



# 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

# 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!