

At around 2 years old, toddlers are just beginning to develop social skills and interaction through play. One common type of play you will notice at this age is called **parallel play**.

### **What is Parallel Play?**

Parallel play is when toddlers play side-by-side with other children but do not yet actively play together or share toys. For example, two toddlers may both be building with blocks next to each other, but they focus on their own blocks rather than cooperating.

### **Why is Parallel Play Important?**

- *Social Development:* Parallel play is an important early step toward social interaction. While toddlers aren't yet playing cooperatively, being near peers helps them observe social behaviors and begin to develop communication and sharing skills.
- *Independence:* Playing alongside others but focusing on their own activities helps toddlers build confidence and develop their own interests.
- *Learning Through Observation:* Toddlers learn a lot by watching what other kids are doing during parallel play, which prepares them for more interactive play later on.

### **How to Encourage Parallel Play in 2-Year-Olds:**

- Provide plenty of safe, age-appropriate toys for each child so they can play comfortably side-by-side.
- Arrange play spaces where toddlers can be near each other but still have personal space.
- Encourage simple interactions like sharing toys or smiling and talking, even if they don't yet play together.
- Model positive social interactions by playing nearby and gently guiding toddlers toward cooperative activities as they get older.

Remember, parallel play is typical and important during the toddler years. It's a normal part of learning how to be with others and will gradually lead to more interactive play as your child grows.