

A young child with brown hair, wearing a blue and black long-sleeved shirt and dark blue pants, is walking away from the camera on a wooden suspension bridge. The bridge has wooden railings and is surrounded by trees. The child is holding a small white object in their right hand. The bridge deck is made of wooden planks, and the railings are made of horizontal wooden slats. The background shows a line of trees and a clear sky.

little walks BIG ADVENTURES

50+ Ideas for
Exploring with Toddlers

ERIN BUHR, MEd

little walks BIG ADVENTURES

50+ Ideas for
Exploring with Toddlers

ERIN BUHR, MEd

Copyright ©2018 Erin Buhr

Published by Gryphon House, Inc.
P. O. Box 10, Lewisville, NC 27023
800.638.0928; fax 877.638.7576
WWW.GRYPHONHOUSE.COM

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or technical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior written permission of the publisher. Printed in the United States of America. Every effort has been made to locate copyright and permission information. Photographs courtesy of the author and Shutterstock.com.

Gryphon House books are available for special premiums and sales promotions as well as for fund-raising use. Special editions or book excerpts also can be created to specifications. For details, call 800.638.0928.

Gryphon House, Inc., cannot be held responsible for damage, mishap, or injury incurred during the use of or because of activities in this book. Appropriate and reasonable caution and adult supervision of children involved in activities and corresponding to the age and capability of each child involved are recommended at all times. Do not leave children unattended at any time. Observe safety and caution at all times.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Buhr, Erin, author.

Title: Little walks, big adventures : 50+ ideas for exploring with toddlers /
by Erin Buhr, M.Ed.

Description: Lewisville, NC : Gryphon House, Inc., 2018. | Includes
bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017037290 | ISBN 9780876597576 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Early childhood education--Activity programs. |
Toddlers--Development.

Classification: LCC LB1139.35.A37 B84 2018 | DDC 372.13--dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017037290>



FOR
N, J, & A
MY BEST ADVENTURE

Contents

Introduction	1
How to Use This Book	2

Home and Community

Neighborhood Walk	6
Grocery Store	8
Restaurant	10
Home and Community Booklist	12
Farmers' Market	13
Post Office	15
Hardware Store	17
Hardware Store Scavenger Hunt	19
Map Walk	20
Photo Walk	23
Baby Walk	25
Spotlight on Walks	27
Counting Walk	28
Bakery	31
Park	33
Library	35

Vehicles

Fire Station	40
Construction Site	42
Car Walk	44
Vehicles Booklist	45
Car Wash	46
Bus Ride	48
Auto Parts Store	51
Scavenger Hunt: Road	52
Bridge	53
Hot-Air Balloon Festival	56
Gas Station	59
Spotlight on the Arts	62
Train Ride	63
Bike Ride	66
Visit a Boat	68
Street Sign Hunt	70



Animals

Zoo	74
Pet Store	77
Natural Science Museum	79
Booklist: Animals	81
Bug Walk	82
Bird Walk	85
Aquarium	88
Scavenger Hunt: Pet Store	90
Pond	91
Farm	93
Hike	95
Spotlight on Gross Motor Development	97
Visit a Pet	98
Art Museum	100
Butterfly Exhibit	103
State Fair	106

Our World

Rainy Day Walk	110
Puddle Walk	112
Garden Center	114
Booklist: Our World	116
Nature Center	117
State Park	120
Ocean or Lake	123
Scavenger Hunt: Beach	125
Night Walk	126
Science Museum	129
Tree Walk	132
Spotlight on Loose Parts and Natural Materials	134
Garden	136
Climb a Mountain	139
Farm	142
Listening Walk	145

Conclusion	148
Glossary of Terms	149
References	151
Index	152



Introduction

When we are born the whole world is new. Infants and toddlers are learning every moment. They are soaking in the world around them: the sights, sounds, smells, interactions, languages, and textures. Everything is new. Everything is interesting. For this reason, everything is also curriculum.

When working with or parenting toddlers, it is not just colors and shapes that we are teaching them, but it is also how to interact with others, how to wash their hands, and how to put on their shoes. These are all-important developmental skills.

I think the world is a magical place. Sure there is trash, poverty, traffic, and meanness in the world, but if you look for it, there is beauty that can far overshadow the ugly. I want my children to see that world. I want them to have experiences. I want them to understand that they are a small beautiful part in a much larger world. I want them to learn from real things in the real world.

It has long been taught that young children learn best through hands-on experiences. As educational reformer John Dewey so plainly explained, “Experience is education.” Often this is translated to using one’s hands to learn in a classroom. This is a valid approach, but I believe taking children out into the world is often the purest hands-on experience.

As toddlers, my twins adored trucks, trains, cars, buses, or anything that moved. Most toddlers do. We read endless books from the library about trains and trucks, blew on pretend train whistles, drove play cars around our play space, and sang “The Wheels on the Bus” constantly, but these are not the experiences they talk about.

My son spent more than two months remembering our trip on a bus when he was a toddler. Watching real trucks dig up a construction site maintained their toddler attention for an hour. Hearing a real flamingo shout at the zoo was better than Eric Carle’s fluting illustrations. As Holly Hughes, author of *Frommer’s 500 Places to Take Your Kids Before They Grow Up*, points out, “Awakening that sense of wonder is what travel is all about, for adults as well as children.” Seeing that these cool things exist in real life is what makes them intriguing for children. The world fascinates them, motivates them, and inspires them.

Furthermore, providing the greatest range of experiences for a topic has been found to be beneficial for young learners. These adventures are so rich with language and sights and sounds they can cause natural explosions in language, reasoning, and other areas of development if you are willing to engage with the toddler as you go.

Researcher Patricia Bauer studies children’s learning and memory. Her findings, as described by author and educator Ellen Galinsky, suggest that “one of the things that we’ve found that helps babies to remember is being allowed to be engaged in the activity.” When they see something more than once and are experiencing something that is meaningful and purposeful, they remember it.

From this, I find myself inspired to explore with my toddlers. To see the world through a toddler’s eyes is to see its beauty, wonder, and possibility all over again.

How to Use This Book

The book is divided into four main adventure topics: Home and Community, Vehicles, Animals, and Our World. Within each theme there are thirteen adventures, each with corresponding activities. This book is intended to give you ideas for following common toddler interests.

The adventures are intended for toddlers roughly aged fifteen to thirty-six months of age of all developmental abilities. Throughout the book there are tips to make these adventures and ideas accessible for the different abilities and special needs of children in this age group.

There are ideas for every week of the year, but do not feel as if you need to follow the order in this book. It is intended as inspiration for trips and activities that you can do with toddlers. Try different things, but also do the ones you love over and over again. Toddlers thrive on repetition. Children can take in only so much in one trip. They will notice something different every time they go to the same zoo or neighborhood spot.

To get started, pick an adventure that sounds interesting or fits the current interests of your toddler(s). If a child is interested in helping you cook, consider a trip to the bakery. If a child loves animals, start with the pet-store trip.

After each adventure, there are several related activity ideas. These can also be done in any order, but they may give you some ideas of how to extend children's learning at home or in the classroom. These are primarily open-ended activities. They address the different developmental areas including physical, social/emotional, cognitive, language, and self-help. These activities encourage you to follow your toddlers' lead and enjoy the process of learning what they find important at this time, rather than directing them toward a specific set of knowledge or any sort of product. The idea is to help them process and think more deeply about the experiences they have had on your adventures.



Many of the activities can be done with most of the adventures, if slightly adapted. These activities have all been done with groups of toddlers aged fifteen to thirty-six months. I have worked with various groups in different settings and understand that some groups or settings are more challenging to have routine adventures, but it is possible to some extent in every location where I have worked.

My biggest tip is to creatively find ways to reduce group sizes wherever possible. While working in a corporate child care center, my co teachers and I worked hard to schedule oppor-

BUT What if...

My toddler likes to eat bugs

Redirect the little one who is interested in putting everything he sees into his mouth.

The children get cranky on a walk

Pack a small activity book or a lovey in case a child needs something else to occupy her.

Make sure children are fed and changed before you begin your walk, but always travel with a diaper bag. Don't travel too far with toddlers (they can typically handle about a mile) to avoid tantrums on your trip.

A toddler gets a boo-boo

I recommend packing a small first-aid kit in your diaper bag for those minor injuries.

For more ideas on how to handle similar situations with toddlers, be sure to read the "Consider" section of each adventure.

tunities for teachers to work in smaller groups of seven children instead of our whole group of twenty-one toddlers by being creative with outside time and sharing other classrooms. The smaller groups were quieter and easier for many of the activities described in this book. While it is possible to march fifteen toddlers through a college campus to a city farmers market, that would have been infinitely easier with only five. In another setting I was incredibly fortunate to have ratios as low as 1:4 for younger toddlers, and while I truly believe this is the ideal, I understand and have more experience working with the opposite end of this spectrum. Be flexible in challenging your current schedule, spaces, and procedures. I promise the rewards of smaller groups are worth it.

Your center and director will have limitations, your setting might not have all of the adventure ideas nearby, and your resources will likely be limited. Your goal is to do your best to think creatively to offer your toddlers more hands-on, real experiences, however you can do that best.

Rather than seeing an idea and thinking it is impossible, let it help you think about what is possible. Let this book inspire you to take your toddlers' interests and experiences and blend them into hands-on, child-led, creative learning.



Home, family, community

These are the first experiences a young child has. As toddlers work to figure out who they are and what their role is in the world, they observe and imitate the people around them. You will often see toddlers swaddling baby dolls, pretending to talk on the phone, or cooking imaginary dishes.

Home and Community



BIG ADVENTURES await on little walks with toddlers!

Little Walks, Big Adventures offers 50+ great ideas for taking toddlers on explorations in your local community. While you walk, young children will have rich opportunities for learning new vocabulary and developing cognitive, language, math, and motor skills—not to mention the excellent exercise and fresh air they'll be getting. You could go on a walk a week as you guide their learning about their community and local environment.

Explore the themes of Home and Community, Our World, Vehicles and Animals, and enjoy a multitude of associated activities you can do at home or school after each walk. Parents and caregivers alike will benefit from the many ideas inside, from singing songs to building a butterfly feeder, to help nurture little ones' minds.

Take the tots outside
and guide their innate
spirit of adventure!



Erin Buhr has an MEd in early childhood education and over 15 years of experience working with young children. Currently she calls San Diego home, where she loves going on adventures with her husband and their twins. You can read more about Erin and her adventures at www.erinbuhr.com.


Gryphon House
www.gryphonhouse.com

GH 15938

U.S. \$19.95

ISBN 9780876597576



9 780876 597576

51995 >

