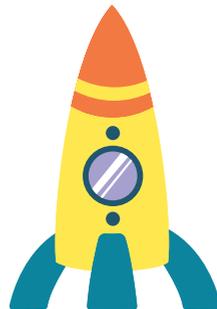
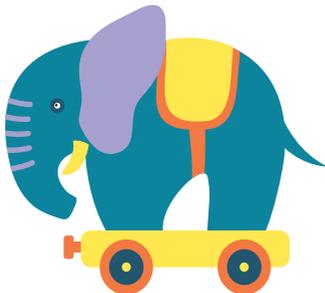
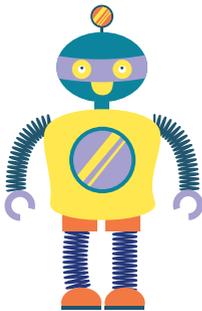
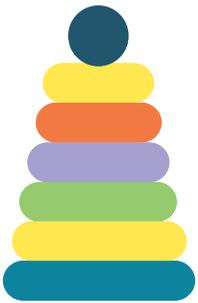


**Twins  
trust.**

We support  
twins, triplets  
and more...

**PLAY**

for twins, triplets  
and more



# CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Twins, triplets and more with additional needs	4
Siblings in your family	6
0-6 months	7
6-12 months	12
12-18 months	18
18-24 months	23
2-3 years	28
3 years and up	33
Further information and resources	39

## Authors

This booklet was written by Helen Regan and Gemma Gunter from Twins Trust.

Helen is the Senior Coordinator of Family Crisis Support at Twins Trust, supporting families who are in serious need and crisis.

Gemma trained at the Norland College and has a degree in Early Childhood Studies. She has worked as a nanny and also has a background in outreach work. Gemma is the Family Support Practitioner for the Family Crisis Support service.

## Thank you to:

- ▶ Claire Burgess and Rebekah Frankcom from Bespoke Family for their support as advisors in producing this booklet.
- ▶ Natasha Fenwick from Twins Trust for her help and support in producing this booklet.
- ▶ The parents of twins, triplets and more who provided quotes and shared their personal experiences in play with their own multiples.
- ▶ The National Lottery Community Fund for funding the production of this booklet.



Twins  
trust.

# Introduction

Play is the way children learn about the world, learn to develop social relationships and learn to express themselves. Language development and play are closely linked, and from an early age by talking and singing to your children when you are playing you are helping them develop their speech and language.

Whether it's playing with just you and one of your children or everyone all together, this booklet has tips and suggestions for how to play and how play supports your children's development as they reach milestones and continue to develop their speech and language. Families with twins, triplets and more have shared their experiences and favourite ways of playing

with their children, throughout this booklet.

The booklet is divided into sections with suggested ages. Children will go at their own pace and may go back and forward as well; for example a child that is tired or poorly might want to go back to a game of a younger age because it is comforting and familiar. You don't need to do everything that is suggested or at the suggested time; use the ideas that fit in with your way of parenting and the interests of your children.



*Watching my twins playing together, laughing and making up games using their imaginations - seeing what they come up with - makes all those sleepless nights worthwhile!*

# Twins, triplets and more with additional needs

Families with a child who has additional needs face **unique** challenges in twin, triplet and quad families. A multiple or multiples who have additional needs are part of a very special relationship with their twin, triplet or more siblings. Developing ways to encourage and adapt play ideas so that all your children can play together can be very rewarding for you all, regardless of how short or long the play lasts.

The age brackets in this booklet **are a**

**guide only**, and your children may reach milestones in their own time compared to their siblings, or may not reach the milestones at the **suggested age**. You may find it helpful to use the ideas and suggestions **which are appropriate** for your children regardless of which developmental stage the play idea is in. This is a guide and resource to be used flexibly for your twins, triplets or more whichever stage they are at.



“

*One of my triplets has special needs and requires an activity chair to help her sit. When they were younger we would place her sisters in their high chairs so they were all at the same height and they could all see each other. I would then sit and read to them all together. Singing with actions was also a big favourite for all of my children, they could watch and join in with actions all watching each other. It was a special time to see them all interacting.*

”

“

When my twins, one of whom has additional needs, and their older brother were younger they would re-enact their favourite stories from books, deciding which character they would be and who would say what ahead of the game. As they all knew the story so well, my twin with speech delay was able to join in, it didn't matter what or how he spoke, they all knew what "part" he was playing.

At other times he would be given a non-talking role, for example he would be the dog or the train. He was always very happy to play these roles and join in, and he was always included and involved.

”

Twins  
trust.

# Siblings in your family

Whether you have older or younger siblings to your twins, triplets and more, involving them in play can help you in having an extra pair of hands to play. Older siblings could help with setting up games and showing their multiple siblings how to play, encouraging and praising them. Younger children may enjoy watching their older sibling and copying their games.

If possible, have areas for older siblings and a space for their toys which is not within reach of the younger multiple siblings. For younger siblings, have a toy box of their own, with their own toys. This can help when everyone is needing some time to play away from each other.

If you are able to, encourage a time when one twin, triplet or more spends time playing with or going to an activity with their older or younger sibling, giving both children an opportunity to play with each other outside of the multiple group.

While younger multiples are napping you may be able to spend one-to-one time with their older siblings, a special time for them when they can have your full attention. Think about moving bedtime slightly later for the older child so you can have time to read with them or hear about their day without being interrupted by their younger siblings.

*My triplets were very interested when my older daughter started school and wanted to be involved in doing homework with her. We decided to give the triplets their own books and pencils to come and draw and do their 'homework' at the same time.*

Twins  
trust.

# 0-6 months

“

*We've definitely had more noticeable playtime since my twins were about 4 months or so, when they started really reacting to our voices and playing with toys.*

”

**At this age your twins, triplets or more may be starting to:**

**Gaze at faces and respond to facial expressions**

**Hold up their heads**

**Give you their first smiles**

**Reach out and hold objects**

**Make sounds and repeat them back to you**

**Move around on their backs**

## What to expect at this age for your twins, triplets or more

A small amount of play at this age can be tiring, so try to keep playtime to 10-15 minutes at a time for your babies. They need to sleep often to reinforce their brain development. From about 3-4 months onwards you can expect them to be up for about 2-2½ hours at any one time

including feeding, then they will need a nap.

**Having a short time each day without other noise** such as the television or radio so that your babies can listen to background noise and just your voice, helps with speech and language development at this early age.

## Toys and ideas for playing together at this age

### SAFETY MIRRORS

Your babies will enjoy looking at themselves in the mirror. You can place the mirrors to the side of the babies while they lie on the floor. Some baby

gyms have mirrors to hang above the babies. It is also a great activity to play with your babies looking in the mirrors, using each individual baby's name,

smiling and playing peek-a-boo with them. This is great for bonding and early speech and language development.



### TEETHING TOYS

Teething can start from 4 months. Toys which your babies can chew on are good to help with their pain as well as help develop their hand eye coordination. Encourage them to hold them independently by passing the toys to them. Be aware they shouldn't be too heavy as their strength to start with will be limited.

### BABY GYM

These are great in encouraging your babies to start to reach and swipe things with their arms, as well as allowing them to kick and start to develop

rolling skills. They have toys hanging above their heads which can be swapped regularly to keep them interested. Playing on the baby gym can be

done individually or with all of your babies laid together, where you can also interact with them as well as allow them to explore by themselves.

## YOU

From the day they are born you are your babies' favourite toy. You talking to them, smiling and interacting with them helps in all areas of their development.

Cuddles are really important and making the most of the one-to-one

times (nappy changes, times when only one baby is awake) increases your bond with your babies and allows you to learn about them individually.

As your babies start to have more awake time you can include them all

in your chat. For example, if you are changing one and the other is awake bring them over in their bouncy chair and direct conversation to all of them in turn so they feel included, and they will enjoy listening and watching you.

## RATTLES

As with the teething toys your babies will start to be able to hold rattles themselves and realise they are able to produce a noise. This is good for their brain development. You can

also use the rattles whilst you sing with the babies, always remembering to give them eye contact and use their individual names.

## SENSORY BASKET

This is a collection of everyday objects chosen to stimulate your baby's

different senses. It is a great way of giving non-mobile babies more

experiences. See over for how to put together your own Sensory Basket.

## PEEK-A-BOO

Lay your babies down on a mat on the floor or, if they are happy, during a nappy change. Use any type of fabric to place over your face and say, "where is Mummy/Daddy", then pull the cloth down and say, "peek-a-boo", with lots of smiles

and eye contact with your babies and then ask where they are, using their individual names.

You will find they start to smile and laugh when people are uncovered and as they get older will start to hide themselves. It is a

simple but fun game and increases your bonding and the baby's speech and language as well as emotional development.

As they get older you can also play peek-a-boo with their toys and they can play with each other.

## HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN SENSORY BASKET

Use things from around your house - wooden spoons, containers, metal objects, brushes, different types of material, sponges - the list is endless and can include anything that provides sensory experiences. A foil blanket (used to keep marathon runners warm) is also fun to include. This can be put under the babies' legs, so as they kick they produce a noise. It is also good for looking into as it's shiny and reflective. Put all the items together in a basket with low sides so as the babies get older they can sit, reach in and take things independently.

Babies under 6 months will not be able to explore the items independently so you will need to explore the items with them. Show them the items and tell them about what they can feel, see, hear. Take out each item and talk to your babies about what you are holding, put it to their hands and let them feel it, tickle their toes with the brushes. Encourage the

babies to follow the objects with their eyes and turn their heads to watch it. Lie all your babies down looking at you so you can move from one to the next. Maintain eye contact and use individual names. This helps with the baby's sensory development and also encourages bonding when you give them eye contact and they watch what you are doing.

**SAFETY POINT:** Always supervise your babies while they play with the sensory basket and ensure that there is nothing sharp and there are no small parts your babies could choke on. Make sure you regularly check the items in the basket and replace anything that may have worn out, perished or become dangerous.

### BOOKS

Cloth and board books are good to start looking at with your babies when they are able to focus more. Black and white patterned books are a great start as their vision is limited in the very early days.

This can be done individually during cuddles or together whilst laid on the floor or whilst sitting in bouncy chairs. This is great for early speech and language development.

## SINGING

Like reading, singing is a great way to increase the babies' speech and language development. Babies are very

appreciative of any type of singing so don't be embarrassed, just go for it and enjoy.

## TUMMY TIME

Tummy time is time your baby spends on their front while awake - it is important for building strength in the neck and shoulder muscles ready for the next stages of physical development, such as crawling and walking. Try doing it for very short periods of time, 3-5 minutes, a few times a day.

Tummy time can be on a play mat together, on the changing mat or even on your chest one-to-one.

Some babies will prefer tummy time on your chest as opposed to the floor. Sitting down or lying on the floor with one of your babies on your chest can help with bonding as you can maintain eye contact. If the babies are on the play mat, try putting toys just within their reach, or a mirror for them to look into. Make sure you turn your babies back onto their backs before they become upset. As your

babies grow, they will become stronger and start to enjoy more time playing this way. As your babies start to enjoy tummy time you can put them on their fronts at the same time facing each other so they start to notice each other and interact, however if they are still unsure about it we recommend you do it one at a time so you can be focussed and reassuring to the baby practising tummy time.

*I would have all my triplets at 5 months on the play mat and would take in it turns to have one practising sitting so they could look at the play mat from a different angle. Once she had had a turn I would lie her down and take her sister and do the same with her. However whilst I was holding one the other two were looking at me on the play mat and I was singing and interacting with them as well.*

Twins  
trust.

# 6-12 months

“ When my twins started to sit up I could give them both a toy to enjoy and leave a few in front of them so they could grab at and choose which one they wanted - I was then able to start watching them play side by side. ”

**At this age your twins, triplets or more may be starting to:**

**Sit  
unaided**

**Move  
around -  
crawling or  
rolling**

**Pull  
themselves to  
standing and  
start to cruise  
around using  
furniture**

**Take  
their first  
steps**

**Explore  
things that  
are within  
their reach**

**Use  
language -  
babbling and  
emerging single  
words**

## What to expect at this age for your twins, triplets or more

As your twins, triplets and more become aware of each other at this age, they may begin to play alongside each other. You may hear them experimenting with sounds and exchanging babble.

Keep talking to your children, using their individual names. Tell them what you are

doing and tell them what they are doing. Responding to their babble helps them develop their language. At this stage, they need to hear lots of different words and sounds to encourage their speech development.



## Toys and ideas for playing together at this age

### STACKING CUPS, BLOCKS, CONTAINERS & BOXES

Your babies will want to develop their coordination. Provide simple activities such as posting boxes, building towers and shape sorters to encourage this. Babies at this age love repetition and you will find they enjoy it if you build a tower and

they knock it down over and over again. Always remember to talk to the babies during this activity and encourage them to start to stack as well as knock over. When playing with all your babies allow them to take it in turns and wait. Use their

individual names so they understand when they can go and when they have to wait. If you feel they're not able to do this yet at this age then buying two sets of stacking cups can be an answer until they get slightly older.

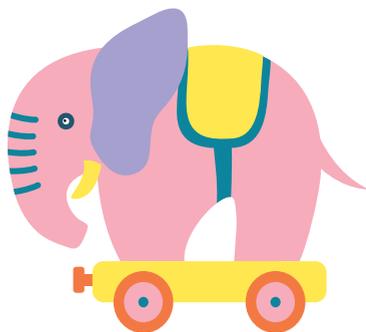
### SIMPLE JIGSAW PUZZLES

Large peg jigsaws help develop your babies' coordination. Share the experience with them and encourage them to put the pieces in the correct place. Allow all your babies to have a piece if they want to play together but

don't worry if one or more are interested and the others aren't. This also encourages early speech and language skills as you can make animal and vehicle noises whilst playing with associated picture puzzles.

## TOYS THAT MOVE

By rolling toys in between your babies it encourages early movement as well as being able to follow them with their eyes and starting to point at the objects. Musical balls also help explore movement and sound. Basic cars and other rolling toys increase the babies' coordination.



## BOOKS

Cloth and board books can be enjoyed with or without an adult. It is very important for the babies' early speech and language development to share books altogether and/or individually.

As your babies are able to sit better you can sit with them altogether to enjoy

sharing the books. You have two knees for two of them and if you have triplets or more, sitting on the floor with two either side and one in the middle works really well. Also start making connections between the picture in the books and the real-life objects, for example, "here's a bird, can we see

one out of the window? They say, 'cheep cheep'".

As your babies' development increases they will become more confident in the water and may like to start playing in the bath. You can get some good bath books to enhance their bath time fun.

## SINGING

As you have now been singing with your babies for a while you will start to notice they get excited as you start to sing their favourite songs. They may even start to try and join in, shake toys and laugh along with you. This is great for their

speech and language development as they start to try and put sounds to the songs and increase their eye contact and conversational skills throughout. Copy the sounds they make to encourage their

confidence in starting to talk and develop their speech and language.



## SENSORY BASKET

This is a collection of everyday objects chosen to stimulate your baby's different

senses. It is a great way of giving non-mobile babies more experiences.

# HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN SENSORY BASKET

Use things from around your house - wooden spoons, containers, metal objects, brushes, different types of material, sponges - the list is endless and can include anything that provides sensory experiences. A foil blanket (used to keep marathon runners warm) is also fun to include. The babies can hold this and rustle in in their hands. It is also good for looking into as it's shiny and reflective. Put all the items together in a basket with low sides so the babies can sit, reach in and take things independently.

As your babies become able to sit unaided they can choose their own items out of the sensory basket to explore. Your

babies will enjoy emptying the basket and then putting the items back in. Follow your babies, let them lead the play. For example if one of them chooses a whisk and puts it straight in their mouth, show them if they bang it you can feel the vibrations, if you stir it in a metal bowl listen to the sound it makes, talking all the time to your babies about the noises you can hear or how the objects feel.

You may start to see that each of your babies prefer different objects.

Again follow their lead with what they like to play with and accept it is okay for them to enjoy different or the same things. This will also help you to get to know each one of your babies' different personalities. However if they do always want the same thing out of the sensory basket try having two of that item. We wouldn't recommend having separate treasure baskets for babies this age as they need **constant supervision during this activity.**

**SAFETY POINT:** *Never leave your children unattended whilst playing with a sensory basket. Babies and children may try to put items in their mouths or accidentally harm one of their siblings with something from the basket.*

## BANGING AND BASHING

Wooden and big plastic spoons can be used as drum sticks, and an upturned washing-up bowl or a strong cardboard box can be a drum. Different sizes of

plastic spoons are interesting too, as well as pots and pans that act as great drums and as containers for putting things into and moving things around in.

## SENSORY PLAY

Hard and soft, warm and cold, thick and thin, furry and smooth, bendy and stiff, everything is interesting and worth exploring, and small children need all the new experiences you can offer. Using a large tray and putting sensory items in it for them to explore is such fun. Shredded paper is fun to hide things in for the babies to find. Cooked pasta or spaghetti as well as flour, oats and rice krispies are all good for this age to explore. This can be done separately in their high chairs or together in a large tray on the floor. You may want to have some other adult help when you try this until you feel more comfortable with how you can achieve it safely.

Playing in water, pouring water and listening to the

sounds it makes, and allowing them to kick in the water, helps physical development but also makes bath time fun! **We do not recommend having babies in the bath at the same time at this age.** However the baby who is out of the bath can still be involved in the same room kicking around on the floor on a changing mat or in a bouncy chair and listening to your commentary.



Bubble machines and blowing bubbles is also a fun activity for you to all enjoy together. You can link that with singing and further language development.

You can also buy many brightly coloured sensory toys with different textures and sounds which are fun to play with together.

**SAFETY POINT:** *Babies at this age will put everything in their mouths so make sure things they are given are not going to cause choking and that they are never left unsupervised whilst doing sensory play. When using food be aware of any allergies.*

## Getting out and about

Going out with your twins, triplets and more can be challenging and may feel overwhelming to start with. A short walk around the block with the babies in the pram is a big deal when you're learning how to leave the house with more than one baby. Gain your confidence by going out with support before you go out alone regularly.

When out for a walk with the pushchair at this age keep talking to your babies about what you can see and point things out to them. Your babies may start to point at things, make time to explain what it is and interact with them. Always remember to direct your conversation to the babies individually, and if one baby has pointed something out to you reply by using their name and then include their siblings in showing them too.

"Yes Isobel there is a squirrel. Rebecca look at the squirrel. Hannah look, Isobel has shown us

a squirrel up that tree!"

Visiting ponds to feed the ducks, or play parks to have a swing, become very popular and can break up the day for everyone. Be prepared: decide how you want to manage your multiples before you arrive. You could make it a rule that it's one in the swing and the others wait in the pushchair. Always make sure you have a snack or something for them to distract them when they have to go back in the pushchair. The siblings waiting in the pushchair can also be involved in the conversation and fun whilst waiting their turn. This is a difficult thing for them to do so if they are struggling only visit the swings when you have other adults, or visit a park that has enough swings for everyone.

*I found having different equipment to put the babies in before they could move themselves was really helpful, I had a jumperoo, a bouncy chair, a playmat and a bumby-type seat and would rotate them around, giving them different things to look at whilst making sure they were always safe.*

Twins  
trust.

# 12-18 months

“ At this age my triplets were starting to pull themselves up and stand by the sofa; nothing precious could ever be left within their reach! ”

**At this age your twins, triplets or more may be starting to:**

**Play  
alongside  
each  
other**

**Walk  
unaided  
with uneven  
steps**

**Recognise  
familiar  
adults**

**Understand  
the world  
around them  
more and  
more**

**Point  
at  
objects**

**Expand their  
language -  
start to use  
recognisable  
words such as  
'mama'**

## What to expect at this age for your twins, triplets or more

As your multiples move into becoming toddlers they want to become more involved in everything, and now they are starting to move around their curiosity takes over.

It's important that you think about what you need to do to keep your children safe when playing.

Playpens and safety gates

can be used to create safe spaces which can be made into play areas. Consider moving away objects that may get broken or items that can be used for climbing out or over the gates.

If you have space consider making one end of a room into a play area, keeping the toys inside so your children have a fun place

to be if you need to leave the room briefly.

Remember to play in the space with all your children. While the children are happy with a toy you could be reading with their sibling sat on your lap and both enjoying some one-to-one time.

## Toys and ideas for playing together at this age

### MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Your toddlers like to become more involved. They are more in control of their limbs and enjoy playing musical

instruments. This can be done whilst singing; a toy drum to bang, shakers to shake. The toddlers will be able to follow simple

instruction songs, for example, "Shake your shakers. Shake, shake and stop."



### PUSH & PULL ALONG TOYS

As your multiples start to walk around they will be able to push walkers and



brick trolleys. They will also be able to pull toys behind them. One or more of your multiples may be more confident at this but make sure you are still encouraging the others to practice these skills and be aware that the more confident ones will not have much spatial awareness so may bump into each other.

## STACKING TOYS

Your toddlers will be more able to stack things up themselves rather than just knocking them down. Encourage their

early interactions together, one to build and the other to knock it down.

## READING

At this age children may begin to become more and more interested in books. Reading at this age is particularly enjoyable for both you and your children and it is especially good to spend one-to-one or quiet time with the children.

Read books individually with each of your multiples by sitting one on your lap while you

read a story and then swap over. You can also read all together with all of your children on your lap, or to the side of you. Don't worry if they don't all want to read at the same time or the same books. They will start to develop favourites and want to

re-read them constantly.

It is so important for the speech and language development that you share stories. You can also print out photos of specific events or trips in the multiples' life and share these experiences again and again. They love to be the hero of the stories and it will stimulate their memories and life experiences.

# ABC

## SINGING

Action songs start to become very popular as the toddlers' ability to get involved and join in increases. They love to

dance around and have fun. This encourages the children to start to speak more clearly and start to put more words together in

sentences. Songs such as row your boat, sleeping bunnies, and dingle dangle scarecrow are all favourites.

## BUBBLES

Your multiples will get excited about chasing the bubbles and trying to pop them. They can also start, with supervision,

taking it in turns to blow bubbles and then pop them.

## BALLS

Your multiples will be keen to practice their new skills of running around and love to chase, throw and roll balls in between each other. Don't expect them to

be able to play together at this age so having enough balls for each of them is a good idea.

## DEN MAKING

Create a playhouse or den by putting blankets/sheets over the table or the back of the sofa moved out from the wall, or an old sheet to make a tent, together with some cushions and a rug to make a bed. Your multiples will enjoy crawling in and out and playing inside the den.

This helps to stimulate their developing imaginative play and interact together. The dens are exciting as they are different every time. Dens can also be made using big boxes from shallow fruit trays to wine cartons, which are great fun to get in and out. Really big boxes make

very good houses and garages. Cut out windows (the flaps make the door) and stick coloured paper or pictures from magazines on the sides for decoration. If you have older children this is a great way to get them involved as well by decorating the den.

## SENSORY PLAY

Create a sensory tray using a large tray. Include different types of brushes (these can be taken from a sensory basket), spoons, pots, pans, plastic containers with oats or cereals in, to encourage early mark-making and pouring skills. Try making a small sensory tray for each of your children to enjoy

using their favourite toys such as diggers, cars or animals to encourage their individuality and so they don't have to always share.

Place these trays on high-chair trays, low down on a table where all of your children can reach or in the garden.

If you have family or friends' support ask if

they can help set up the trays and with the activity, this will give you more time to spend with each of your children as they play. Try to not worry about the mess. Your children will enjoy the textures and discovering what is hidden for them; the tidying can wait until the play is finished.

## HIDE & SEEK

Your multiples may enjoy hiding themselves in dens and behind things and enjoy peeking and booing out at you and

their siblings. They will also enjoy finding toys and hiding them under pots and in boxes.

## WATER PLAY

In the bath the babies can start to play more, pouring and watching the water move from one container to another. As they start to sit well, they can splash their arms more and reach for bath toys, making the experience a lot more fun. If you feel the babies are sitting well enough and you start to want to have

them in the bath together there are bath seats you can use which can make it safer for the babies and more enjoyable for you.

You can try making ice cubes from coloured water (adding food colour or glitter to enhance the sensory experience). It's fun for you all to watch what happens when the

ice cubes begin to melt. These can be explored in the large tray together or separately in their highchairs.

### **SAFETY POINT:**

*Never leave your children unattended in the bath or with water at any time.*

## Getting out and about

Going to the shops, the park or to a play group or twins and multiples club is a great time to play. There is so much to see on your walk or drive. The bus at the bus stop, the clouds moving fast and the sounds you hear. You may find that your babies are having

more awake time in their pushchair. You may want to change to a forward facing pushchair so they can join in and point things they see out to you. By listening to them and repeating back what they see helps and encourages their speech and language.

“

*I used to get a blanket when we had story time and we all used to huddle in, so even the babies who couldn't sit on my knee for that story were still included in a 'blanket cuddle'*

”

Twins  
trust.

# 18-24 months

“ I would often find my triplets had improved on a game I had set up and turned it into a better game of hide and seek, hiding soft toys in a box for their sisters to find and taking it in turns to have a go at hiding the toy! ”

**At this age your twins, triplets or more may be starting to:**

**Enjoy role playing and pretend play with their siblings**

**Become more confident walkers**

**Use around 10 words and may use them when pointing to objects**

**Use words such as 'me', 'mine' and 'no'**

**Enjoy climbing**

## What to expect at this age for your twins, triplets or more

Now your twins, triplets and more are starting to develop some language, they want to be heard by you. Encourage them to wait their turn when their sibling is talking or pointing something out. If they are all talking at once ask them all to stop speaking for a moment and use the name of your twin, triplet or more who was speaking first to go first. When they have

finished, praise the children who were waiting and then ask again using their name for them to tell you what they have seen. By using your children's name when asking a question you will get one answer at a time rather than two, three or more voices all speaking at once trying to compete with each other.

## Toys and ideas for playing together at this age

### SMALL WORLD TOYS



Figures, animals, boats, cars, buses and planes are all fun for your multiples. They are developing their imagination and their pretend play, and you may find they try and recreate things they have seen in their life experience with the

characters. You can assist with this following their lead and allowing them to experiment with what might happen in different situations.

### CONSTRUCTION & BUILDING BRICKS

As your toddlers' coordination increases they will move on from stacking cups to being able to build more

complicated structures and will enjoy showing you their masterpieces. Praise them individually and encourage their language

by describing what you see and copying the words they use as well as filling in the gaps in their sentences.

## ROLE PLAY TOYS

A telephone, dustpan and brush, plastic cups, plates, jugs, dolls, teddies, soft animals, toy bed or pram to push along are all popular toys for children as their imagination develops. Follow your multiples' lead and extend their pretend play by developing their language. For example, when they pick up the phone and say "Hiya," when it's

your turn say, "Hi, it's Sam on the phone for Luca" to start to encourage them to play together rather than just alongside each other. They will start to be able to have pretend picnics with your guidance but don't expect their attention span to be long. Praise them for short bursts of interaction before they jump to another activity.

## DRAWING

Moving on from the early mark-making with brushes, this age group will be keen to try out crayons, paper and colouring books to encourage drawing and

mark-making. **Make sure you supervise them** as some children are still keen to put them in their mouths, but it is great for their fine motor skills. Display their

works of art for everyone to see. This will encourage your multiples to be proud of their own achievements as well as appreciating their siblings.

## SINGING, ACTION SONGS AND DANCING

This becomes more energetic and can be boisterous with twins, triplets or more as they can recognise songs and really join in properly. Make sure it is done in a safe environment and at a time you don't mind them getting very excited (not just before

bedtime!). Encourage each child to tell you a song they would like to sing. If you need some new material there are plenty of children's CDs, or if you have a smart speaker it will no doubt have lots of ideas for you and your children to enjoy.

## READING

Books can become more complicated and you may find your little ones will sit and listen for longer to a book they are particularly interested in. They will want to become more involved, turning the pages and even

starting to finish the sentences off in repetition books. Having board books on a level the children can independently access is hugely beneficial to develop their independence and increases your awareness

of their individual favourites. As your children's speech and language is emerging rapidly, encourage them to talk as much as possible and make sure that each of your multiple group are heard.

## SPECIFIC SENSORY BASKETS

As your multiples develop, they will be showing you more of their own individual personalities and likes and dislikes. This can sometimes be challenging, for example a very common theme is wanting to practice throwing. They don't understand what is safe to throw and not. We suggest that if your

multiples are keen to develop this skill, to make a throwing sensory basket. This should be filled with things that you don't mind them throwing - for example soft balls, bean bags, pompoms etc. If you see any of your multiples going to throw something unsuitable, instead of shouting no and taking it away use

language such as, "We don't throw remotes, you can throw these instead," and put the basket in front of them. You could also take the items out and use the basket as a target for them, further increasing their hand-eye coordination and channelling their concentration.

## SENSORY PLAY

The sensory play as described earlier in this booklet can still be used, but as your multiples develop more understanding for not eating everything, items such as dried pasta can also be used. Spaghetti

threaded through the holes in a colander is great for hand-eye coordination and the pasta shapes can also be threaded onto the spaghetti.

One thing to note is that your multiples

concentration span is likely to be short. Try to make sure any sensory activities are removed before the children get bored. This limits the amount of mess.

## JIGSAW PUZZLES

This is a good activity for winding down towards the end of the day to try and get your multiples to sit still and concentrate on. This is great for hand-eye coordination as well as language development as you can discuss shapes, sounds and provide simple instructions for the children to follow. Having enough

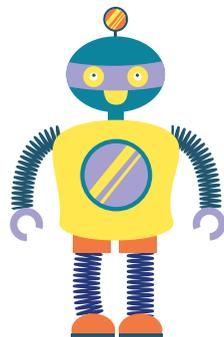
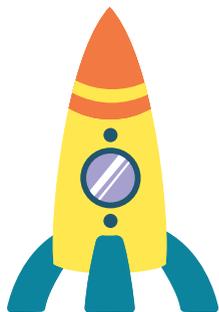
jigsaws for each of your multiples can be beneficial so that they don't have to share all the time. It's a good idea to start with the simple peg jigsaws and be led by the children. Again, don't be worried if one twin or triplet is more able than the others in the multiple group.

## Getting out and about

From about 18 months, children's imaginations develop fast. Talk about what is happening in the street - what things do they see and hear. When shopping, point out all the things around and encourage them to tell you what they are. Think about joining a parent and toddler group, a twins and multiples club or another group such as a music group where your children can practice their socialising skills outside the family.

Your twins, triplets and more will be wanting to practice their new skill of walking. This can be a stressful time for parents as they are not very stable and have no sense of danger. Make sure they are able to do it in a safe environment, for example some park areas have gates all around which means the toddlers can't get out. Until they are securely walking keep them in the pushchair near roads or in busy areas.

*I always keep some toys in a cupboard that I bring out only when I need the children to be occupied for a while - toys they don't normally see - so it gives me the chance to get the tea ready or clear up.*



Twins  
trust.

## 2-3 years

“ My children thrive on being played with individually even if for just an hour. The other day, I took my daughter swimming while my husband took my son to the park. They both had a wonderful time and keep asking when we can do it again. ”

**At this age your twins, triplets or more may be starting to:**

**Talk and put sentences together**

**Enjoy playing together in a game rather than just playing alongside each other**

**Engage in role playing and dressing up**

**Develop more independence, doing tasks such as putting their coat and shoes on by themselves**

**Want to make their own choices**

## What to expect at this age for your twins, triplets or more

As your children are becoming more independent, and may be spending time at pre-school or nursery, it is important to encourage their individuality and develop their social skills as an individual rather than as one of a multiple group.

You may find that you have requests for two, three or four different bedtime stories; great if you have time. For the nights you don't have time allow each

child their own night when it's their turn to choose the story for bedtime. Make a note on a notice board or leave a note attached to the fridge so you don't forget whose turn it is! When asking questions about a story ask your twin, triplet or more who picked the book to answer. Use their name to give them an opportunity to answer in their time so they are not fighting to be heard over their siblings' voices.

## Toys and ideas for playing together at this age

Children at this age will be extending the play they were experiencing at 18-24 months as well as...



### MESSY PLAY

You can start to introduce more art activities as they can start to understand that not everything is for eating! **Don't feel**

**pressure to do this at home**, as if they attend a nursery or pre-school they will experience these activities there. You

could also make use of time when there is more than one adult around to provide these activities or during precious one-to-one time.

### PAINTING

Double easels can be bought, with trays on either side for the paint pots. Thick paintbrushes are easily available.

Aprons are a must, as well as something to cover the floor such as an old shower curtain that can be wiped down afterwards.

Make sure you have everything ready for the clean-up before you start with the children.

### PLAY DOUGH

To make your own play dough: 2 cups plain flour, 1 cup salt, 1 tablespoon cooking oil and some food colouring - mix with water until it's soft and springy but not sticky. This will

keep for about a month if wrapped in cling-film inside a covered container, e.g. an ice-cream box, in the fridge. If possible, take it out half an hour before use so that it becomes soft

and pliable again. Play dough is best used on a laminated wipe-clean table-top or tray. Rolling pins and cake cutters can be used with play dough.

### PUSH-ALONG & PUSHCHAIRS

Now your multiples are walking confidently, pushchairs and other push-along toys are great to develop their pretend play as well as encourage further spatial awareness.

### SAND PLAY

This is best kept for outdoors unless you have lots of room. Wet sand and dry sand offer very different play experiences. It is best to start with dry

sand, sifting it through the fingers, hiding hands and finding them, pouring sand from one container to another; try using kitchen funnels, plastic see-through

bottles, yoghurt pots, sieves, or flower pots with holes in. Talk about what is happening with your children and follow their lead.

### DRAWING

A wipe-clean board with pens can be introduced during supervision. Make sure the pen lids are not put in the multiples' mouths. They feel very grown up being

able to use pens but **make sure the rules are set out from the start**, for example we keep pens at the table and don't walk around with them.

### COLLAGE - STICKING

At first, small children just enjoy sticking cut out shapes and pictures, pieces of material, pasta shapes etc. at random on a large sheet

of paper. PVA school glue is best for bigger items and glue sticks for tissue paper and pictures. You will notice as they get older they will

want the pictures to be something more specific - encourage them to use their imagination to create their own masterpieces.

## RIDE-ON & SIT-ON TOYS

You may see your twins, triplets or more interacting together in this type of activity especially if they only have one to share between them. These toys are expensive and it's not realistic to think they can have one each. You will see them taking it in

turns to push each other and ride on, but be aware this can sometimes escalate into fighting so needs to be supervised. These types of toys are great for their gross motor skills and balance.

## READING

To continue to share books is hugely important for your multiples. Developing their love for reading is invaluable as they embark on pre-school and school. Start to ask them questions

about the stories you are reading to clarify their understanding as well as well encouraging them to read the pictures and tell you what they see. Ensure that each multiple gets a

chance to put their view forward if you are sharing stories together, and allow them to praise each other for their individual opinions.

## COLOUR MATCHING & COUNTING

You may notice your twins, triplets or more showing more interest in counting and colours. Without putting pressure on them, encourage them to count during their play and point out colours. They can sort anything and they love to put things in order and

groups. Encourage each multiple to collect a different colour or encourage them to try and work together as this is a skill that you will be seeing more and more as they get older.

## LARGE ROLE-PLAY EQUIPMENT

This includes kitchens, garages and train sets. By having more than one child you have a ready-made pretend group for role play. A large piece of equipment

really aids this play and develops their ability to play together. We wouldn't advise that you have more than one of these pieces of equipment but encourage

the children to assign different roles. You may be surprised at how they can coordinate and enjoy a game once they get into it. It can be very sweet to watch.

### Getting out and about

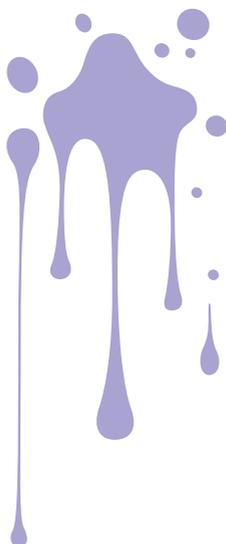
You may find your multiples wanting to walk more. As you build your confidence, do it in safe areas away from busy roads. You could let them take it in turns to be out of the pushchair if you felt like you wanted to teach them how to walk safely individually first.

Reins are a vital piece of equipment to be used, especially with triplets and more. Encourage them to always hold someone's hand, even if it's one of their siblings (whilst you have hold of the reins) when out walking.

“

*When doing messy play make sure you take it away before the children become bored to prevent too much mess.*

”



Twins  
trust.

# 3 years and up

“ My children are three and are able to concentrate on a task for that much longer, which makes doing messy play more worthwhile, though now they are at preschool, they do a lot of craft and I don't feel too guilty if we don't do much at home. ”

**At this age your twins, triplets or more may be starting to:**

**Share  
with their  
siblings**

**Show  
empathy  
towards their  
twin, triplet  
or more  
sibling**

**Develop  
friendships  
outside their  
multiple  
group**

**Become  
frustrated if  
they can't do  
something  
the first  
time**

**Play  
games  
together**

**Share  
jokes and laugh  
together in their  
play with their  
twin, triplet or  
more sibling**

# What to expect at this age for your twins, triplets or more

You may notice your twins, triplets or more develop a pattern in their play. For a while one of your children may be dominant, leading the play and making the decisions, while the others may follow their sibling's lead. The next day they may reverse roles. Encourage the child that is dominant to allow their siblings ideas to be heard. If being the leader role isn't being shared

you may need to intervene and ensure the less dominant child is given opportunities to make some decisions and lead the play.

Your twins, triplets or more may want to help you with your activities such as washing the car, or preparing food. This is a great way for your jobs to become play.

## Toys and ideas for playing together at this age

Children will be extending the play they were experiencing earlier on in the booklet as well as...

### READING

At this age the children really become involved in reading and singing, you may notice they have memorised parts of their

favourite books and they request certain song choices and know all the words. Make sure the children **have books**



**that are independently accessible to them** so they can access them when they want.

### PUZZLES & GAMES

Your multiples may start to want to play more traditional board games with rules. There are some very good first board games on the market which are a great introduction. It does take

patience from the parents to negotiate turn-taking and then understanding that not everyone will win, but they are important lessons which will get easier the more they practice. Encourage them

to praise the winner, but that the winner shouldn't gloat, and that they all get rewarded for playing in good spirit and sticking to the rules.

## PRETEND PLAY & DRESSING UP

Pretend play starts to occupy a great deal of children's play time at this age. It is through pretend play that children work out their place in the world and sort out what is real, what is possible and

what is impossible, in their own lives. Twins, triplets and more come into their own: they have a ready-made group for pretend play.

Tea parties, pretend picnics and dressing up role play are all great

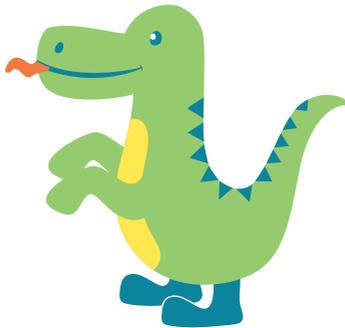
for developing your children's imaginations.

You could keep recycling, such as boxes and washed out bottles, to use in a pretend shop and also include some home made money to extend the play.

## SMALL WORLD TOYS

Using small world toys to set up scenes such as doctors or shops is a great way for children to practice their skills and push their boundaries in a safe environment. It also helps with worries - if the children have a new experience coming up, the play can be centred around that so they can understand what's going to happen and that it will be ok.

Small world pretend play with small figures, barbies, and action figures really becomes very popular at



this age and becomes an activity your twins, triplets and more will concentrate on for a longer period of time. They may need some help to settle disputes as they understand how to communicate within a game. They are able to reenact real life scenarios to see how the world would respond to their behaviour.

## MEMORY GAMES

These can be done with cards or specific pairs games or also using your toys. Choose a selection of toys and have your children look at them. Ask your children to close their eyes and, while they are

doing this, take one toy away - the children should then guess which toy is missing. As the game continues, you could increase the number of toys which are taken away on each turn.

## LARGE OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT

This includes swings, slides and climbing frames. Being able to provide opportunities for your multiple group to get out and run off some steam is very important. These large pieces of equipment can be bought for the garden or, alternatively, visited at the local park. The children will become

more daring and keen to show off what they can do. Praise each of your multiples separately for their own achievements and try not to compare them to each other. Encourage them to be proud of each other's achievements as well trying to stop any rivalry towards each other.

## JOBS AS PLAY

You may find your multiples are at their most involved when they are being helpful. Washing cars, digging in the garden, going to the shops

or the rubbish tip all are valuable learning experiences and encourage the children to be helpful as well as keeping them entertained.

When involving your twins, triplets and more, allow them to have their own sponge for the car to wash as well as their own gardening equipment.

## CUTTING AND STICKING

Pre-school age children will want to use scissors for themselves. Make sure the rules of scissors are set out from the start: no walking around with them and they're always used at the table. Old magazines

are good for them to develop their fine motor cutting skills, as well as drawing lines on paper and letting them cut or draw along them. Start with straight lines and move up to wiggly and pointy lines.

## THREADING

This can be done with threading boards or by threading pasta or beads onto string to make necklaces. This is great for hand

eye coordination and fine motor skills that are really useful as they start to learn to write.

## AUDIO BOOKS

Nothing replaces the valuable time you spend reading together. However, as the children start to drop an afternoon nap it

can be beneficial to try and enforce some quiet time throughout the day, and these are a happy alternative to the television.

If your twins, triplets or more want to listen to different things, investing in some children's headphones can be very useful.

## CONCENTRATION GAMES

Jigsaws, matching and board games, puzzles and card games all help to develop concentration and memory, as well as learning to be the one

who doesn't always win. Help may be needed with more elaborate puzzles, games and construction sets. Be ready to praise

achievements and to help with the frustrations and challenges if it doesn't work the first time.

## COOKING

This can be done very simply with more than one child. Organisation is the key to making sure everything is ready and to hand. Weighing and measuring obviously have huge benefits to pre-school

learning but starting a recipe from scratch with twins, triplets and more can be challenging. Make sure they all have their own equipment and are allowed to take it in turns to mix with their own spoons.

Encourage them to watch what is happening and how the mixture changes from start to finish. There are plenty of ready-made mixtures which can make the process quicker to try for the first attempts.

## Getting out and about

Any life experience can be developed and extended with your twins, triplets or more. They are so excited to learn and relate to the world and their vocabulary is improving rapidly, so they are able to discuss all their thoughts and ideas.



Why not take your twins, triplets and more out for a nature walk and collect leaves, acorns, and twigs on your way? This can be extended

when you get home into doing leaf rubbings with crayons or sticking their treasures onto paper or card and making pictures.

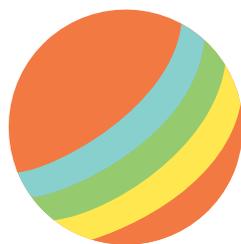
When shopping, you could make shopping lists for each child to take with them and find in the shop, using pictures cut out of magazines stuck to the list.

Give them lots of praise when they put them in the trolley. You could then use empty boxes and packets to set up a role play shop at home to continue their learning.

“

*Weekends were the time for our children to have some one-to-one time with a parent. We saved Saturday afternoons (where we could) for this. One of us would take one of our triplets out on their own, going somewhere which would usually be a challenge to go on my own with all of them such as swimming or soft play. Enjoying this time together is something we continue to do now they are older. The two who stayed at home also benefited from more choice on what to play without a third voice competing for attention.*

”



## INFORMATION, RESOURCES & SUPPORT FROM TWINS TRUST

More information, resources and videos on play for twins, triplets and more can be found on the play section of our website: [www.twinstrust.org/play](http://www.twinstrust.org/play)

Twins Trust has support groups for parents and carers of twins, triplets and more in particular circumstances. Details for all the groups below can be found on our website here: [www.twinstrust.org/let-us-help/support/resources-and-groups.html](http://www.twinstrust.org/let-us-help/support/resources-and-groups.html)

- One Parent Families group
- Special Needs group
- Triplets and More group
- Grandparents group

Twins Trust also supports families who have lost a baby or child from a multiple birth. More information can be found by emailing

[bereavementsupport@twinstrust.org](mailto:bereavementsupport@twinstrust.org) or visiting [www.twinstrust.org/bereavement](http://www.twinstrust.org/bereavement)

## INFORMATION ON KEEPING BABIES & CHILDREN SAFE

Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT): [www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk)

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA): [www.rospace.com](http://www.rospace.com)

Twins trust.  
**Twinline**

Need to talk?  
We're here to listen

**0800 138 0509**

### FREE HELPLINE

Monday - Friday 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 10pm  
or email [asktwinline@twinstrust.org](mailto:asktwinline@twinstrust.org)

**For parents or carers and anyone expecting  
twins, triplets or more**



# PLAY

**Twins  
trust.**

**We support  
twins, triplets  
and more...**



[www.twintrust.org](http://www.twintrust.org)



01252 332344



@twintrust

Twins Trust, Manor House, Church Hill, Aldershot, Hants, GU12 4JU

Registered Charity Numbers: 1076478 and SC041055.

Registered Company Number: 3688825