



Summer Exploration for Infants and Toddlers

Summertime presents many opportunities for continued learning, exploration, and sensory exposure for infants and toddlers. Hands-on investigation of natural environments supports curriculum implementation. Environmental investigation promotes cognitive and motor development, as well as critical thinking skills. Sensory nature-based opportunities further support curriculum implementation and child interest by fostering self-regulation, risk assessment, and social and emotional development. Some fun ways to engage infants and toddlers in sensory exploration are:

- **Go on a nature walk.** Look for various textures in your environment. Pick up items such as leaves, flowers, and rocks, and describe each item’s unique characteristics. Share how these objects feel different in your hands. With infants, depending on the object, you can lightly rub the object against the back of their hands/feet or allow them to hold it. For toddlers, use adjectives to describe what you are holding. For example, you may say, “this rock is smooth” or “this tree bark is rough.” Allow each toddler to feel the object in their hands/on their feet and have them repeat the description.
- **Get active.** Infants and toddlers love music. For infants, they can be placed on a blanket and given a musical instrument to shake or bang. Encourage toddlers to dance, twirl, or exercise to music. This is a great way to help explore their bodies in space and in motion. Toddlers can also wave scarves, they dance and twirl. Give each child an instrument and pretend you

are all in a band. Allow the children to make their sounds softly or loud, or fast and slow. For older toddlers, have them to march whenever you hold up a picture of an ant, wiggle when you show the picture of a worm, and flap their arms when you hold up the picture of a bird.

- **Observe nature.** There are many ways infants and toddlers can observe nature. Have the children observe the birds as they eat from a bird feeder or the ants as they march up a tree. Take pictures of the various plants, insects, objects, or birds in your outside environment. For infants, you can take them to the object and show them the picture and the object. You can ask the toddlers to find the item in the picture.
- **Scavenger hunt.** With toddlers, you can engage in a scavenger hunt. Use pictures of your outside environment to show the children what they need to find. Have the children bring the object to you. For example, you can show a picture of a ball and the toddlers can bring a ball to you.
- **Become a scientist or mathematician.** Help infants and toddlers become scientists by exploring sand/water to discover some of their properties. Infants can splash a tray filled with water with their feet or hands. Like scientists, toddlers can explore sand and water by pouring, sifting, building, or mixing. Food coloring can be added to the sand or water to create different effects. Become a mathematician by counting similar objects, comparing sizes, or matching shapes. Bubbles are loved by both infants and toddlers. Count aloud as bubbles are popped. Toddlers can find matching objects such finding all the trikes or all the round balls. They can compare the sizes of leaves.

The outdoors provides opportunities for continued infant and toddler sensory discovery, exploration, and engagement. Use these suggestions or create your own, to take advantage of nature's beauty.



Resource Spotlight



Are you a care provider for infants or toddlers in Virginia interested in earning your CDA? We offer the easiest assistance approval program in the state, covering 100% of coursework and textbook materials. We also cover a portion of credential application fees, and ongoing support throughout the CDA journey. If you are interested in the CDA journey and our CDA Assistance Program, we are having a virtual informational session on Tuesday, July 22, 2025 at 1:00PM. Please register below.

[Register Here: CDA Informational Session](#)

Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities



Each month, VA ITSN offers virtual training sessions for early childhood care providers. All of our trainings are rooted in CLASS and/or Social-Emotional Competency (SEC) domains. With a wide variety in topics and times offered, please click on the link below to see July 2025's training list. You can find all of the training details and registration information below.

[VA ITSN July 2025 Virtual Trainings List](#)

Virginia Child Care Provider Scholarship Program: Fall 2025 Applications Accepted through July 25

Students working toward a career studies certificate or an associate degree in early childhood development at Virginia's Community Colleges and students enrolled in SCHEV-accredited Montessori Training Programs may apply for FALL 2025 scholarships through the [Virginia Child Care Provider Scholarship Program](#). Applications will be accepted online through July 25. These scholarships support the cost of in-state tuition for up to two [approved courses](#) per semester. Information about the scholarship program may be found [online](#).

Did you know?



VQB5 - Virginia's Unified Measurement and Improvement System

2024-2025 VQB5 Quality Profiles Timeline and Reminders

This summer, the VDOE is using CLASS scores from the fall and spring, along with curriculum use information to calculate quality ratings for the 3,300 sites who participated in VQB5 during the 2024-2025 year. Sites will have an opportunity to preview their quality profiles during [data verification](#) at the end of July. VQB5 Quality Profiles will then be finalized and shared publicly in the fall of 2025, along with historical ratings information for sites with existing quality profiles. Learn more about VQB5 Quality Profiles by visiting EarlyChildhoodQuality.doe.virginia.gov.

Early Childhood State of the State - Updates for Summer 2025 - July 15 at 12 Noon

Join Jenna Conway, Chief of Early Learning and Specialized Populations, on July 15 at 12 noon, for a webinar presentation on key updates for early childhood in Virginia. This presentation will review the significant accomplishments and success of the past year, as well as preview the work that is on the horizon. The webinar will be recorded and will be shared in future Readiness Connection Updates. Attendance is limited to 500 registrants.

- **Webinar:** Early Childhood State of the State - Summer 2025
- **Date:** July 15 at 12
- [Register](#)



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