



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.



4-8 months



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!



4-8 months



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.