

# Toddlers

By Suze Hargraves

Apparently an Oscar statue was seriously damaged when it was handed to a 15 month old girl sitting on a rock. Is anyone else snickering? Who gives a once-in-a-lifetime award to a 15 month old child? It would seem someone in Hollywood didn't get the "don't hand anything of value, breakable or otherwise treasured in any way, to a toddler" memo.

MedlinePlus.com reports these developmental stages for children age 1-3 yrs.

- Gross motor – walking, running, climbing (toddler climbs up on rock)
- Fine motor – feeding themselves, drawing (toddler fingers explore delicate lines on shiny statue)
- Sensory - seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling (toddler looks at and tastes statue)
- Language – saying single words, then sentences (toddler utters the word "oops")
- Social – playing with others, taking turns, doing fantasy play (toddler experiences first major social faux-pas as an entire room of people stop to stare at her after the loud clanking sound made by falling statue)

As you can see, the toddler was doing what toddler's are supposed to do. The people taking care of the toddler....not so much.

Taking care of a toddler requires skill and cunning. They are clever, fast and have a natural knack for running in one direction while looking in another. In order to assist a little explorer in their quest to grow and learn, we adults must arm ourselves and our homes against things we can't imagine happening. Although this seems impossible, it's not. Here are some child proofing tips to help you whether you are a full time or part time or even infrequent caretaker of a toddler:

- Never leave your purse, wallet or keys where they can be reached. Small objects and tiny pills are like magnets to toddlers. Keys can be poked in eyes/ears including those of pets, the toddler's own and even yours.
- Keep your valuables and breakables stored away. If it's that important to you, you'll still have it years down the line in one piece if you keep it out of little hands.
- Secure cabinets and drawers. Use chains and padlocks if you must, but keep them out of places containing potential poisons or otherwise lethal objects such as knives. That includes you medicine cabinets. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports "Among children, ED visits for medication poisonings (excluding abuse and recreational drug use) are twice as common as poisonings from other household products (such as cleaning solutions and personal care products)".
- Secure shelving and tables. If they think they can climb something they will try. They do not discern the difference between a ladder and a bookcase. Screwing a bookshelf into a wall may seem extreme but it's not. Do it.
- Cushion sharp edges on counters and tables. Better yet, buy things with rounded edges to begin with.
- Don't take your eyes off a toddler for more than a seventh of a second. They're fast and they're motivated. If you don't think they're "up to something" you're underestimating them. Toddlers wake up in "explore" mode. You cannot take a nap, turn your back or be distracted by a phone call or computer while you're in charge of a toddler. Stay focused.

Remember, a Best Movie Oscar is pretty much the same as Oscar the Grouch when you're two years old. It's the adults job to know the difference.

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