

A close-up photograph of a child's hand holding a dark pencil, poised to draw on a white sheet of paper. The paper features a faint outline of a butterfly. In the upper left corner, a portion of a pink and white striped fabric is visible. The background is a light gray surface.

**Toddler &
Preschool
Activities
List**

Donna Reish



- [Duplos](#)—these chubby, safe-for-toddlers “Legoes” are perfect as first blocks for toddlers. Many of the sets have people, animals, and vehicles with them; those make them even better for this age.
- [Felt books and felt activities](#)—older toddlers/preschoolers may enjoy these. I reviewed the earlier on this blog. You can find information about them [here](#).
- [We loved the Hugg a Planet](#) for ALL ages---even my high schoolers would toss it around and study it.
- [Anything kitchen!!!](#) We loved plastic food and dishes especially
- [Car and truck mats](#) (oh, I loved these!).



- [Measuring and weighing set](#)—get ready for a lot of fun with some kids and this set. Our kids collected things throughout the week when they knew that they would have their measuring and weighing set to play with that week!

- [Dress up](#) (don't get me started—have I mentioned that every year for five years our teen daughters sewed dress up clothes for the boys for Christmas—knights, Minutemen, wise men, cowboys—okay, I'm crying now.

- [Lacing Beads](#) these are great for independent play only after you have played with the child and he does not need help with them. The ones that come with cards to try to duplicate are excellent preschool math tools for use with Mom too!

- [Shape beanbags](#)—Do a Google or Pinterest search on bean bag activities. These shaped ones are especially great for multi-purpose play and learning!





Toys & Activities to Use in Room Time with Preschoolers



Many of the activities listed for toddlers would work well for preschoolers. Additionally, we added more “preparation for school” type of things (we tried to not teach anything formally that we could teach informally) as was appropriate.

- [Duplos](#) continue to be good choices for preschoolers, following a transition into Legoes whenever the child is ready. We carefully kept our Duplos and Legoes separated, especially when the toddlers and preschoolers shared in room time.

- [Felt books](#) and felt playsets continue to be good for this age group.

- [Laurie puzzles and sets](#) Can you ever have too many Laurie puzzle sets? As mentioned earlier, be sure your child can do them alone (by first using them for his “preschool” time with you).



- [Imaginets](#) (we never had these, but had various types of magnets for our kids at different ages). Definitely getting these for our grandson!

- [Silly Putty](#), play dough, clay—they love all of them. We made our own play dough for years and years—store bought play dough does not begin to compare to home made. The stove top version is softer and longer lasting. We loved it. However, preschoolers usually don't care!

- As far as “silly putty” is concerned, Timberdoodle has some amazing [metallic putty](#), or [colorful/glow in the dark](#).

- [Play Dough](#)—for special room time days, we would have “table time” rather than room time. We would set up the play dough with cutters, rollers, and more. This time often went longer than the normal room time!

- [Play Dough Cookie Cutters](#)

- [ABC puzzles](#): Timberdoodle carries the Laurie ones we used, but there are many nice ones out there (we loved giant floor puzzles, especially with this age). I sort of collect ABC puzzles! ☺



- [Brio Trains](#): there's a reason your preschoolers are always drawn to the trains in the waiting room of the doctor's office!

- [World & USA puzzles and colorforms](#): Timberdoodle has some great ones for preschoolers. Use this for preschool with your child first—then put it in the room time rotation!
- [Playmobile](#): For children who are not Lego fans—or when your preschoolers like more make believe play than the chubby Duplo or Fisher Price people but are not ready for small Legoes, consider Playmobile. It doesn't have the building aspects to it (except for the headache of building everything before children play with it—I've actually heard of parents hiring teens to assemble these things before Christmas!)—but the make believe and play value of nearly anything Playmobile is incredible (and the play value extends to unsaturated-with-television ten year olds as well!)
- [Colorful sorting items](#): Colorful, sorting items (bears, in this case)—What needs to be said about anything this darling and colorful—these were not the ones we had, but this set makes me want to “do it all over again!”
- [Shape sorters](#): Shape sorters—these are ideal to do with your preschooler, but once we played with our little ones with these, they also enjoyed using them alone.
- Sand and water tables are pricey—you can do similar activities with tiny swimming pools on the porch or even flat tubs filled with water and/or sand—our little ones would occasionally have “room time” in the bath tub in their swim suits (usually two at a time!) with an older child stationed in there reading and keeping an eye on the littles. [Here is one](#) to give you an idea of the type of play I'm describing, and [here is another one](#) that has four tubs in frames.

- [Car mats](#) besides the floor ones of these, you can even get place mats and tiny cars for use in meetings, at restaurants, etc.

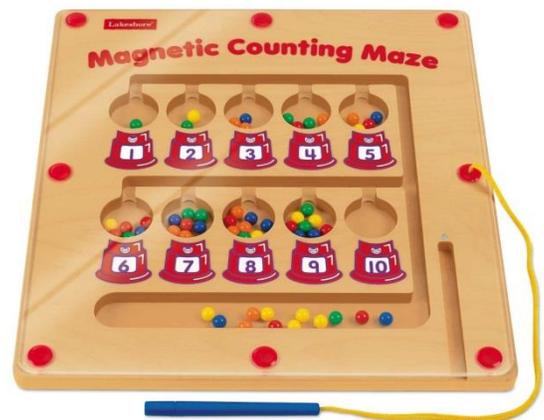
- [Traffic signs](#) and other things to go with car mats....okay, I'm in love with these!

- [Lego tables](#) and lego plates to build on keep something intact. We used inexpensive ones picked up at garage sales and wholesale clubs, but I still drool over the elaborate ones. Here is a modest one:

- [Magnetic mazes](#)—these are ideal even for road trips since there are no loose pieces; unfortunately, we only had these for our boys as they were not available when I was a young parent! [Here is another one.](#)

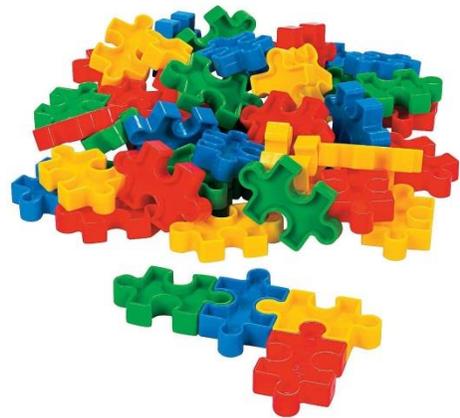
- [Lacing beads](#)—again, this is one you will want to do with the child first.

- [Lacing activities](#)—these are amazing portable activities for meetings, church, etc., besides room time use (again, after you have “taught” them).



- [Puppets](#)—Okay, I admit it—I collected puppets as a hobby when my kids were growing up! These are readily available at yard sales and second hand stores

- [Animals!](#) And yes, I had ours divided by zoo, wild, farm....I loved the preschool days!
- [Floor Puzzles](#)—so many beautiful ones available. Use for “school” first!
- [“Letters & Sounds” Preschool Curriculum](#) —once you “teach” the letters with the cards and the sounds with the songs, the cards can be used by the child independently during room time. You can also hang the song posters in the room time area after each sound is learned.
- [Wipe and write activity](#)—great for room time and for on the go times!
- [Puzzle blocks](#)—these are so cute. I’m going to get these to do with my grandson when he is three!
- [Activity table](#)—we had a couple of activity tables (Brio, Duplo, and Lego). Even if this activity is out for free play all the time, you can still make it a room time toy if it entertains and educates your child well! We would have room time “Brio weeks” or “Duplo weeks.”
- [Peg board set](#)—use this for math with your preschooler then put it in the room time tub!



- [Hammer and nails](#)—be sure he can do these on his own before including them in room time, but these are really neat!

- [Measuring and weighing set](#)—collect things in a zipper bag that he can use for weighing and put it out with the weighing set.

- [Pattern blocks](#)—this is the set we had for all of our children, though it had a different name then; I will list it here, but it is really more of an activity you do with your child.



- [Stencils with markers, crayons, etc.](#) We used plastic ones rather than card stock ones.

- [Children's cash register](#)—a real hit with many of our kids!

- [Magnetic ABC's](#) (and other magnetic activities)

Hopefully, this list and the links will give you some ideas to get you started in creating your room time tub or basket. Look for items at garage sales, thrift stores, etc.

Another thing we did with activities, per se, was to add things into their room time that we had used with them already. For example, after we did a Laurie puzzle with the child and he could do it alone well, we moved it to his room time for him to play with it by himself. (We also did this with reading—a mastered “oral reader” became the child’s “silent reader”—more on this in helping your children in school later!)

Again, I recommend that you take two dozen or so items that you want to save for room time—that the preschooler cannot just go get out of the toy box or off the toy shelf—and get these out one or two at a time for his room time. Obviously, we had Legoes, dress up, Playmobile, etc. out all the time for the little ones to play with—so these things may or may not work for room time (it depends on how much they love playing with them!). The key is to have activities that are not always available that would interest your little ones during a concentrated independent time.

One final note about toddler room time activities: Be sure you get true “independent” activities. Avoid electronics, difficult to assemble toys, or other activities that require too much help in order for the toddler to play with.

Donna

Have a question? Connect with me here!

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characterinklady@gmail.com

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