitute before 6 months.

Guide to Games and Activities for 0-5 Year-Olds

I tried to teach my child with books,

He gave me only puzzled looks.

I tried to teach my child with words,

They passed him by, often unheard.

Despairingly I turned aside,

“How shall I teach this child?” I cried.

Into my hands he put the key,

“Come,” he said, “Play with me!”

Author Anon

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