

# Animal Farm

Sample Play Routine from the bestselling book,

*My Toddler Talks: Strategies and Activities to Promote Your Child's Language Development*

## Materials:

- A barn
- Farm animal – cow, horse, sheep, goat, pig, chicken, or rooster, and sometimes a cat or dog

## Play Routine

### Beginning:

Have the animals greet each other by saying, "hello" or "hi," or by making the appropriate animal sounds (e.g., the cow says "moo," the sheep says "baaah," or the horse says "neigh neigh"). Keep the procedure somewhat predictable, and allow the toddler to take turns modeling you. Sometimes, after the toddler imitates your actions, he will imitate your speech.

### Middle:

After the animals greet one animal, have them walk in and out of the barn, saying, "knock knock" to open the barn's gate. Once they are in the barn, have the animals, eat, go to sleep, or even go potty! Following a routine that the toddler can relate to in his life will help him to better understand the play.

### End:

End the routine before the toddler loses interests. Announce that the animals are sleeping and that you should wake them up to play again later. Return toys to their proper locations.

## Language Techniques:

### Choices:

For example, you can say, "Do you want the cow or the sheep?" or "Should the animals eat or sleep?"

### Self-talk & Parallel Talk

Narrate your actions and the toddler's actions. For example, "The cow is sleeping." For toddlers who are not yet talking, make snoring sounds or say one or two words such as "sleeping" while pointing to a cow that is sleeping in the barn. Improvise the type and length of the utterance based on the toddler's current language skills.

### Pause in anticipation:

Pause three to five seconds after making a comment. Give the toddler some time to process the comment and respond. For example, you can say, "The cow is hungry" or "The cow wants to eat." Then inwardly count to five, and wait expectantly for the toddler to say something. Accept any response. If there is no response, don't push; just keep playing.

## Other Tips:

Toddlers are more likely to imitate your actions and sounds if they are having fun! Remember to be animated and silly.



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