

A child's interests are

Windows of Opportunity

to fun and enjoyable learning

Climbing is a powerful learning activity for many young children



Places to learn and activities to enjoy **AT HOME**

In the living room or family room

- Pile sofa cushions and pillows on the rug, or arrange them into an "obstacle course," where your toddler can have fun climbing and crawling in safety. Hide toys or colorful scarves among the pillows and encourage her to climb and burrow to reach them.
- Remove any breakable and sharp objects from tabletops, shelves, and other surfaces where your climber might be tempted to pull to a standing position or climb. Replace them with interesting, non-breakable things you'd be happy for your child to "discover" and handle, like children's picture books and building blocks or decorative items like baskets, artificial fruit, woven coasters, dried gourds, or a tray of smooth rocks or shells (as long as they're too large to swallow!).
- Your busy climber's activities present lots of opportunities to use words that describe the locations of objects, himself, or other people. Use words like **up, down, over, on, in, out, under, through, next to, beside, above, top,** and **bottom** as you talk about what he's doing.
- Let your child find ways to climb (perhaps by using a footstool, ottoman, or plastic milk crate) onto a couch or onto your lap without help to join you for activities like reading stories or playing games.

Kitchen and dining room

- Keep a sturdy step-stool on hand. Help your child climb up to stand and "work" alongside you at the sink, table, or counter.
- Help your child learn to climb up into her high chair or booster seat for meals and snacks.
- Make (by removing child-proof latches, for example) one of your bottom cabinets an accessible "climbing-in" space for your young child. Let the equipment you store there be safe and interesting for your child to play with: plastic food storage containers and lids, unbreakable mixing bowls, metal pots and pans, wooden spoons, etc.

Out in the yard

- Show your child places where she can climb safely such as a garden bench, planting beds bordered with railroad ties, etc.

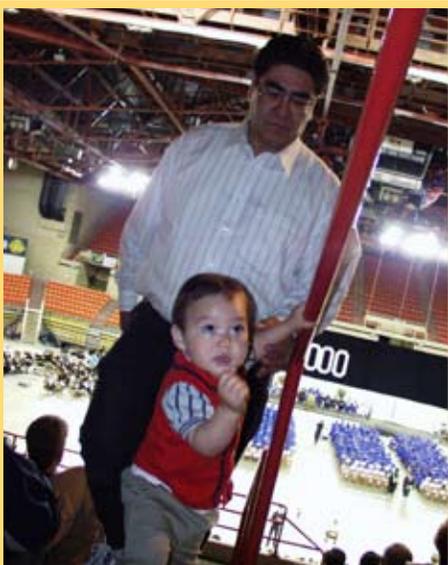
Bathroom

- As soon as he can stand comfortably, place a step stool in front of the bathroom sink so your child can climb up to turn on the water, brush his teeth, comb his hair, and do other self-care tasks while looking into the mirror. Place his toothbrush and other things he needs within reach.

Places to learn and activities to enjoy **AWAY FROM HOME**

Playground or park

- Visit several parks and discover which playgrounds offer the best climbing structures. Some are made of pressure-treated timbers. Others have metal frameworks and heavy-duty plastic parts. Some have rubber tires young children can climb in and through. You can find versions with ladders, stairs, ramps, cargo nets, knotted rope ladders, and even junior-sized rock-climbing walls. Some playgrounds feature areas with equipment especially sized for toddlers or designed for children who use wheelchairs.
- Find a gently sloping, grassy embankment you can scramble up with your child. Show him how to use hands and feet to reach the top. Declare your successful climber the “King (or Queen) of the Mountain.” Part of the fun is laughing and squealing as you both roll sideways all the way back to the bottom!



Gym bleacher steps, church pews, and playground structures are just a few of the places little climbers want to test their skills.



Visiting friends and family

- Take a quick look around to spot safe climbing places as well as any that should be avoided. Maybe there’s a fun climbing challenge your child will come to associate with Grandma’s house to look forward to enjoying on each visit. It might be a little step stool grandma uses to climb onto her high bed, a long wheelchair ramp to the front entrance, a stile for crossing a pasture fence, etc.

On a walk in the neighborhood

- Take time to stop regularly at places that offer safe climbing opportunities for your young child. Examples would include stairs to the entrances of public buildings and businesses, low walls, trunks and branches of fallen trees, rock outcrops, benches in a bus-stop shelter, and more.
- As your child gains climbing skills, look for new climbing/crawling/tumbling spots to explore along your regular walking routes—a neighbor’s leaf pile, a playground climbing structure, a fence to scoot under, a public sculpture or monument, a rocky creek bank, etc.

Other community resources

- Many family-friendly restaurants have play areas equipped with padded structures where young children can climb on a variety of multilevel platforms or cargo nets and slide safely down to the floor.
- Take advantage of climbing opportunities in a local children’s museum’s interactive exhibits.

