



ROCK

ACORN



SHELL

LEAF

CHICHIBERRY PARENTING · OBSERVATION JOURNAL

Why This Object Matters

Toddler Treasure Observation Journal

Discover what your toddler's favourite objects may be revealing about attention, memory, curiosity, identity, and emotional development.

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What Looks Random Often Isn't

Most toddlers carry something. A stone from the path. A stick from the garden. A tiny plastic figure they haven't put down in three days. A spoon from the kitchen drawer that no one remembers them taking.

These objects are rarely random. When we look closely — not at the object itself but at the *pattern* around it — we begin to see something more interesting: the early architecture of a child's attention, memory, and sense of self.

The rock they keep in their pocket is not just a rock. The leaf they bring inside every afternoon is not just a leaf. Something about it called to them. Something made it worth keeping.

This journal was made to help you notice. Not to interpret, label, or assess — simply to observe. The act of noticing, and writing it down, often reveals more about your child than any milestone chart ever could.

Objects may point toward attention, memory, curiosity, identity, and emotional security — the quiet foundations of early development. This journal helps you see what is already there.

What They Carry

These are the objects that appear most often in small hands. Ordinary things, made significant by the child who chose them.



Rocks

*Collected, compared,
carried.*



Leaves

*Observed, examined,
remembered.*



Acorns

*Held, examined,
pocketed.*



Pinecones

*Textured, complex,
endlessly interesting.*



Shells

*Treasured for texture
and shape.*



Sticks

*Carried, pointed,
transformed.*



Found Objects

*Noticed, claimed,
kept.*

The object changes. The choosing never does.

A Simple Framework

There are no rules here. Use the pages in order, or jump to what feels relevant. Return to pages as patterns emerge. Let this be a living document, not a task to complete.

01 Notice

Pay attention to which objects your child returns to. What do they carry, collect, or seek out repeatedly? Don't evaluate — simply observe.

02 Observe

Watch how they interact with the object. Do they sort it, examine it, carry it, or share it? The behaviour around the object tells as much as the object itself.

03 Record

Write it down while it's fresh. The Treasure Collection Log and Profile pages are here for this. Even a few words is enough.

04 Reflect

Use the reflection pages to look across entries. Patterns become visible over time — textures, sizes, categories, purposes — that reveal your child's emerging interests.

05 Follow the Pattern

Let what you discover guide what you offer. A child drawn to sorting might love a treasure tray. A child drawn to carrying might need a small bag of their own.

Favourite Object Profile

Use one page per object. Fill in as much or as little as feels right.

OBJECT NAME

DATE FIRST NOTICED

WHERE FOUND

WHY MY CHILD CHOSE IT (MY GUESS)

HOW OFTEN THEY CARRY IT

HOW THEY REACT IF IT'S LOST

PHOTO / SKETCH SPACE

ATTACH OR DRAW HERE

ANYTHING ELSE WORTH NOTING

What Does My Child Notice?

These questions are not meant to be answered all at once. Return to them as you accumulate more observations.

What objects appear repeatedly in their hands or pockets?

What textures seem to attract them?

What size objects do they prefer — tiny things, or things they can hold in both hands?

Do they collect (many things) or carry (one thing at a time)?

Do they sort, compare, or arrange what they find?

Treasure Collection Log

continued

DATE	OBJECT	WHERE FOUND	WHAT HAPPENED	PARENT NOTES

I'm Starting To Notice...

Tick what keeps appearing. Add your own. Look for patterns across ticks — they may point toward a dominant interest or sensory preference.

☐ Rocks & Stones☐ Leaves☐ Sticks & Twigs☐ Shells☐ Tiny Toys☐ Containers☐ Household Objects☐ Seeds & Pods☐ Fabric & Soft Things☐ Paper & Flat Things☐ Food Objects☐ Other: _____

REFLECTION

When I look across these, what surprises me?

What Might This Object Be Helping Them Practice?

Objects are often vehicles for practice. When your child returns to the same thing, they are usually working on something. Here are six possibilities.

Remembering

They found this before.
Returning to it exercises early memory and the beginning of a personal narrative: *this belongs to me*.

Comparing

When they hold two rocks or line up leaves, they are building the cognitive foundation for mathematics — sorting, ordering, noticing difference.

Observing

Close study of small things — turning them over, holding them to the light — is early scientific inquiry. They are noticing details most adults have stopped seeing.

Identity

Claiming an object — deciding it is *mine* — is one of the earliest ways children begin to define themselves as distinct people with preferences.

Control

In a world where most things are decided for them, having one small object entirely in their hands is a meaningful experience of agency.

Security

Some objects become transitional anchors — reliable, familiar presences in moments of change, separation, or uncertainty. This is healthy and important.

What Might Be Emerging?

These are possibilities, not conclusions. A pattern across several observations may suggest something — but children are always more than any single interpretation.



Rocks & Stones

MAY SUGGEST

- an interest in collecting and comparing
- texture and weight exploration
- early sorting and categorising
- a preference for grounded, solid objects



Leaves

MAY SUGGEST

- careful observation of natural detail
- pattern recognition (veins, shapes)
- interest in the natural world and change
- a quieter, noticing disposition



Containers

MAY SUGGEST

- an interest in gathering and transporting
- emerging sorting behaviour
- enjoyment of filling and emptying
- a schema around containment



Tiny Toys

MAY SUGGEST

- attachment to familiar, named objects
- early storytelling and imaginative play
- interest in relationships and characters
- comfort through familiarity



Sticks

MAY SUGGEST

- interest in tools and extension of reach
- mark-making and drawing instinct
- physical exploration and movement
- symbolic or pretend-play thinking



Household Objects

MAY SUGGEST

- a desire to participate in real life
- imitation of meaningful adult tasks
- interest in tools and how things work
- readiness for practical life activities

This Week's Treasure

PHOTO OR SKETCH OF THE OBJECT

Why do I think this mattered to them?

What did they do with it?

What conversations happened around it?

What do I want to remember about this?



*Instead of asking:
What is my child carrying?*

*try asking:
What is my child noticing?*



Attention is where learning begins.

When you follow their attention rather than
redirect it, you discover what they are already
building inside.

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What Keeps Appearing?

As you accumulate observations, interests begin to emerge. Circle or shade what you notice most often. Add notes beside each.

Nature	Movement	Animals	Building
Sorting	Pretend	People	Patterns

REFLECTION

Looking Back

These questions are for you. There are no right answers — only honest ones.

What surprised me most as I was observing?

What did I learn about my child that I hadn't seen before?

What do they seem drawn toward lately?

What do I want to observe next?

Treasure Tray Ideas

A simple tray responds to what you have already noticed. It says: *I see what interests you.*

Nature Tray

For children drawn to the outdoors, who return with their pockets full.

- Rocks sorted by size
- Pinecones and seed pods
- A magnifying glass
- Dried flowers or pressed leaves
- A small notebook for drawings

SKETCH OR STICK A PHOTO HERE

Shell Tray

For children fascinated by texture and the details found in small things.

- 6–10 shells of varying size
- A magnifying glass
- Sand-coloured linen cloth
- One or two coral pieces
- A small bowl for sorting

SKETCH OR STICK A PHOTO HERE

Rock Tray

For children who compare, weigh, and examine — who notice things others walk past.

- River stones in different weights
- A raw mineral specimen
- A small balance scale
- Paper for mark-making
- A soft cloth for polishing

SKETCH OR STICK A PHOTO HERE

Seasonal Collection

For children who are drawn to change — who notice when things are different from last week.

- Autumn: acorns, chestnuts, leaves
- Winter: pine sprigs, seed heads, bark
- Spring: petals, new leaves, stones
- Summer: flowers, feathers, pods

SKETCH OR STICK A PHOTO HERE

A CLOSING THOUGHT

*The object itself is rarely the
whole story.*

It is the meaning attached to it that matters.
And meaning is one of the ways children build a
relationship with the world.

What you noticed in these pages is not small. You
paid attention. That, too, is something your child will
remember — even if they cannot say so yet.

Thank you for being here.

This journal was made for the parents who notice the small things
— who pick up the rock their child set down, who pause before
moving an acorn off the kitchen table, who wonder what the object
means without rushing to find out.

*If this journal helped you see your child a little more clearly, that is enough.
More than enough.*

EXPLORE MORE AT

chichiberry.com

Articles, observation guides, and printable resources for parents of toddlers — designed around slow,
intentional, connected childhood.

CONTINUE EXPLORING

- [Why Toddlers Carry Random Things Everywhere](#)
- [Why Toddlers Repeat Words — and What It Reveals](#)
- [What Your Toddler Is Really Learning During a Walk](#)
- [An Outdoor Activity That Builds Observation Skills](#)

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