



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.

Ages & Stages

8-12 months