



Ages & Stages Learning Activities

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Communication

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your wonderful new person communicates with her whole body. Her gaze at you tells you that you are the most important person in the world. She communicates with body movements, noises, and her own special cry when she needs something. Your baby's favorite music is your gentle voice. Even though she enjoys the sounds of a busy household, some quiet time is important so baby can hear family voices.

Song and Rhyme Introduce your baby to the chant, rhyme, and rhythm of your favorite songs and nursery rhymes. Change the words of a familiar tune. Add baby's name now and then ("Twinkle, twinkle, little Andy. How I love my little Andy").

Sing and Talk as You Take Care As you bathe, feed, exercise, or change your baby, sing any song. Make up your own songs. Let your baby watch your face while you talk and sing. Encourage other family members to do this. Baby knows how important she is.

Funny Baby During quiet, happy times encourage your baby to smile. Make funny (not scary) faces that baby likes. When baby smiles, be sure to make that face again. Tell baby how funny he is!

Picture Books With baby cuddled on your lap, hold a book with simple, clear, colorful pictures so that both of you can see. Talk softly about what you see as you point to the pictures. Baby will learn that reading time is very special.

Special Talking Time When your baby is awake, cuddle her and hold her so she can see your face. Talk for a little while. Look at her face as she looks at yours. Encourage her to make different sounds, coos, and squeals. Have a conversation.

Words for Baby's Cry As you comfort baby when he cries, talk about why he is crying. Try to figure out what's wrong, and tell him about it as you take care of his needs.

Noticing Sounds When sounds happen around the house, help baby notice by talking about them ("I hear the telephone ringing," "I hear your brother calling").

Telephone Time When you are on the phone, hold your baby close and look at her. Baby will enjoy watching and listening to you. She'll think your conversation is just for her!



1-4 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Baby is gaining strength right from the beginning. He practices lifting and controlling his head. He moves his arms and legs. Soon he will be able to roll to his side from his back. He likes being held so that his feet gently touch a surface. He likes to be held in a sitting position so that he can strengthen his back and tummy muscles and see what's going on.

Position Changes When baby is awake, place baby in a different position, on her stomach or side. This will allow baby to move her arms and legs in different ways or directions. Always watch baby when she's on her stomach.

Kicking Practice Place baby on his back on a firm surface. As you talk quietly to baby, encourage him to move his legs. Hold a foot in each hand and gently move them back and forth.

Heads Up Put baby on her stomach. Dangle a bright toy in front of her, or make faces and sounds to encourage your baby to lift her head.

Bath Time One special way to bathe baby is in the tub with you. Enjoy gently massaging his legs, arms, tummy, and back. Allow baby to kick and splash as you hold him safely and talk and sing a little bathtub song.

Balancing Act (about 3–4 months) Stand baby on your knees and gently hold her in a standing position. Let her support as much of her own weight as she can to help her strengthen her legs and gain balance.

Roll Over Encourage baby to roll from his stomach to his back by holding a bright toy in front of him and slowly moving it over to the side. You may help him roll over until he can do it himself.

Pretty Pull-Ups (about 3–4 months) With baby on your lap, pull baby up slowly by her arms. Then, gently lower her in an up-and-down game. Talk to her as she moves up and down. This will help to strengthen stomach muscles and let baby see the world and your smiling face from a different point of view.

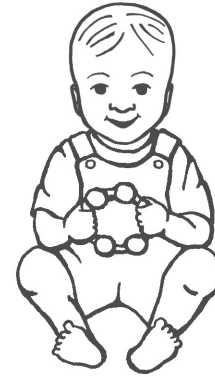


1–4 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby is gaining control of her gaze and can focus on a nearby object for a few seconds. Soon she'll be able to follow you with her eyes while you move around. Her fist will grasp your finger and hold on tightly. She will show excitement by waving her arms. It is a wonderful time of beginning to notice what's going on in the world!

- Finger Kiss** When feeding baby, encourage him to touch your lips (if he doesn't do this spontaneously). Kiss his fingertips. Baby will learn the soft, wet sensation of your lips and soon will learn to aim his fingers toward your lips.
- Gotcha (about 3–4 months)** While your baby is lying on a rug or sitting in her infant seat, offer a toy or something to grasp just beyond her reach. When she reaches for it, make sure she gets it. She'll probably taste it, too.
- Finger Grip** Let your baby grab your finger and grip it tightly. Gently tug a little just to let your baby know you're there. "My, you are so strong!"
- Finger and Toe Rub** Rub your baby's fingers and toes one at a time. A little baby lotion makes this especially nice. Your baby will enjoy the sensation. It will increase his body awareness.
- Ribbon Flutter** Hang a long, brightly colored ribbon or scarf loosely around your neck. When you lean over to change baby or pick her up, let her reach out and touch the ribbon. Sit and talk about what she is doing.
- Tug-O-War** Let baby grasp a dishcloth or the corner of a washcloth. Gently tug the other end. Tell him how strong he is. Let go, and let him win!



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby already responds to sounds and voices. He's beginning to look for the source of the noise. He also looks at his surroundings and will show an active interest in a person or toy. He likes to study things like his own hands and his favorite face—yours!

Tracking Fun Let baby follow a rattle, a shiny spoon, or your face with his eyes. Hold your face or an object 10–12 inches from baby's face and slowly move from left to right. Talk softly as you play. Baby will enjoy being part of the action.

Light Touch Stroke your baby gently with a feather, a cotton ball, or the edge of a cloth. Your baby will enjoy the sensation as she learns to isolate different body parts. Talk to baby softly. Describe what she is feeling.

Cotton Ball Sniff To help your baby develop his sense of smell, dip cotton balls in different fragrances such as mint or vanilla extract. Gently waft these near baby so he can experience the scent. "Mmm, it smells so good."

Making Faces With baby on her back, lean over her and make surprised or happy faces. Encourage her to reach for your nose or lips or mouth. Have a little laugh together.

Colorful Socks Put a brightly colored sock on your baby's foot. This will encourage her to look at her feet, then pull at them and catch a foot. This game will help baby discover parts of her own body.

Silver Spoons Lie your baby on his back, and dangle a shiny spoon above him so he can reach and bat it. A shiny spoon also makes a nice hanging crib toy to entertain baby as long as it is safely tied out of reach.

Reaching Practice (about 3–4 months) With your baby in your lap or the lap of another special person, hold up a safe, interesting toy on a string for him to reach for. Let baby be successful by slowly moving the toy to his fingers.



1–4 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Baby will look into your eyes to tell you “I’m yours.” She loves and needs a lot of holding and physical contact. When she needs you, she will fuss or cry. Your response and gentle voice will comfort her. When she is taking in information, she will be calmer. This is often after eating, resting, or having a diaper changed. At about 7 weeks old, she will respond with a beautiful smile!

Love and Trust Building Respond right away when baby cries. It’s her way of telling you something important. Carry, hug, smile, sing, and talk to baby often. It’s your way of saying, “I love you and I’ll take care of you.”

Communicating Through Touch After his bath, baby may be ready for a massage. Use baby oil and gently massage his arms, hands, legs, feet, back, tummy, and bottom. Continue only as long as your baby is quiet and content. Talk or sing a little song. You can make it up—baby won’t mind.

Funny Face Play Make an “oh” face; stick out your tongue or pucker your lips when baby seems to be studying your face. Hold that expression and see if your baby will imitate it. Smile if baby copies you!

Looking in the Mirror Hold your baby up in front of a mirror. She may enjoy smiling and making noises at herself. As baby looks in the mirror she is learning about your gentle touch and about the “other” baby she sees.

Peekaboo Play Peekaboo with your baby. Place your hands over your eyes then over baby’s eyes. Release your hands and say, “Boo.” Place a blanket over your head and come out saying, “Boo.” Your baby will enjoy many variations of this game for a long time to come.

Happy Hands As baby’s fist begins to relax, place a small toy in his hand. He won’t be very good at letting go just yet. Let him grasp your finger while you nurse. Later, guide his hands to hold his bottle. Smile and tell him how strong he is!



1–4 months



Communication

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby has learned to use his voice: He squeals and is beginning to babble to you and to others. He knows his name and may use his voice to let you know he is happy. He can shout for your attention and is about to make sounds such as “mama” or “dada.” He is also learning to respond to “bye-bye.”

Baby Rubdown After bath time, enjoy some quiet time talking with your baby as you gently rub him down with lotion or oil. Tell him about your day—ask about his.

What’s That? When your baby notices a sound, help her locate the source. Ask your baby, “What’s that? Daddy’s car?” “Did you hear a dog?”

Touch that Sound (about 5 months) As your baby begins to experiment with his voice, you will probably hear /b/, /m/, and /d/ and “ah,” “ee,” and “oo” sounds. Imitate the sounds baby makes. While you make the sound, let your baby put his fingers on your lips to feel the vibrations.

Trust Building with Words When you move away from your baby to do other things, keep in touch with your baby through your words. Tell her what you are doing as she follows with her eyes. “I’m over here. I’m picking up the clothes. I’ll be right back.” Now and then step out of sight, but continue to talk until you return. “Did you miss me?”

Reading Time Your baby will enjoy looking at pictures in magazines or books. Choose things such as a telephone, dog, car, or spoon. Sit with your baby on your lap and read about the pictures. Tell a little story. “See the phone? It’s for you.”

Sing a Song When you are bathing, diapering, or changing your baby’s clothes, sing a song such as “This is the way we wash our toes, wash our toes, wash our toes. This is the way we wash our toes, so early in the morning.”

Hide-and-Seek Move just out of sight and call baby’s name. Wait a few seconds, and then reappear. “Here I am!” Now find another place and hide again.



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby gets stronger every minute. She now holds her head up and looks all around at everything that's going on. She is learning to sit by herself, even though at first she uses her hands for support. She loves bearing her weight on her legs and will soon pull to stand.

- Floor Time** Spread out a quilt on the floor or outside under a tree. Put your baby on the blanket on her tummy with a few of her favorite toys and encourage her to stretch, scoot, roll, squirm, or wiggle her way to the toys. Be sure to give some time for baby to be on her back, too.
- Sitting Pretty** Help your baby sit alone. Sit behind him and give him some gentle support. He can hold a toy or a book. Whisper in his ear that he is a wonderful baby! As he learns to sit by himself, you can give him less help.
- Bouncy Baby** Hold on to your baby's hands and help her stand up. Have fun bouncing up and down while she's standing on the floor, the sofa, or your lap. Sing a little bouncing chant: "Bouncy, bouncy, bouncy, stop. Isn't that fun?"
- Stand-Up Play** At about 7 months your baby may enjoy standing up while holding on to tables and chairs and reaching for different objects. Remove breakable items from low tables or shelves, and line up some of his favorite toys to reach for.
- Little Explorer** Now that baby can crawl, she'll want to explore the whole house! Make sure the areas where she can explore are safe and clean. "What's under the table? What's behind the chair?" What good exercise!
- Obstacle Course (about 6–7 months)** Once your baby has started to crawl, you can make a simple obstacle course of pillows and blankets for your baby to crawl across and around.
- A Shiny Pot Lid (7–8 months)** As your baby gets better at sitting alone, give your baby a pan or pot lid to play with. He can see himself in the pan as he bangs it, pats it, and rolls it.

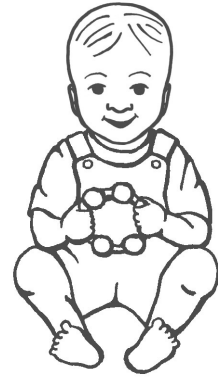


4–8 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby's grasp has relaxed now, and he likes to reach and grab nearby objects. He can hold and bang objects and even hold something in each hand! He may watch you scribble with interest. He's learning how to use his fingers and is getting better at it every day.

Rattles and Toys Give your baby plenty of opportunities to try out different rattles and toys. Things that feel different or toys that make sounds will be very interesting to your baby. Some of the best toys aren't toys at all, such as spoons.

Picky, Picky (6 months or older) When your baby starts eating solid food, he will enjoy trying to pick up small bits with his thumb and forefinger. Don't worry about the mess. This fun activity strengthens eyes and fingers.

Mello Jell-O Make small Jell-O cubes. Your baby will love to catch the Jell-O as it squirms around on her plate.

Drop and Dump As soon as your baby can sit alone, he can sit on the floor and play some dropping games. Use a plastic container and a small ball, block, or toy. Let your baby drop the ball into the container. You may need to help him at first. Now dump it out. He will want to try it again and again!

Finger-Paint Put a dab of soft, smooth food (e.g., yogurt; soft, mashed carrots) on a plate or cookie sheet and let your baby "paint" with her fingers. It's all right if she eats the "paint."

Noodle Pull Give baby a little serving of cool, cooked noodles. Let baby pull apart a few strands. This is a fun way to practice using fingers and to snack at the same time. (Always stay attentive while baby eats.)

Cheerios Spill Put some Cheerios in a plastic bottle. See if your baby can figure out how to tip over the bottle to feed himself the Cheerios.

Tub Time Make bath time fun. This is a good time to practice holding, pouring, and squeezing. Add plastic cups, pitchers, sponges, and scoops to baby's bath. What wet, bubbly fun!





Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your busy learner is interested in making things work! She will find a toy that's partly hidden and will reach with all her might for something that's just out of reach. She knows when a voice is friendly or angry and much prefers friendly sounds. She also loves Peekaboo!

Where Did it Go? Move your face or a favorite toy behind a cover while your baby is watching. Ask, "Where is Mommy?" Drop the cover and say, "Here I am!" Cover baby's doll or bear. Ask, "Where is the bear?" Move the cloth and say, "There he is!"

Bath-Time Boats Put a fleet of plastic butter containers in your baby's bath. She will delight in learning about sinking, floating, dumping, and pouring.

Reactions Provide baby with toys that react such as squeak toys, pull toys, and pop-up toys. Let baby discover ways to make things happen! Share baby's surprise. "Look what happened!"

Hide a Squeak Toy Hide a toy or some item that makes noise, such as a bell or set of measuring spoons, under a blanket while your baby watches. Reach under the blanket and make the sound. Let him try to find it. Now hide the toy to the side, then behind your baby. Let him look around.

Music Maker Give baby a spoon or a block for each hand. Show her how to bang them on a tabletop or highchair tray while you sing a song. Sing and tap loudly, then sing and tap very softly. Hooray for the band!

Hide a Baby This is a fun version of Peekaboo. While folding laundry or doing the dishes, cover baby with a sheet, towel, or dishcloth. Say, "Where's the baby?" Wait a second and pull down the cloth. "Surprise! There's the baby!"

Safe Sandbox In a small container or tray, let baby touch some cornmeal or flour. As you do this, talk about how it feels and show him how to sift it through his fingers. "Ooh, that's so soft."



4-8 months



Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby knows you very well now and will lift his arms to come to you. He may begin to fret when strangers approach. He likes to play with his image in the mirror and is really quite sociable as long as he feels safe and secure.

A Cup for Baby Allow your baby to hold a plastic cup. Put a little water in it, and see what baby will do. She will probably enjoy trying to drink out of a cup. Let her experiment.

Body Awareness Your baby is discovering different body parts and probably has become very interested in his feet and hands. Encourage him by playing games such as *This Little Piggy* and other games with fingers and toes. Talk about his body when he touches his feet. Say, "You found your feet!"

Self-Feeding Encourage your baby to pick up and eat safe foods such as crackers or Cheerios. You may also give baby her own spoon to hold while you feed her with another spoon. Try taking turns—you pretend to eat a little and then offer a bite to your baby. Baby will understand that feeding herself is the way to go.

Whisper Power Rock, walk, or dance and whisper sweet words in your baby's ear. Whispering to your baby helps him to calm down and provides another way to talk in a quiet and loving voice.

A Social Hour Invite another parent and his or her baby over to play with your baby. As the babies look at, reach for, and explore each other, they will make important discoveries about real people. Stay close by to keep each baby safe as they do their exploring.

Wave Bye-Bye Wave bye-bye when you leave the room for a moment or two. As you wave, tell your baby where you are going. "I am going into your bedroom to get your blanket. I'll be right back. Bye-bye."

Faces in the Mirror While looking in the mirror with your baby, talk about body parts such as the eyes, nose, and ears. Touch your nose and say, "Daddy's nose!" Touch baby's nose and say, "Baby's nose." "Daddy's eyes, baby's eyes." Play this game as long as baby seems interested.



4-8 months



Communication

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby now has many different sounds and a lot to say. She likes to play with sounds such as “ba ba ba” and is learning that some sounds mean special people, such as “dada.” She understands some words and directions now and will soon say the names of familiar people or things.

- Following Directions** Help your baby to learn to listen and follow simple directions. Try simple directions such as “Show me Grandma,” “Wash your tummy,” or “Hold the diaper?” When baby responds or follows the direction, be sure to let him know you notice. “Oh, there’s Grandma” or “Thank you for holding the diaper.”
- Grocery Time Is Learning Time** When you go to the grocery store and baby is with you, talk to her about what she is seeing. Let her hold a box or put items into the grocery cart. Point out signs in the store and read them to your baby. “That sign says apples. Let’s get some nice red apples.”
- The Telephone Game** Talk to your baby on his play phone or an old cellular phone. When there are two phones, you can both talk and your baby will have fun carrying on a conversation just like the big people.
- Sleep Waltz** At naptime or bedtime in the evening, hold your baby close and dance together to some quiet music. Your baby has probably spent a lot of time exploring during the day. Now she needs some cuddling. This communicates to baby a feeling of closeness and intimacy.
- Quiet Times** When baby is awake and alert, turn off the radio and TV so that he only hears your voice. This helps baby hear the sounds of words more clearly. Hum and sing just for baby’s pleasure. Ask baby, “Can you hear a bird?” “Can you hear the clock?”
- Baby Babble Game** When your baby makes a sound such as “ba,” repeat the sound back: “ba ba ba.” Your baby will enjoy playing with sounds and making conversation.
- Applause, Applause** When baby does something new or fun, give baby a hand. Clap and say, “Yea!” Baby will love the attention and will probably clap, too!
- Reading Adventures** Read to your baby every day. Cuddle up, get close, and make this a special time together. Point to pictures in books or ask her to find something. “Where’s the kitty?”



8–12 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



This is a very active period for your baby. He's now pulling up on furniture, crawling and creeping into places he couldn't reach before, and getting ready to walk. In fact, he will probably walk holding on to your hand and attempt a few steps without your help. Baby is on the move.

Money in the Bank Save round metal ends from frozen juice containers or lids from jelly jars to use as "money." Now that your baby can sit alone, let her put these round things into a clear container. Then shake the container and make a great noise. Dump them out and put the "money" in the bank again.

Kick, Kick When you are changing your baby's diaper or getting him ready for bed, play this game. As your baby kicks his legs, sing in rhythm to the kicking. When your baby stops kicking, stop singing. When he starts again, start singing. This will develop into a fun game of stop and go. Your baby not only exercises his muscles, but he gets to be the boss.

Reaching for Fun If your baby is pulling himself to a standing position, put some of her favorite toys on a low table and let her stretch way out to reach them. This will give her practice with reaching and balancing. She will also be learning about ideas such as near and far.

Rain, Rain in the Tub Get a small empty plastic container, put some holes in it, and let your baby fill it with water during bath time. Help him hold it up and discover "rain" for himself while you supervise.

Walking Practice Once your baby has started to walk, she will want to practice a lot. Show her how to hold on to a lightweight chair or stool and push it around the room. Sturdy cardboard boxes also make great push toys, as does a stroller. Let your baby push a stroller when you go for walks.

Tunneling While folding laundry, throw a sheet over a table or the backs of two chairs. Let your little explorer crawl into the "tunnel." When he's out of sight, call him. Then, greet him with surprise when he finds you.

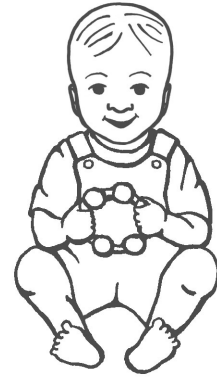


8-12 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your busy baby is beginning to pick up tiny bits of food with her thumb and forefinger. She can take things out of a container, such as spoons out of a plastic bowl, and can bang two toys together. If you give her a crayon and paper, she may even attempt to imitate your writing with a scribble.

- Feely Game** Make a feely game out of a cardboard box by including things to feel, hold, and bang. Good items might include an empty plastic baby bottle, a square of velvet fabric, and a sponge. Let baby reach into the box and grab something. Talk about what he is holding. This exercise for little muscles also helps baby explore different textures.
- Hand Clapping** Help your baby bring her hands together and clap. Clap her hands and then hide them under a blanket. She will like to watch her hands go away and come back.
- Catcher's Up** Use a small, soft ball—or make a ball out of socks rolled together—and play catch with your baby. He won't be able to really catch the ball yet, but he will enjoy trying to throw it and chase after it.
- Tearing** If baby loves to tear paper, get a big basket or box and put some old magazines and wrapping paper inside. Let your baby tear what she wants. If she is more interested in putting wads of paper in her mouth, put the box away and try again in a few weeks.
- Sticks and Stones** Take a walk outside. Encourage your baby to gather stones in a pail or small paper bag. Pick up twigs and leaves. Talk about the color or the size. "Look—this big leaf is nice!" (Remember to watch out for things that might go into your baby's mouth.)
- Goodies in a Jar** Put Cheerios or small pieces of cereal in a screw-top or snap-top plastic jar or snap-top butter container. Put the lid on loosely. Let baby take the lid off. You may have to show your baby how to take the lid off and get the cereal. Soon he will do it by himself.
- Bedtime Book Time** A great way to get ready for bed is to snuggle up and read books with your baby. Let her pick a few books and help turn the pages. Talk about the pictures, and enjoy your special time.



8–12 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



As baby learns how things work, he is busy taking them apart. He can take pieces out of a puzzle or rings off of a stack. He is learning how to find hidden objects under a blanket. He enjoys looking at pictures in a book and enjoys your naming the pictures. He's been so busy exploring that he probably now knows the word "no."

Rhythm Play Using small blocks or spoons, try drumming on the table or clapping toys together to make sounds. Sing along and dance a little. Enjoy the music.

Scarf Pull Tie several colorful scarves together. Insert one end into a cardboard tube. Let your baby pull the scarves through the tube. Now, can your baby stuff the scarves back into the tube?

Hide-and-Seek Hide a ticking clock or a small radio under a pillow or blanket. Let your baby listen to find the sound. "Do you hear it?" "Where is it?"

A Third Toy Give your baby a third toy when she has a toy in each hand. See if she can figure out a way to take the third toy and hold on to all three. If this is too difficult for your baby right now, try it again in a few weeks.

In and Out Put a piece of cereal inside a clear plastic container or baby bottle without a lid. As your baby works to get the cereal out, he will learn more about inside and outside. Another way to show baby the ideas of inside and outside is to get a big box that your baby can crawl in and out of.

Little Laughs By about 11 months, your baby will begin to develop a sense of humor. Do something funny such as trying to drink out of her baby bottle or pretending to put on her shoe when getting ready to go out. She will probably burst out laughing.

Magic Cups Place a cup and a small toy on a tray for baby. Hide the toy under the cup and ask, "Where is the toy?" If he doesn't find it, lift the cup and show your baby where it is. Say, "You found it!" Do this several times. Soon he will lift the cup and find the toy all by himself. Later, add another cup. See if baby can remember which cup hides the toy.



8-12 months

Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby may fear strangers and prefer only you. She loves to explore her environment and needs your watchful eye to keep her safe. She shows her likes and dislikes and shows affection to you and even a favorite toy. She can help you dress her but likes to do things by herself when she can.

- Bath Time** When your baby is taking a bath, give her the washcloth. Encourage her to wash by herself. After the bath, let your baby help get dressed by pushing her arm through her nightshirt. Be patient; these self-help skills take a lot of time and practice.
- Follow Me** Your baby probably is learning to enjoy imitation. Encourage this by showing your baby how to play Follow the Leader with you. Use simple movements, such as tapping on the table or putting a hat on your head. Talk about what you are doing. Say, "Your turn," and see if your baby will follow along. Let your baby have a turn at being the leader.
- Party Time** Your baby may enjoy watching older children play. This is especially fun when there are older brothers or sisters. If there are other babies his own age in the neighborhood, he will enjoy playing alongside them. At first they will enjoy watching each other. Eventually, they will learn to play together.
- Little Helper** Give your baby a damp sponge, and let her wipe the table, chairs, floor, walls, and doors. This is an activity she may enjoy doing while you are getting dinner ready or washing dishes. Tell baby, "Thank you for helping Mommy."
- Snack Time** Your baby will enjoy feeding himself during snack time. Give him a few choices of simple foods such as crackers, pieces of fruit, or cheese. He'll even enjoy trying to drink out of a big boy cup with a little help.
- Mirror, Mirror** When you have a moment at home or while running errands, stop and encourage your baby to look at her face in a mirror. Make silly faces. Tell her what a big girl she is getting to be.
- Roly-Poly Game** While sitting on the floor, roll a small ball to baby, and then ask him to roll it back. Now, do it again. Then, do it just a little faster! This could be a fun game to play with an older sister or brother.



Communication

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby's babbling is beginning to sound more like talking. He says "mama" and really means it and is beginning to learn the names of things. He may say "no" if he is not happy. Because he's so busy learning to walk, his language use may slow down a bit. He combines a word with a point or gesture and you know very well what he means.

- Hide the Noises** Show your baby three things that make noise, such as a squeak toy, a set of measuring spoons, and a rattle. Let baby play with them for a while. Then hide the items under a box or cloth and make a noise with one. Take the cloth off and ask baby, "Which one made the noise?" See if she can guess.
- Quiet Time** On weekends or at some time that's not busy, spend time with baby in a quiet place with no radio and no TV, perhaps outside. Talk to your baby about what you're doing or about what baby is doing. Let your baby hear your voice and see your face making words. Talk calmly and tell baby how special he is. When your baby talks, encourage him. Have a conversation.
- Rhythm Clapping** While listening to music, show baby how to move and clap in rhythm. Your baby will enjoy moving to the beat. Play different types of music, such as rock and roll, country, and classical music.
- Listening on the Telephone** When Daddy or Grandma calls, ask them to spend a few minutes talking to baby. Baby probably won't talk back to them yet but will be delighted to hear someone's voice coming through the telephone.
- Big Talk** While you do housework or get a meal together, talk to your baby about what you are doing. Encourage your little one to use two words together to make baby sentences, such as "Help me," or "More juice." This big language step will grow into a lot of talk.
- Little Reader** Read to your baby every day. Cuddle up and make this a special time. Point to pictures and name things for her. Sometimes ask her to find something: "Where's the cat?" She may need a little help from you at first.
- Big Helper** Your baby can be a big helper. Give him simple directions: "Can you get me a napkin?" "Give me your shirt." He may need you to point or help a little. Say, "What a big help. Thanks!"



12–16 months



Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



By now your busy baby can move around the house quickly. She may be standing by herself, walking while holding on to furniture, or walking well. She will try to climb up steps, and your watchful eye is very important. Baby loves to push and pull things and is getting stronger every day.

Let's Go for a Walk Your baby will love going for walks and seeing new things. Talk to her about what you are seeing. In an open area, let baby push her own stroller. She will enjoy the feeling of power as she moves something big all by herself. Be sure to watch that she keeps the stroller where it's safe.

Row the Boat Let your child experience rocking on a rocking horse or in a chair. Sit him on your lap and use your body to rock back and forth. Play with him sitting opposite of you on the floor. Hold hands and gently pull and push him to and from you. Sing a little song, such as Row, Row, Row Your Boat, while you rock back and forth.

Tunnel Time Drape a sheet or bedspread over a table or two chairs so that it becomes a tunnel. Encourage baby to crawl through. "Come on through." "There you go." "You made it!" Siblings will have fun playing this game, too.

Roll a Ball Your baby will enjoy playing with balls. You can sit across from her and roll a ball to her. Encourage her to roll it back. Clap your hands when she does. If the ball is big and soft (like a beach ball), she may be able to try to catch it.

Finger Walk Take a little walk with baby holding on to your finger. Baby can choose to hold on or to let go. Talk to baby about what you see and where you're going. "Let's walk over to those flowers," "Let's walk down the hall," or "You're a good walker!"

Dance Fever Play some fun dancing music, and show baby how to dance! Wiggle and turn, clap, and stomp your feet. Try lots of different kinds of music. Wave around some scarves and ribbons. Have a dance party.

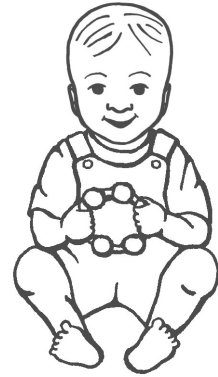


12–16 months



Fine Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Baby is using fingers with more skill now. He will point with his index finger and can pick up tiny bits of cereal with his thumb and finger. He can hold and mark with a crayon or felt-tip pen and grasp small objects such as pegs and insert them in a pegboard.

- Budding Artist** Let baby draw a picture for you with a crayon and a large piece of paper. Give baby plenty of room. Baby may only make a few marks, but give a lot of praise: "Look at the picture you made!" Be sure to put the crayon away when you both are finished. Your baby doesn't yet know that you only want marks on the paper.
- Ball Toss** Encourage your child to practice throwing a small, soft ball. Have him stand in one spot and throw the ball. Try again—see how far it goes. At first he may need you to show him how to throw the ball. "Wow, look how far it went!"
- Carton Construction** Rinse and save pint and quart milk cartons to use for blocks. Show baby how to stack them, then knock them down. Line them up to make a wall, and then knock them down again.
- Tacky Tape** Make a small wad of masking tape with the sticky side out. Give this to baby to play with. It is very entertaining and will give baby some good finger exercise.
- Squeezing** Give baby a sponge, washcloth, or sponge ball to play with in the bath. Show baby how to squeeze the water out. You might also let baby play with plastic squirt toys. That's really fun!
- Fill and Dump** Give baby a plastic container or box and a few items such as a clothespin, a spoon, a toy car, and a spool. Make sure the items are big enough that they do not pose a choking hazard. Show baby how to put them all in the container, then dump them all out again. Tomorrow, change the container or the objects.
- Library Time** Find a time every 2 weeks or so to go to the library. Pick out new books with your child. Cuddle up every day and read together. Read the story, talk about pictures, and let her take turns turning pages and pointing to pictures. What a special time together!



12–16 months



Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby is a busy explorer. She enjoys holding, stacking, and playing with toys. She is learning her body parts and can probably point to at least one if you ask her. She enjoys books and will “pat” her favorite picture. She may try to help turn pages in a book. She enjoys learning about how things work.

Money in the Bank Make a money bank out of a large can or a plastic container. Cut a long slit in the plastic cover about 1/2-inch wide. Use the circular ends from frozen juice cans as “money,” or cut circles from a box. Show your baby how to put these “coins” into the bank.

Water Painting Give your baby a clean paintbrush and a small bucket of plain water. On a sunny day, go outside and let your child paint the walls, sidewalk, or fence with water. Your child will enjoy this “painting.” Then you can watch it dry, and paint again. Try this inside with a small paintbrush and a piece of paper. Watch the painting disappear!

Problem Solving Let your baby figure out how things work and what they do. Show baby how the switch turns the light on and off. Show him how the flashlight works. Talk to him about what you are doing and why: “I’m putting on a coat because I am cold.”

Little Hunter During quiet times, ask your baby to find the blanket or get a book from another room. Ask her to get things she cannot see at the time. She might need a little help. When baby is successful, be sure to say, “Thank you.”

Matching Game Children this age are just beginning to notice when two things are alike, especially shoes, socks, or other objects they know about. Play this game: Hold up one of baby’s shoes or a sock. Ask baby, “Where’s the other one just like this?” Help baby make the match. “Yes, these two are the same.”

Copy Me Play a game with your baby. You do something and then try to get baby to imitate you. Clap your hands. If he tries, say, “Look, you can clap, too!” Touch your nose, stick out your tongue, and say, “You try.” When he does something new, imitate him. Be silly and have fun. You can also try this with a mirror.



12–16 months

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Personal-Social
 Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your sociable baby likes to roll the ball and play Peekaboo or other interactive games with you. He needs to know you are nearby. He actually likes to be the center of attention now! He will show you great affection but may collapse into a tantrum when things don't go his way. He is proud of his new skills, and he wants to learn how to do things by himself.

- Dress-Up** Your baby may enjoy dressing up in different hats and shoes and looking at herself in the mirror. Make a dress-up box with scarves, ties, and silly masks. Add new things every now and then. You can find great things at thrift shops.
- Help Around the House** Your baby can help do small jobs such as wiping the table with a sponge, stirring pancake mix (with your help), or sweeping up a little dirt with a small broom. He will enjoy doing something special for you. Be sure to praise him for helping.
- Brushing Teeth** Give baby her own toothbrush. Let her see you or her siblings brushing their teeth. Put a tiny dab of toothpaste (without fluoride) on the brush (if any) so baby can taste it. Don't expect much brushing; she will probably chew the bristles as she learns about this new thing; and you may need to finish for her. Be sure to put baby's toothbrush in a clean safe place until next time.
- To Market, to Market** Take baby to the supermarket with you so baby can "help." Talk about all of the colors and smells. Let baby hold something, such as a small can or a lemon. At the checkout, let baby "pay" the cashier. What a good helper!
- Hide-and-Seek** At home, play Hide-and-Seek by hiding just behind a door, calling to baby, then peeking out so you can be "found." A sibling may have fun playing this game. It helps baby understand that when you disappear, you will come back.
- Bathing Baby** When bathing baby, let him bathe a small plastic doll. Show baby how to be gentle with the doll. Later, let baby dry and hug the doll. It will teach him to be loving.
- Cleanup Time** Ask baby to help you put the toys away. You will need a box or a shelf where toys should be placed. Show baby how to pick up the toys and where to put them. What a good helper!



12-16 months