

## Homemade games to play with a toddler

There are a lot of games that you can play to support the development of your child and have a lot of fun. I would like to present you 2 games/activities that used to be among our favourite when Veda was a toddler and they still find their place to her shelves from time to time over the past few years.

**The first one:** cards made of leaf herbaria, laminated. I'd collected as many different



leaves of deciduous species as I could and I made two sets of these cards. There were 4 different activities that we used them for since she was 2 years old:

1. As *language cards*, to learn the names of the trees that have these leaves. For a toddler this should be supported by seeing real trees as they are still building their thinking from concrete to abstract.

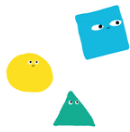
2. As *cards for matching the tree with the fruit* that it produces (for which purpose we had also collected chestnuts, acorns, beech nuts and so on).

3. For *matching the same leaves*:

- Matching the cards by ordering the first set and then having the second one in hand and putting the same leaves below;
- Taking one set of the cards outside and matching them with real leaves.



4. As a *memo game* (which she could play by herself or we could play together). Also possible now and a very nice game for concentration and for training the memory.



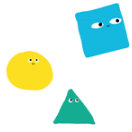
Even if the time of the year doesn't allow you to provide real leaves, it is still possible to find some good images on the Internet. For a toddler I would recommend starting with up to 3 cards and building up by adding one at a time when the first 3 are already mastered. It applies for all mentioned activities.

**The second one:** a homemade *lotto* game with flags.



I recycled some cardboard to make it, a shoes box, I think. I cut 4 equal squares for the cards, each for a different continent - Europe, Asia, Africa and America (combining countries from both Americas). Then I cut 16 equal small rectangles, I chose countries with not similar and somehow interesting flags but I also included all countries where we have someone we know or where we have been and I have pictures to show. I painted the flags on the small rectangles and on the continent cards and wrote the names of the countries - not because she was able to read them; it was mostly for me because I didn't recognize the flags of some of the countries myself and I had to be able to tell her the name of each country every time. Moreover, if a child gets used

to written language from an early age, they are most likely to start being interested in letters sooner. This game is quite suitable and enjoyable for little ones (we started playing it when she was 2) because they love to match. Nevertheless, it is also interesting for older children. It helps to learn the names, flags and location of countries. For older ones if you have a world map at home, you can also look for the countries there but for toddlers it is still too abstract, unless you live in a country different from your native one or you travel a lot to different destinations. This game is easily printable, too. If you have a printing



<http://montessoriandilek.cz/>

machine at home, you can just download, print, cut and glue the flags. You can also laminate them to make sure they last longer. I just never had a printing machine at home and I needed to be creative and improvise.

**For laminating** - you can do it even if you don't have a laminating machine at home. All you need is laminating pouch (which you can order online) and an iron. Place the sheet in the laminating pouch, place the pouch between two sheets of blank white paper and iron slowly at low temperature on an ironing board. Check the result and if it is not satisfying, try a bit higher temperature. This is how I made the cards with the leaves.