Learning to Communicate

A guide to infant communication development: Birth to 12 months

Parent Handbook

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Revised edition January 2012, re-edited by Teresa Anderson and Jennifer Evans

**Funding and publisher**

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Part of the Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity

Faculty of Medicine

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Suggested Citation: Anderson T. Learning to Communicate: A guide to infant communication development: Birth to 12 months: Parent Handbook. Sydney: Centre for Health Equity Training Research and Evaluation (CHETRE), part of the Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity, Faculty of Medicine, UNSW Australia, 2012.

Design and editing: Fiona Byrne
Introduction

Background
Your baby began learning about his new world from the day that he was born. Over the next 12 months, he will learn many things that will have a major effect on the rest of his development. Your baby is like an explorer who is on a voyage of discovery. Along the way, he will soon begin to learn to use his senses of taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight in order to make sense of this exciting new world.

One of the most important things that he will learn is how to communicate. Many people mistakenly think that babies don’t begin to communicate until they start to talk in single words. This is not the case. By the time your baby has his first birthday, he will have learnt all of the main rules of communicating.

This program is based on the Interactional Model of Communication (Anderson 1995). Communication development is understood to be influenced by and in turn influences the development of the child’s language, social and cognitive systems, and it’s development is influenced not only by the natural endowments of the child but also the environment into which the child is born.

Learning to Communicate has been designed to help you to understand how your baby learns to communicate and how you can encourage that development. The program provides information on typical development from birth to 12 months covering all aspects of development which have a significant impact on your baby’s communication development and provides ideas on how you can help your baby’s communication skills to develop.

The Program will help you to:
- Understand normal development of communication.
- Know what you can do to encourage your baby’s development.
- Know what types of toys and play materials are appropriate at each stage of your baby’s development.

Structure of the Program
The program consists of an introduction followed by six Parts commencing when your baby is born and finishing when your baby is 12 months old.

- Part 1 Development from Birth to 2 months
- Part 2 Development from 2 to 4 months
- Part 3 Development from 4 to 6 months
- Part 4 Development from 6 to 8 months
- Part 5 Development from 8 to 10 months
- Part 6 Development from 10 to 12 months

Each part is divided into 4 sections:
- Typical development
- Helping your baby to learn
- Things that make learning fun
- Your baby: Progress update

The program resources include videos available online at http://www.learningtocommunicate.com.au and a more detailed Parent Handout.

If you have questions about any part of the program, please discuss them with your Child and Family Health Nurse, General Practitioner, local Community Health Centre or Speech Pathologist.

References

Resources
There are a range of useful web resources available for parents. Contact your local Child and Family Health Nurse for a current list of websites.

Another information source available is the Child Health Record book given to parents after the birth of their child. This book is used to record standard health details, developmental milestones as well as providing other helpful...
Learning to Communicate

By the time your baby has his first birthday, he will have learnt all of the main rules of communicating.

What is communication?

Although we all communicate to each other everyday, we rarely stop to think about what it is and why it is so important to us. Without communication we wouldn't be able to interact with our family and friends, we wouldn't be able to work and we certainly wouldn't be able to share a joke. Can you imagine your life without communication?

It is important to realise that speech is not the only way that we communicate. We also communicate by writing, drawing, making gestures, facial expression, our body language, our tone of voice and even how close we stand to people.

It is also important to think about why we communicate with each other. Basically, communication is a way of achieving our goals. By communicating, we can get things that we want such as objects and information; or we can get people to do things for us.

Although language is the main way that we communicate to each other, the other ways of communicating are just as important. We often use a variety of different ways of communicating to convey a message, for example, drawing a map while giving directions.

Babies first learn to communicate non-verbally, that is, without language. Your baby will first learn the functions of communication, for example, to request a toy, and will then gradually develop the language skills to express those functions.

Communication functions

There are three main functions which form the basis of most of our later communication. These are requesting, informing and rejecting. Your baby will first learn to communicate these functions with his body movements, actions and vocalisations.

Requesting

This is basically asking someone for something. We can request objects (such as biscuits); actions (such as asking someone to drive us to the shop) and information (such as asking the name of an object).

Informing

This is giving information about objects, people and events (such as telling someone that it's very cold outside). It includes commenting about things, showing things and answering questions.

Rejecting

This is indicating that you either don't want something, don't want to do something or that you disagree with something.

Early communication skills

Three skills which are essential to communication development in the first 12 months are eye contact, joint attention and turn-taking.

Eye contact

You will notice that from a very early age your baby is attracted to your eyes. When your baby makes eye contact with you, it makes you feel that he wants to talk to you. This is because eye contact signals to us that someone is "ready" to communicate with us. Think about how you feel when you are talking to someone who doesn't make eye contact with you, someone who looks all around the room and never at you. Basically you feel that the person isn't interested in talking to you. You probably also feel very uncomfortable with that person.
The first step in communicating with someone effectively is to make eye contact with them. By doing this we know that the person is ready to communicate, and that he is listening to what you are going to say. Eye contact is also used to direct someone’s attention.

Your baby will first learn to communicate by using his eye contact to indicate to you what he wants. Later he will begin to combine actions and vocalisations with his eye contact in order to communicate with you.

**Joint attention**

Joint attention is attending to something at the same time as someone else. Without it people would never talk about the same things. In order to have an effective conversation, we need to talk about the same topic. For example, it would be strange if you and I were having a conversation and I talked about the weather while you talked about what you did last week.

Your baby will learn to communicate through his joint activities with you. Through play, your baby will first learn to attend to objects or toys that you place in front of him. He will then begin to use his hands to direct his own attention to things and will begin to follow where you point. By 12 months, he will have learnt how to direct your attention by pointing and will even begin to look where you look.

**Turn-taking**

In order to have a conversation, we need to be able to take-turns. Turn-taking begins very early in your baby’s development. Initially your baby will simply use general body movements as his turn. As you interact and talk to him you will notice that he will look at your face intently. He will go very quiet and still while you talk and will begin to move around when you stop. At first there will be a little overlap with your turns but as he develops, his turns will become more definite. It is important that you give your baby the opportunity to take turns early in his development. You can do this by “waiting” after you’ve said something so that he has the chance to respond. Babies need time to respond.

As your baby develops, his turns will become more like yours. When you talk to him, he will tend to use vocalisations more and when you do actions, he will also tend to respond with actions. Games such as pat-a-cake are very good for encouraging turn-taking.

**Understanding of the world**

What your baby knows about the world has a major effect on his communication skills. Initially your baby is like an observer, just watching what is happening around him. However, by 4 months your baby is starting to interact more with his world. He is beginning to learn about relationships between things and is beginning to realise that he can cause things to happen, that he can have an effect on his world.

There are several important skills that your baby will learn in order to develop an understanding of the world in which he lives and that are critical for the development of communication skills. These are:

- object permanence
- cause and effect relationships
- problem solving
- imitation
- play

**Object permanence**

This is a fancy name for knowing that things still exist when we can no longer see, hear or touch them. Most of the things that we talk about to each other are things that are not within our view, such as what we did at work, or what we are going to do tomorrow. We often ask people to get things for us from another room, or out of a cupboard. Without object permanence skills we would only be able to talk about things that we could still see or touch or hear.

To develop object permanence we must build up images or pictures of people, objects and events in our minds. This forms the basis of our memory banks.

**Cause and effect relationships**

This refers to your baby learning that by his actions he can...
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have an effect on his world.

You will notice that his actions are initially random. Occasionally he will accidentally hit something with his hand or his leg causing it to make a noise. Gradually his actions will become more deliberate as he begins to understand the connection between his actions and the noise. For example, when he cries you come and pick him up, or when he makes a noise, you talk to him.

Understanding these basic cause and effect relationships is essential to communication. Remember that one of the main reasons that we communicate is to have an effect on other people and our world. You can help your baby to understand cause and effect relationships by providing him with opportunities to experience them.

Problem solving

As your baby's understanding of the world develops and he begins to understand cause and effect relationships, he also begins to solve problems, such as “how can I get things that I want”. He will start to develop goals (that is, things that he wants), and start to work out how he can achieve them.

Problem solving is basic to our communication. It is through communication that we achieve many of our goals. Through communication, we can get other people to help us to get things that we want.

Imitation

It is through imitation that your baby learns the words that we use to communicate to each other. Initially he will learn to copy simple actions such as banging, shaking a rattle, splashing in the bath or copying faces that you pull. Later he will progress to copying simple sounds that you make like “bububu”.

Play

Your baby explores and learns about his world through play. Early on your baby’s play with objects is limited to a few actions such as hitting, holding or mouthing. Soon he will start to shake and bang rattles and other noise makers.

Gradually his play will become more complex. In this way he is gradually building up information in his memory bank about these objects and what they can do. To your baby, play is not a special time to sit down with toys, play is everything he does whenever he is awake. It is learning about his world through exploring.

YOU AND YOUR BABY

Name

Date of Birth

Date commenced program

Best thing your baby did today

Your baby will begin to solve problems such as “how can I get things that I want?”

Through imitation your baby learns the words we use to communicate to each other

Your baby explores and learns through play

Record your baby's first year journey!

Each part encourages you to write down new things that baby has done
Best thing your baby did today

LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE

Part One: Birth to 2 months

The journey of discovery begins
Learning to Communicate

Birth to 2 months

The journey of discovery begins

1. TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

It would be easy to think that your new baby does little other than to sleep and feed all day, but if you watch her carefully, you will notice that she can actually do many things. Your baby started to develop skills while still in your womb. Most of her early skills are there to help her to survive.

Motor development

Your new born baby has very little control over her body. She is unable to support her own head and most of her early movements are governed by her reflexes. These reflexes are present to help her to survive. She has rooting and sucking reflexes to help her to feed; and gag and cough reflexes to protect her airway. She has many other reflexes which are also important to her development. Your doctor will check these when your baby is 6-7 weeks old.

The “rooting reflex” is very important for helping your baby to attach to the breast or a bottle. It can be activated by stroking the side of her face. When you do this she will turn her head toward the side and open her mouth, particularly on the side she was touched. It is important to try to activate this reflex when you are about to feed your baby as it helps to prepare her for feeding.

Your baby also has a “sucking reflex” that is activated when anything is put into her mouth, particularly if it touches her palate. Again, this helps her to feed. Like you, your baby has "cough" and "gag" reflexes to stop food going the wrong way.

Although her movements are random at first, she will quite quickly begin to gain more control over them. She will move her limbs more and will begin kicking. She will also start to straighten up and try to lift her head.

Her hands will tend to be closed at first and will gradually begin to open up more as she starts to touch things that are around her, such as her clothes, your clothes and your face.

Looking

At this age your baby can see 18-25 centimetres away. Anything further away than this is a “blur” to your baby. She is unable to make out fine detail, seeing only the main parts of things. She is very attracted to bright colours such as yellow and red and particularly likes objects which have contrasts of colour. She is even able to follow bright objects briefly with her eyes. She will quickly become fascinated with your eyes because they are so different from the rest of your face and are just the right distance away from her when you are feeding her.

Listening

At this age your baby is very sensitive to noise and will startle to loud noises. You will find that she is attracted to human voices very early and will settle to soothing voices and music.

Understanding of the world

Your baby is beginning to learn about her new world through touching, tasting, smelling, feeling, listening and looking. As her senses develop she is able to explore her surrounding more. Each day her experiences are adding to her knowledge about how the world works. At this stage she is simply reacting to things that are happening around her.

Communication skills

Your newborn baby is unable to intentionally communicate with you. However, she has already begun to develop skills (such as looking, giving you eye contact and listening) that will help her to communicate. Your baby will soon begin to take-turns when you are talking to her. See how she wriggles around when you stop talking. This is the beginning of her journey toward communication.
2. HELPING YOUR BABY TO LEARN

Everything that you do can help your baby to learn. You don’t have to set aside special times of the day to “teach” your baby, she is learning all of the time. She learns best simply by being with you and having the opportunity to experience new things.

Where should baby play?

It is important to lie your baby in different positions for short periods during the day to help to strengthen her muscles. Lying your baby on her tummy will help to encourage her to lift her head up and will help to strengthen her neck and back muscles. Lying your baby on her back will encourage her to move her arms and kick her legs. It will also allow her to move her head from side to side easier and to follow objects. Different positions give your baby different views of the world and allow her to better explore her environment.

Routine activities that help baby to learn

There are several routine activities that you carry out with your baby every day which provide ideal opportunities for you to interact with your baby.

Feeding

You probably feel that besides sleeping, your baby does little else but feed. It is during feeding that your baby has the best opportunity to interact with you. During feeds your face is close to your baby’s. She can look into your eyes, hear your voice as you talk to her and feel you close to her. Your baby likes to be held firmly against you so that she can feel your heartbeat. In this position she feels secure and comforted.

Nappy changing

You have many nappy changes to look forward to in the next 12 months, so it’s important to make the most of them. Nappy changes not only provide you with a good opportunity to have a chat with your baby but also to monitor her motor development. Talk to your baby about how she is growing and moving her body, remember to lean over her so that she can focus on your face. If you’re too far above her, you’ll be a blur. You will notice that she will begin pushing and kicking more with her legs. Encourage her to have kicks with her nappy off.

Bath-time

Like nappy changing, bath-times give you the opportunity to see how your baby is developing. Although babies tend to enjoy their baths, they don’t take kindly to being dressed and undressed. You will most likely find that your baby will move her legs and arms around a lot in the water and will find it quite relaxing. Again it is good to get into the habit of talking to your baby while you are bathing and changing her.

Activities to encourage conversations

It is never too early to begin having conversations with your baby. To help your baby to learn how to have a conversation:

- ensure that your baby is close enough to you to see your face!
- talk to her during all your routine activities such as bathing, nappy changing and dressing
- remember to give your baby the opportunity to respond to you and wait for her to respond before you continue to talk
- remember that initially she will take turns using general body movements
- use a lot of inflection in your voice as your baby is more attracted to variations in sound

Activities to encourage listening

It is important to give your baby the opportunity to respond to different sounds. You will find that she will respond
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Birth to 2 months

differently to different sounds. She will startle to loud sounds and will settle to others especially your voice or music. To encourage your baby to listen:

• sing while gently rocking your baby in time to the music
• speak softly while you are bathing or feeding her
• avoid sudden loud noises
• gently shake different sorts of noise makers e.g. rattles, bells
• sing her lullabies and simple rhymes
• activate a music box
• play different sorts of music

Activities to encourage looking

There are many things that you can do to encourage your baby’s looking skills. Again many of these things can be done during routine activities. To encourage looking:

• put objects 18–25 centimetres away from baby’s face, tilt them so that she can see them properly
• attach toys or mobiles to the sides of the cot
• change toys regularly
• pick toys and pictures with bright contrasting colours
• ensure that your face is close to hers to encourage her to look at you while you are talking to her
• hold a bright toy above your baby’s face and move it to attract her attention, slowly move the toy from side to side, to encourage her to follow it with her eyes
• place a mobile over your baby’s cot

Activities to encourage touching

To encourage your baby to touch and explore her environment:

• touch your baby’s face with your hands
• use a washer during bath-times, to brush over your baby’s face and body
• massage your baby, stroking her arms, legs, body and face
• kiss your baby’s hands, let her feel your face and mouth
• touch your baby’s palms with objects and cloths of different textures (rattles, face cloths, toys)
• dress your baby in clothes made of different materials or with different textures on them
• wear clothes with different textures, encourage baby to touch them (e.g. a soft scarf and a woollen jumper)

3. THINGS THAT MAKE LEARNING FUN

At this age your baby isn’t able to play with many things as she hasn’t yet sufficient control over her body. You are the best and most accessible “toy” that she has at this stage. As your baby begins to develop, she will begin taking more notice of things around her. The toys that you introduce at this age should encourage:

• listening
• looking
• touching

4. YOUR BABY: PROGRESS UPDATE

Date       Write down any new things your baby has done this month

Appropriate toys for this age

• noise makers such as small rattles
• music boxes and chimes
• bright and contrast coloured mobiles and pictures
• toy frames for bassinettes, cots and reclining baby chairs
• play mats with a variety of different textured panels
• wrist rattles
• teething
• soft small toy animals with different textures
When you are talking to your baby, notice how he looks and smiles at you.
2 to 4 months Notice how he smiles at you

1. TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

At this age, much of your baby’s day is spent sleeping or feeding, although, he is beginning to spend more and more time awake. During these waking times he is starting to take more notice of the world around him.

Motor development

Although his muscles have grown stronger over the last two months, he still does not have very much control over them. You will have noticed that although he is moving his arms and legs more, his movements are still quite random. He likes to watch his own movements, but he hasnt yet realised that he is actually making them! At first you might see him looking at one of his outstretched hands for a moment or his foot while you’re changing his nappy.

Listening

Sounds are very important to your baby at this age. Because he is unable to move around, he depends on his sight and his hearing to explore his environment. Although he still startles to loud noises, he is much more attentive to sounds that occur around him. He is particularly interested in voices at this age. He will quieten and often stop sucking when he is spoken to. Because he is too young to be able to work out where sounds are coming from, he will not try to search for them.

Understanding of the world

As you are aware, your baby’s knowledge about the world in which he lives is still very limited. Each day he learns a little more to add to his ‘jigsaw puzzle’. At this stage your baby is starting to develop little goals, that is, he has started to realise that there are things that he wants. His understanding of the world hasn’t yet developed enough for him to work out how he can get these things. You will see him staring at objects for quite long periods. You can imagine him saying: “I’d really like that but how can I get it?” He doesn’t yet know that he can use his body or other people to get things that he wants, even things that are in reach.

At this age he doesn’t yet have an understanding of cause and effect relationships. Although he can notice changes occurring around him, he doesn’t yet know how to produce changes himself.

His play is very limited at this age because he doesn’t yet have enough control over his hands to hold toys or to manipulate them. He does, however, like to look at toys and bright objects. You can encourage his interest by hanging toys from a frame or across his crib. Hanging frames are very useful for babies at this age.

Communication skills

Your baby is beginning to be much more responsive and communicative by this age. You will notice that he really enjoys having conversations with you. The importance of eye contact is something your baby learnt weeks ago. When you are talking to him, notice how he looks at you and smiles. Encourage him to participate in your conversations by taking turns with him. Although he can’t talk yet, he can take

Motor development

- muscles are stronger
- is more active; kicking, moving arms around
- movements are still random
- is able to hold his head up for short periods
- is unable to hold objects placed in hands
- is opening his hands more

Looking skills

- is more interested in surroundings
- is able to briefly follow moving objects with eyes
- is fascinated by bright colours
- is interested in faces, particularly eyes and mouths

Listening skills

- depends on sounds to explore his environment
- startles to loud noises
- attends more to sounds
- is interested in voices quieters and stops sucking when spoken to
- is unable to localise sounds
turns by simply moving his body. Sometimes he might also vocalise during his turn. His vocalisation will mostly consist of open mouth sounds like “ah” or grunting sounds. This is because he hasn’t yet developed very much control over his mouth. You might hear him practising different sounds in his cot when he first wakes up.

2. HELPING YOUR BABY TO LEARN

It is important to remember that you can provide your baby with opportunities to learn new things by simply having him with you while you undertake your normal, everyday activities. It is good to set aside a little time each day to have a special quiet time with your baby; however, there are also many routine things you do each day which can help your baby to learn.

Where should baby play?

Now that your baby is taking more notice of things, it is a good time to introduce him to a reclining chair. These provide good support for your baby and enable him to have a good view of things around him. You can move the chair around the house with you so that he can watch what is going on. It is important not to place the recliner on a table or work bench and always use the harness to secure your baby in the reclining chair.

A rug or sheet that you can spread out on the floor is great for this age group. Remember it is helpful to continue to lie your baby in different positions during the day. This will help to strengthen his muscles and will also give him different views of the world. While laying on his tummy, he can practise lifting up his head and looking around.

Routine activities that help baby to learn

Remember that there are many routine activities that you do with your baby everyday which provide important opportunities for him to learn and interact with you.

Feeding

Feeding is still one of the most special times of the day that you spend with your baby. It provides you with an ideal opportunity to develop your relationship with him. While being held close to you during his feed, he can feel your heart beat, the warmth of your body and can clearly see your face. Make the most of these times by using them to communicate with your baby. Talk to him quietly about his day, how he is growing or even use the time to quietly sing him a lullaby. Your baby will learn a great deal from these quiet times together.

Nappy changing

By this stage you probably feel that you do little else but change nappies! Nappy changing does not have to be an unpleasant chore that you need to do as quickly as possible. Of course there will be times where you will be in a hurry; however, when you can use it as a special time to spend with your baby. You will find that now your baby is more alert and responsive, nappy changing can be quite enjoyable. It provides a wonderful opportunity to talk to him, to play with him and to simply be with him.

Remember that you will still need to lean over him so that he can clearly see your face. Again, talk to him about what he is doing and how he is growing. Although he can’t understand the words you are saying, he will respond to how you are saying them. Nappy changing times will also give him the opportunity to have kicks without his nappy on.

Bath-time

At this age baby still may not always be keen to be undressed and dressed. Generally your baby will find the warm water very relaxing. He can kick and move his arms freely in the water. Remember to talk to him as you bath and dry him. It is through these conversations that your baby will learn about his body parts and his actions. He is also learning many other skills such as taking turns, attending to the same thing at the same time.
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Everyday activities that help baby to learn

Now that your baby is taking more notice of things around him, you can place his reclining chair near you while you perform your normal daily activities. For example, he'll be very interested in the things he can see and smell and hear in the kitchen while you prepare dinner. When the family is sitting down to dinner, make sure to include your baby. He is learning to be a member of the family and will enjoy being with you, listening to your conversations, and even participating at times.

He will also enjoy going outside for short periods of time. At this age you can begin lying him on a rug or in his reclining chair on the grass. Talk to him about the things he can hear and see outside, such as the birds flying over head, the trees and the colour of the flowers. Talk about things that you notice he shows an interest in. For example, if he stares at the dog, talk to him about it and pretend that he is talking back to you.

He will also start to take more notice of things around him as you take him out in his pram. Try to go for a walk at least once a week. It will be good exercise for you and a great adventure for him. Again, don't forget to talk to him about all of the things that you can see and hear as you go.

Specific activities that help baby to learn

To encourage conversation

By this age your baby is becoming more alert and responsive. Through your conversations with him, he will learn so many things. To encourage conversations:

- remember that your baby needs to be able to see your face while you talk to him
- talk to him during your routine activities with him. You don’t need to set aside “special” times to talk to him.
- use variety in the tone and inflection of your voice
- give him the opportunity to take a turn in the conversation. Initially accept any movement or sound as his attempt to have a turn. The more you do this, the more deliberate his turns will become.
- pretend that he is talking to you! When he makes sounds, talk back to him as if he is starting up a conversation with you. By doing this, you are reinforcing the sounds that he makes.
- remember to give him eye contact when you talk to him
- encourage other people to talk to him. This will help him to become familiar with other people and will also add to his general experiences.

To encourage listening

Now that he is becoming more alert, you will notice that he is taking more notice of the different sounds around him. To encourage listening:

- introduce him to different sounds in his environment by moving him around the house to where all the activity is
- sing him songs, lullabies and simple rhymes with actions
- show him brightly coloured rattles with different noises. Move them in front of him while they rattle.
- place a music box or pull musical toy in front of him and activate. When the sound stops, wait for him to respond before activating it again.
- play different types of music on the radio or CD/music player

To encourage looking

At this age, your baby is very attracted to bright colours. He is particularly interested in things which have distinctive contrasts in shapes and colours such as black and white, red and blue. Remember that baby can see objects best 20-30 cm from his face. To encourage looking:

- hang toys from a frame over his reclining chair or cot. Place them close enough for him to accidentally touch them if he moves his hand. This will also encourage him to
Learning to Communicate

2 to 4 months

To encourage touching

Although he doesn’t have a lot of control over his hands as yet, he is beginning to use his hands more to explore his environment. To encourage touching:

- continue to give your baby massages. This will be enjoyable for both of you.
- dress baby in clothes made from a variety of materials or with different textures. Move his hand across them so that he can feel them.
- wear clothes yourself that have contrasting texture; encourage your baby to touch them
- place objects close enough for your baby to touch them accidentally. Encourage him to touch them by gently moving his hands across them.

3. THINGS THAT MAKE LEARNING FUN

Your baby’s most important play thing is still you! Although he isn’t able to play with toys by himself, he is more aware of them. The most important functions of toys at this age are still to encourage listening, looking and touching. Toys that are appropriate for this age include:

- noise makers such as rattles, bells; preferably small and brightly coloured
- teether in a variety of shapes, textures and colours
- wrist rattles
- toy frames to hang over the reclining chair (essential)
- bright and contrasting toys to hang from the toy frame
- a bright mobile to hang over the cot
- bright and contrasting prints or magazine pictures
- a roly poly
- pull music boxes and chimes
- Softsound books and Touch and Feel books

4. YOUR BABY: PROGRESS UPDATE

Date

Write down any new things your baby has done this month

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One of the most exciting skills your baby will learn at this age is how to reach for things they want!
Learning to Communicate

4 to 6 months  Your baby is more aware.

1. **TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT**

By four months your baby has begun to learn that she can have an effect on the world around her. She is starting to be aware that she can cause things to happen through her actions. This is an important milestone in your baby's development.

**Motor development**

Your baby's head control is much more developed at this age. Although she still requires some back support, she can now keep her head up and can turn it from side to side to see what is happening around her. She will enjoy being propped up for short periods so that she can look around and use her arms more.

At 4 months, your baby is starting to discover her body. You may notice her looking at one of her outstretched hands for a short time, turning it as she opens and closes it. She may even start to bring her hands together. Gradually she will develop more control over her hands. One of the most exciting skills your baby will learn at this age is how to reach for things that she wants. Reaching involves many skills. For baby to be able to reach effectively, her muscles must be strong enough to support and turn her head, she must be able to focus on objects and she needs to have some control over her hands to guide them in the right direction.

At first your baby will tend to lean toward things that she wants and occasionally will accidentally touch objects placed in front of her. You will notice that her movements are becoming more purposeful. Through trial and error your baby learns that if she reaches out, she can often get things that she wants. Gradually, she will learn to guide her hand in the direction of the toy that she wants and close her hand around it.

Grasping is another important skill that your baby learns at this time. Initially she will only be able to hold an object placed in her hands for a very brief time. At this stage she often isn’t aware that she is holding the object and will tend to drop it without noticing it fall. She will soon start to take more notice of an object placed in her hands and will move it so that she can see it better.

Once your baby can reach out and grasp, she will start to do many more things with her hands. She will tend to mouth everything placed in her hands, she will start to bang and shake rattles and will soon begin holding toys in both hands. At this stage she is unable to transfer objects from one hand to the other.

**Listening**

Bright colourful objects still attract your baby's attention the most. At this age she will take much more notice of objects placed in front of her, and will try to reach for them. You will also notice that when you are reading with her on your lap, she is beginning to take an interest in colourful pictures in your magazines and books.

As she is now able to see objects placed further away from her, you will notice that she is starting to become a little sticky beak, watching everything that is going on around him. She will enjoy watching you do your chores or other children playing near her. Moving objects are particularly fascinating at this age. Watch how she turns her head to follow objects as they move.

Your face is still one of the things that she likes to look at best. Her eyes are naturally drawn to yours because they contrast with the rest of your face. Notice how well she now maintains eye contact with you.

**Listening**

Four month old babies are fascinated by sounds, particularly voices. Notice how she stops moving (including sucking) when she hears a sound. She will now search by turning her head to find out where the sound is coming from. At this age she is attracted to sounds with variety. You will notice that she will tend to listen intently and suck faster when she
Learning to Communicate

4 to 6 months

hears a new sound. Music is very interesting to baby’s of this age. Watch how your baby reacts to different types of music.

Understanding of the world

What your baby knows about the world has a major effect on her communication skills. Initially your baby is like an observer, just watching what is happening around her. However, by four months your baby is starting to interact more with her world. She is beginning to learn about relationships between things and is beginning to realise that she can cause things to happen, that she can have an effect on her world.

There are several important skills that your baby will learn in order to develop an understanding of the world in which she lives. These are:

- object permanence
- cause and effect relationships
- problem solving
- imitation
- play

Object permanence

This is a fancy name for knowing that things still exist when we can no longer see, hear or touch them. Most of the things that we talk about to each other are things that are not within our view, such as what we did at work, or what we are going to do tomorrow. We often ask people to get things for us from another room, or out of a cupboard. Without object permanence skills we would only be able to talk about things that we could still see or touch or hear.

To develop object permanence we must build up images or pictures of people, objects and events in our minds. This forms the basis of our memory banks.

Think of a car! Do you imagine a mini, sports car or sedan or another sort of car? The car that you imagined is probably different to the car that your friend imagined. This is because your different experiences effect the images that you build up in your memory banks.

At four months your baby has very primitive object permanence skills. She will follow moving objects with her head; however, she will not continue to search for them once they are out of sight. Similarly, she will search for a sound while it is still happening, however, will stop searching when the sound stops. Because she hasn’t yet developed images of objects, actions, or events, she does not search for objects that are either completely or partially hidden.

Cause and effect relationships

At this stage your baby is learning about cause and effect relationships. She is learning that by her actions she can have an effect on her world. You will notice that her actions are initially random. Occasionally she will accidentally hit something with her hand or her leg causing it to make a noise. Gradually her actions will become more deliberate as she begins to understand the connection between her actions and the noise.

Another useful thing she will learn at this age is that when she cries you come and pick her up, or when she makes a noise, you talk to her. Understanding these basic cause and effect relationships is essential to communication. Remember that one of the main reasons that we communicate is to have an effect on other people and our world. You can help your baby to understand cause and effect relationships by providing her with opportunities to experience them.

Problem solving

As your baby’s understanding of the world develops and she begins to understand cause and effect relationships, she also begins to solve problems, such as “how can I get things that I want?” She is now not only developing goals (that is, things that she wants), but is also starting to work out how she can achieve them. She is also beginning to be selective.
Learning to Communicate

4 to 6 months

in her goals. She will tend to turn away from things that she doesn't want and will reach towards things that she does want. Watch how she now shapes her hand in anticipation of getting the object she wants.

At this stage she does not realise that she can use other people to help her get things that she wants. She has not yet developed a connection between people and objects. Over the next few months you will help your baby to develop this connection by:

• giving her things that she is reaching for
• talking to her about objects that she is holding or looking at
• encouraging your baby to look at you and the object

Problem solving is basic to our communication. It is through communication that we achieve many of our goals. Through communication, we can get other people to help us to get things that we want.

Imitation

It is through imitation that your baby learns the words that we use to communicate to each other. At 4 months your baby will tend to simply watch you carry out actions, she will find them fascinating. Soon she will learn to copy simple actions such as banging, shaking a rattle, splashing in the bath or copying faces that you pull. Later she will progress to copying simple sounds that you make like “bububu”.

Play

Your baby explores and learns about her world through play. At this age your baby's play with objects is limited to a few actions such as hitting, holding or mouthing. Soon she will start to shake and bang rattles and other noise makers. Gradually her play will become more complex. In this way she is gradually building up information in her memory bank about these objects and what they can do. To your baby, play is not a special time to sit down with toys, play is everything she does whenever she is awake. She is learning about her world through exploring.

Communication skills

Although your baby has not yet developed true communication skills, she is beginning to learn all the important rules she will need in order to be an effective communicator.

Eye contact

By this age your baby will maintain eye contact with you while you are having little conversations with her. Because she does not yet connect you and objects, she will not try to talk to you about objects or ask you to help her get objects. Therefore when she wants something or is playing with a toy, she will tend to look only at that toy. Similarly, if she does not want something or does not want you to do something, she will tend to pull her arms back and turn away without giving you eye contact.

As your baby's cause and effect and problem solving skills develop over the next few months, you will notice that your baby will begin to use eye contact more in her communicative attempts. You can encourage this by talking to your baby about what she is playing with, and positioning yourself so that she can achieve eye contact with you. You can also do this when she is reaching toward something: talk to her, position yourself so that she can achieve eye contact with you and give her the toy once she looks at you. This will help her to develop a connection between you and the toy.

Turn-taking

By this age your baby is learning to take turns in a conversation. She will vocalise to you and will stop when you talk and continue when you stop. She does not really start up conversations yet but will join in if you start one up.

Taking turns is important to any communication. We would...
not be very good communicators if one person always did all the talking. Over the next few months your baby will become much better at taking turns, she will overlap less with you and will also begin to start up conversations.

Your baby is also learning to take turns in games, which helps her turn-taking in conversations. If you play games like banging on the table, she will tend to wriggle her body or make a sound when you stop. She will stop wriggling when you bang again.

You can help your baby to develop turn-taking skills by playing games like this with her and by having lots of little conversations with her. Remember to make sure you give her a chance to have a turn.

You will also notice that your baby is beginning to make more sounds. At this stage she will tend to make more open mouth sounds such as “ah” or “eh”. She may even use a few consonants such as “m” or “b”.

Babies are very variable in the type and amount of sounds that they make at this age. Try not to compare your baby with other babies. Some babies are very talkative while others tend to be quieter. The most important thing is that your baby is experimenting with sounds, not the amount of sounds she is making.

She will enjoy lying in her cot or on the floor and discover all of the different sounds that she can make with her mouth. Listen to the different sounds that she can make!

At this age she will take a great interest in her own mouth and in your mouth especially when your talking. Encourage her by talking to her and letting her play with your mouth.

2. HELPING YOUR BABY TO LEARN

Parents are the best people to help babies to learn. There are so many things that you do each day which provide your baby with ideal opportunities to learn about her world. Here are some ideas to help you.

Where should baby play?

The best place for your baby to learn is near you. She will enjoy watching you as you carry out your normal daily activities. Remember to place her in a variety of positions throughout the day. This will help to strengthen different muscle groups and will also give her different views of the world.

Although she is unable to sit unsupported as yet, she will enjoy being propped up for short periods each day. In addition to allowing her to look around more, it will enable her to use her arms more. A reclining chair is very useful at this age.

She will also enjoy sitting on your lap at a table. Place toys in front of her to encourage her to reach. Because she is well supported in this position, she is able to easily move her arms around.

Routine activities that help baby to learn

Now that your baby is taking more notice of what is happening around her, routine activities such as nappy changing, feeding and bathing take on a whole new meaning. Here are some more ideas on how you can use these times to help your baby to learn.

Nappy changing

Nappy changing itself is not the most exciting activity in the world; however, it can be an enjoyable time spent interacting with your baby. Use the time to have a conversation with your baby. Watch how she uses her eyes and body movements to communicate with you. Play games with her, such as pat-a-cake or peek-a-boo. After several goes at the game stop midway and wait for your baby to respond before you continue.

Bath-time

By 4 months your baby will start to enjoy her bath more. She
Learning to Communicate

won’t mind being undressed as much as she did when she was younger. When dressing, undressing and bathing your baby, give her a chance to have a kick and to move her arms and body without the restriction of her clothes. Again use the time to have a conversation with her. Don’t forget to allow her to have a turn in the conversation.

Dressing

Remember to talk to your baby while you are dressing her. She can learn lots of interesting things about her body, her clothes and her world as you change her. Talk about what you are doing, how she is growing and the different parts of her body. Although she can’t understand your words as yet, she is responding to the sounds that you are making. With your help, she will gradually begin to connect those sounds with things in her environment. This is how she begins to learn the meanings of words. Sing songs such as “Heads and Shoulders and Knees and Toes”.

Feeding

At this age your baby is still being fed very frequently. Feeding is a very special time to spend with your baby. During feeds your baby feels secure and content. Again make the most of these times by holding your baby close to you so that she can look into your eyes and by quietly talking to her. Your baby may start taking small amounts of solids over the next few months. The reclining chair is very useful for sitting your baby in while she has her first solid meals. Remember to sit at your baby’s eye level so that she can easily maintain eye contact with you. She will feel intimidated if you lean over her. She will enjoy having a chat to you while you feed her.

Everyday activities that help baby to learn

It is important for your baby to have the opportunity to spend time in a variety of places during the day. Imagine how bored you would be if you were kept in the same room all day! At 4 months your baby will enjoy being moved around with you (both inside and out), while you carry out your normal daily activities. This is a good way to keep your baby entertained.

The washing

It is good to take your baby outside with you while you hang out the clothes. Place a rug near you on the grass (in the shade). Your baby can either lie on the rug or in her reclining chair. If she has a brother or sister, they might like to keep her entertained with some toys. Your baby will enjoy listening to all of the different sounds and seeing all of the different sights in the garden. Remember to talk to your baby about the things she can see or hear while she is outside.

Doing the ironing

While you are doing the ironing place baby across the room from you so that you can talk to her while you’re doing it. Of course, you need to make sure she is not too close to the ironing board for safety reasons. She will find your actions entertaining and will enjoy the opportunity to chat to you. Place her toy frame across her reclining chair so that she can play with it. Talk to her about what you are both doing.

The gardening

Gardens are wonderful places for babies. There are so many interesting things to see in the garden! Place her rug near you while you gardening. Talk to her about what you’re doing, about the plants, the plane going over head, the birds sitting in the tree. She will enjoy feeling the breeze on her face, the grass under her hands and hearing all of the different noises such as mowers, people talking, hammering and dogs barking.

Going for walks

Walking is not only good exercise, it can be very relaxing for both you and your baby. Your baby will find the motion of the pram very soothing. It is often a good way to help babies who have difficulty sleeping to get to sleep! Your baby will also find the walk very interesting. It gives her the opportunity to see new things and to hear new sounds. While walking point out to your baby the different things that you see. Remember that although she can’t understand the words that you’re saying, she will respond to your voice. Gradually she will come to connect the sounds that you make with the things around her.
Reading books
It is never too early to start reading books to your baby. Although your baby is unable to actually read at 4 months, it is a good time to introduce her to baby books. Reading books with your baby helps to develop many skills such as attending to specific things, looking where someone else points, listening, taking turns, connecting sounds with pictures and pictures with objects. At this age your baby will be attracted to books with big, bright pictures. Hard covered books are much easier for baby to handle than the cloth books. The best books are the board books especially designed for babies. These usually have only one main picture on each page (this helps to focus baby’s attention). The hard pages allow baby to turn them more easily. Most of these are also cleanable and wipeable.

Specific activities that help baby to learn

To encourage listening
- talk to your baby about things that you are doing
- place noise makers on her toy frame, and place them close enough to her hands so that they make a noise when she moves
- talk to her about sounds that you hear
- play music to her and dance with her to the beat
- sing songs to her, particularly songs with actions
- shake noise makers in front of her then gradually move them out of sight to encourage her to follow them
- shake noise makers slightly out of her line of vision and encourage her to turn her head to the direction of the noise
- when you come into the room call her
- place noise makers in her hand and encourage her to move her hands
- hang wind chimes in her room

To encourage looking
- give her objects to play with which are bright and colourful
- place bright mobiles in her room
- place bright pictures on the wall near her cot
- hang a variety of different objects from her toy frame
- introduce her to her first book if you have not done so already. Choose books which have hard cardboard pages and only one main picture on each page (refer to reading books section above).
- sit your baby on you lap while you are reading, she will enjoy looking at the colourful pictures in your magazines
- sit your baby in a variety of positions to give her different views of her world
- take her for walks in her pram, so that she can look at different things around her

To encourage communication
- talk to her about things that you are doing. Remember to give her a chance to have a turn too. Wait for her to move or vocalise before you continue
- play games such as pat-a-cake with her. Stop half way through the game and wait for her to move or make a sound before you continue. This will help her to take turns.
- make sure that your face is close enough to her that she can make eye contact with you
- remember to make eye contact with her when you are talking to her
- use variety in your speech, use high and low sounds, quiet and loud sounds. This will keep her interested.

To encourage object permanence
- show your baby bright objects and gradually move them
- give her a chance to have a turn too. Wait for her to move or vocalise before you continue
- talk to your baby about things that you are doing. Remember to give her a chance to have a turn too. Wait for her to move or vocalise before you continue
- play games such as pat-a-cake with her. Stop half way through the game and wait for her to move or make a sound before you continue. This will help her to take turns.
- make sure that your face is close enough to her that she can make eye contact with you
- remember to make eye contact with her when you are talking to her
- use variety in your speech, use high and low sounds, quiet and loud sounds. This will keep her interested.

GOOD READING BOOKS TO LOOK OUT FOR
- Where’s Spot? by Eric Hill
- I Love Animals by Flora McDonnell
- Miffy by Dick Bruna
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
- Baby Animals by Dorling Kindersley Publishing (DK Touch and Feel Series)

Visit your local public library to see what sorts of baby books you can borrow.

CHILDREN’S ACTION RHYMES
Round and round the garden
Like a teddy bear
One step, two steps
Tickle you under there.
Note: Do the actions as you say the rhyme. Gently trace your finger in a circle around your baby’s palm. Walk your fingers up your baby’s arm, tickle your baby under the chin, arm or tummy.

Pat-a-cake
Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man.
Bake me a cake as fast as you can;
Roll it and pat it and mark it with B,
Put it in the oven for baby and me.
Learning to Communicate

4 to 6 months

out of her sight and then back again, talk to her as you do this
• place objects in your baby’s hand and cover her hand and
  the object with a see-through cloth. Pull it off while your
  baby is watching.
• play peek-a-boo with your baby. Cover your face with a
  cloth, continue talking and then pull it off.
• while talking to your baby move your head out of
  her sight and then back again. She will follow your
  movements.

To encourage understanding of cause and effect
• place noise makers close enough to baby so that she will
  hit them if she accidentally moves her hand or her feet,
  gradually her actions will become more deliberate
• place noise makers in her hand so that if she moves her
  hand she will make the noise
• when she vocalises go up to her and talk to her
• encourage her to kick her legs in the bath, so that she can
  see/hear the splashes

To encourage problem solving
• place bright and interesting objects in a hanging frame
  close to her, so that if she moves her hand she can grab
  them, this will encourage her to reach
• wind up toys to activate them, stop them and wait for her
  to react (move or vocalise) before you let it continue

To encourage play
• give her light weight colourful toys and objects which are
  easy to handle
• place them in her hands as she is unable to pick them up
  by herself at this age

• talk to her about the toys that she has and help her to
  manipulate and mouth them. Don’t stop her from putting
  things in his mouth (unless of course they are unsafe), this
  is your baby’s way of exploring!

To encourage imitation
• carry out interesting actions in front of her, such as
  banging on the table, clapping hands then manipulate
  her hands and repeat the action, make a game of it!
• copy sounds that she makes, then wait for her to make a
  sound then repeat. Note: it is easier for her to copy sounds
  she can already make.
• when she smiles, smile back at her

3. THINGS THAT MAKE LEARNING FUN

Now that baby is starting to use her hands more, her need for
play materials has changed. Play materials for 4 month olds
should encourage baby to touch and explore, learn about
cause and effect relationships, learn how to solve simple
problems, learn about object permanence. Look for objects
that:
• are easy to handle, that is, are not too heavy or too large
  for little hands. Note: some rattles are a little top heavy, try
  rattles that are dumbbell shaped.
• are safe to put in her mouth (as everything will soon go in
  her mouth)
• are bright and colourful
• have different shapes and sizes
• make noises when moved
• have different texture

Toys that are appropriate for your baby at this age
• colourful balls - several soft balls which are small and easy
to grab (cloth and rubber balls are ideal). Baby will enjoy

Play materials for
4 month olds
• colourfull balls
• chime-balls
• roly-poly
• noise makers
• wrist rattles
• plastic key rings
• soft toys
• teething rings
Learning to Communicate

reaching for them, mouthing and manipulating them

• chime-ball and roly-poly - these will help to develop cause and effect relationships, remember to place close enough to baby for her to accidentally hit them

• noise makers - which have a variety of shapes and noises, tie them to the toy frame or place them in baby’s hands

• wrist rattles - which again can help to develop cause and effect relationships

• plastic key rings - these are easy to manipulate and mouth and make great noises

• soft toys - to encourage touching and mouthing

• teething rings - to encourage touching and mouthing

Play materials from around the home

As your baby is now starting to reach for things, you must ensure that anything within reach is safe for baby to touch. Therefore avoid objects which:

• have parts that are small enough to swallow

• have sharp or rough edges

• may have poisonous paint

• have contained poisonous substances such as dishwashing liquid

• have contained medicines

• have small parts which may break off

The following items from around your home make ideal play materials for 4 month olds:

• plastic containers - various sizes and shapes such as small fruit juice bottles and old plastic jars. Fill with large baby crayons, scrunched up paper.

• plastic spoons - select solid plastic spoons that are colourful and have rounded handles; these are good for baby to mouth, manipulate and bang

• plastic bangles - in a variety of colours and textures; good to mouth, manipulate and hold on to

4. YOUR BABY: PROGRESS UPDATE

Date Write down any new things your baby has done this month

As your baby is now starting to reach for things, you need to ensure that anything in reach is safe for baby to touch.
LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE

Part Four: 6 to 8 months

Sitting upright gives your baby a whole new view of the world.
Learning to Communicate

6 to 8 months Your baby is more active.

1. TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the past 6 months your baby has learnt many things. Through looking, listening, touching and tasting, he has begun to understand more about his world. You will have noticed that as his skills have developed, the way in which he interacts with his environment has also changed. Let us look at what baby can do now.

Motor development

By 6 months, your baby is learning many things about his body. He has found his hands and his feet, and spends many hours looking at them, feeling them and putting them into his mouth. With your help, he will soon discover other parts of his body.

Gradually your baby is gaining more control over his body. He will soon be able to sit by himself, although only for few seconds at first. You can help him by sitting him squarely on the floor with his legs spread apart and supporting him until he balances. He will also use his hands to prop himself up for a short time. While he is learning to balance, you will need to provide him with some support (using pillows behind and to the side of him to prop him up) so that he can be free to use his hands. He can also sit supported in a high chair, which will allow him to use his hands more.

Sitting helps your baby to become a little more independent. He is now free to do more with his hands and can play quite differently. He is able to reach more consistently and easily toward things that he wants.

Your baby is now able to do much more with his hands, he is no longer limited to just holding or grasping toys. He is learning that he can do many things with his hands such as banging, crumpling, passing toys from one hand to the other, holding toys in both hands (at the same time) and turning toys over to examine other sides. He still tends to take everything to his mouth, so that he can explore them more. Although he still has difficulty releasing toys that he is holding, he will learn how to do this over the next few months with your help. He is also now able to consistently reach for things that he wants including your face!

Over the next few months your baby will develop even better control over his body. Soon he will be trying to go places. He will try to roll over, at first from his back to his tummy and will soon begin trying to crawl.

Looking

Sitting upright gives your baby a whole new view of the world. He can now clearly see quite long distances away such as across the room, or to trees when out in the garden. His increasing visual skills allow him to explore his surroundings more. You may have noticed that he is becoming much more inquisitive. At this stage he likes to explore everything, turning toys over to examine the other sides, looking at himself in the mirror, examining your face, poking his fingers in your nose, eyes and mouth.

One of his favourite things is just looking at you. You will notice that he now maintains much better eye contact with you, especially when you both are having little conversations. Remember that eye contact is one of the most important parts of communication.

He is still very attracted to bright colours and contrasts in shape. He will often stare for quite long periods at things that he wants which are out of his reach. He is also beginning to attend more to objects and books placed in front of him, and will enjoy touching his book as you read it to him.

Listening

Your baby is very interested in sounds by this age, especially your voice. He prefers sounds which have lots of variety. You will notice that he attends to you more when you use lots of variation in your voice. He doesn't like it when you use a flat voice. Similarly, he likes to hear and play with noise makers.
Learning to Communicate

Understanding of the world

As we have said before, what your baby knows about the world will significantly affect his communication skills. Over the past few months, you will have noticed that there has been a major change in your baby’s understanding and his awareness of the relationship between things in his environment.

Object permanence

Remember, this is a fancy name for knowing that things still exist when they are out of our sight. By 6 months, your baby is beginning to develop his object permanence skills. You may have noticed that recently your baby has started to cry when you leave the room or when an unfamiliar face comes into view. This is not because he is being naughty, but because he has begun to develop these little images in his mind - of you, familiar people and objects. This is a very important step for your baby to make.

He will also soon begin to search for objects which have fallen out of his view and will try to uncover partially hidden toys. You can help him to develop this skill by playing games like peek-a-boo or hide and seek. Partially hide objects and help him to find them. If he is holding a toy he likes, cover his hand, and the toy with a cloth. In this way he can still feel the toy even though he can’t see it. Pull the cloth off the toy while he is looking. You can also play hide and seek in the bath, show him how the toy can go under the water and hide under the bubbles.

Understanding of the world

Object permanence

- is starting to cry when you leave his sight
- is developing little “images” of familiar people/objects in his mind
- is starting to search for objects that fall out of sight or that are partially hidden

Cause and effect

- is starting to learn that he can make things happen through his actions
- is starting to learn to activate simple toys such as a roly poly

Problem solving

- is learning to use his own body to get things that he wants
- is turning away from things that he doesn’t want
- has not yet developed a connection between people and objects
- does not realise that he can use other people to get what he wants
- does not realise that he can use objects/toys to get other people’s attention
- starting to use tools such as strings/cloths to get what he wants

Cause and effect relationships

At this stage your baby is learning about cause-effect relationships. He is learning more and more that he can have an effect on his environment, that by doing certain things, he can cause other things to happen.

Remember that you can help your baby to understand cause-effect relationships by providing him with opportunities to experience them, such as giving him toys that he can easily activate and by responding to his actions.

Problem solving

Your baby’s ability to solve problems is gradually increasing. He is learning that he can use his own body to get things that he wants. He is also starting to decide that there are things that he does not want and will turn away from them. He now realises that he can get things within reach by reaching out his hand, and is starting to shape his hand in anticipation of getting the object.

At this stage he still hasn’t developed a connection between people and objects and so does not yet realise that he can use other people to help him get what he wants. Over the next few months this connection will begin to develop as you continue to:

- give him things that he is reaching for
- talk to him about objects that he is holding or looking at
- encourage him to look at you and the object

He will soon begin to solve other problems, such as dropping one toy so that he can pick up another one; or pushing one object out of the way to get another one, or pulling a cloth to get what is on top of it; or pulling a string to get a toy tied to it.

Imitation

As we’ve said before, it is through imitation that your baby learns the words that we use to communicate to each other. You may have noticed that your baby is starting to become a little mimic, copying simple actions such as banging or splashing in the bath, or copying faces that you pull. He will
soon progress to copying simple sounds that you make such as “bubub”.

Play
It is through play that your baby learns about his world. Initially your baby only used a few actions when playing with objects such as holding them or mouthing them. Now he is much more active in his play. Although he still uses his mouth to explore objects, he now also carries out other actions on them such as banging, hitting, shaking, waving and crumpling. In this way he gradually builds up information about what these objects are and can do. Remember that to your baby, play is not a special time to sit down with toys, play is everything he does whenever he is awake, it is learning about his world through exploring.

Communication skills
At this stage your baby still has not yet developed true communication skills, he is continuing to learn the important rules he will need in order to be an effective communicator.

Over the past two months, you may have noticed that he is using much more eye contact with you while you are having little conversations with him. Because he still does not yet connect you and objects, he will not try to talk to you about objects or ask you to help him to get objects. Therefore when he wants something or is playing with a toy, he will only look at that toy. Similarly, if he does not want something or does not want you to do something, he will still tend to bring his arms back and turn away without giving you eye contact.

As your baby’s cause effect and problem solving skills develop over the next few months, you will notice that your baby will begin to use eye contact more in his communicative attempts. Continue to encourage this by talking to him about what he is playing with and positioning yourself so that he can achieve eye contact with you. Remember to do this when he is reaching toward something: talk to him, position yourself so that he can achieve eye contact with you and give him the toy once he looks at you. This will help him to develop a connection between you and the toy.

Your baby is continuing to develop his turn-taking skills. He is using more consistent turns in conversations. Notice how he vocalises to you and stops when you talk and continues when you stop. Over the next few months he will get even better at taking-turns and will overlap less with your turns. He might even start to initiate conversations with you.

Your baby will enjoy playing turn-taking games such as peek-a-boo or pat-a-cake. These games will help him to develop his turn-taking in conversations. Notice if you bang on the table, he will bang on the table when you stop; and will stop when you start to bang again. You can help your baby to develop turn-taking skills by playing games like this with him and by having lots of little conversations with him. Remember to make sure you give him a chance to have a turn.

You will also notice that your baby is beginning to make more sounds. At this stage he is beginning to use more consonants such as “m” and “b”. He might also be starting to string sounds together, such as “bubub”; “ah-oo”. Don’t forget that babies are very variable in the type and amount of sounds that they make at this age. The important thing is that your baby is experimenting with sounds. He likes to lie in his cot or on the floor, or sit in his high chair and discover all of the different sounds that he can make with his mouth. At this age he will take a great interest in his own mouth and in your mouth especially when you are talking. He will try to touch your lips and put his little fingers into your mouth. You can help your baby to learn about speech and sounds by:

- talking to him
- letting him touch your mouth
- encouraging him to touch his own mouth; and
- by letting him have quite times to experiment with sounds.

2. HELPING YOUR BABY TO LEARN

Everything that you have done with your baby over the past 6 months has been helping him to learn. Look at the many skills he has developed up until now. Without you he would not have learnt these skills. Because he isn’t yet very mobile, he relies on you to help him to interact with his world. In
some ways you are like his interpreter with the rest of the world.

Remember that you don’t need to set aside special times each day to teach your baby new things. He learns best by being with you and having the opportunity to experience new things.

Where should baby play?
The best place for baby to play is still near you! Although he likes being in his own room for a small part of the day, he would rather be with you.

He still needs the opportunity to be in a variety of positions each day, so that he learns to use his different muscles. These positions also give him different views of his world.

On the floor
Now that your baby is learning to sit, he should have the opportunity to practise this skill every day. Sit him squarely on the floor with his legs spread to the side, supporting his weight until he is balanced then let him go. At first he will only sit for a few seconds; however, soon he will be able to sit for longer periods by himself.

Although he will initially require support (pillows behind his back and to the sides to help him balance), it is important that your baby also has the opportunity to play while sitting on the floor. This position enables him to manipulate his toys with his hands and to bend forward and reach to toys in front of him. This will help him to develop more control over these parts of his body.

It is also important that he spend some time each day on the floor on both his back and his tummy, especially his tummy in preparation for crawling. You may find that he isn’t very keen on being placed on his tummy; however, he won’t get used to it if he is never placed in this position. Obviously you need to do this when he is awake and when you are around to watch him. Placing toys to the front and side of him will encourage him to reach and roll toward the toys. Placing toys slightly out of reach will encourage crawling. Time spent on his tummy will help to strengthen his neck muscles.

On your lap
Your baby will enjoy sitting on your lap at a table. As he doesn’t have to concentrate on balancing, he is free to use his hands to explore things in front of him. He might also like sitting on your lap facing you so that he can have a good chat to you or play little games like “round and round the garden”.

In a high chair
Now that your baby can sit supported in a high chair, he can more easily watch you while you are doing your daily chores. It’s sometimes a bit hard to see what mum and dad are doing when you’re close to the ground and they are so far above you. He’ll enjoy sitting in his high chair at meal times, watching the family eat and participating in conversations with you.

In his cot
Each day your baby should spend some quiet time in his cot, playing with his toys, exploring his body and practising his sounds. This is generally a relaxing time for baby and a good time for Mum and Dad to have a rest and to spend time with each other. Babies need to learn to entertain themselves. It is very important that the toys you leave with your baby in the cot are safe.

Routine activities that help baby to learn
As you are now aware there are many routine activities that you carry out with your baby every day which are ideal opportunities for you to play with your baby and help him to learn.

Nappy changing
By now you will have become very skilled in the art of nappy changing. Are you having fun while you change his nappy or is it a bit of a chore? Remember that with a little imagination, nappy changing time can become a lovely opportunity to communicate with your baby. You can talk to him about...
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6 to 8 months

By now your baby probably loves bath-time. He can now kick and splash, probably all over Mum and Dad. Remember that he is learning that he can make things happen through his actions! Don’t forget to take the time to talk to him while he is having his bath. You can talk to your baby about his body parts as you wash him, for example, “mummy wash your face”, “clean those feet”. You can also play games like “this little piggy” or sing songs like “rub-a-dub-dub”. Bath-times are good fun.

There are lots of things your baby can learn while having his bath. He can learn about cause-effect relationships by watching the water splash as he hits it with his hands or kicks it. Now that he can sit up more you can begin to introduce toys into his bath: he can watch them float, tip water out of them, and splash, probably all over Mum and Dad. Remember that your baby is having his bath. You can talk to your baby about his body and the new actions he is starting to perform. As he gains more control over his body, you will notice him wriggling more trying to investigate the things around him, including his own body. See how limber he is: can you suck your toes? He thinks he is very clever to be able to do this. Watch how he inspects the different parts of his body. There are so many wonderful things for him to learn about his own body.

You can also use it as a time to play little games like “round and round the garden”. But don’t forget to keep the nappy handy!

Bath-time

By now your baby probably loves bath-time. He can now kick and splash, probably all over Mum and Dad. Remember that he is learning that he can make things happen through his actions! Don’t forget to take the time to talk to him while he is having his bath. You can talk to your baby about his body parts as you wash him, for example, “mummy wash your face”, “clean those feet”. You can also play games like “this little piggy” or sing songs like “rub-a-dub-dub”. Bath-times are good fun.

There are lots of things your baby can learn while having his bath. He can learn about cause-effect relationships by watching the water splash as he hits it with his hands or kicks it.

Now that he can sit up more you can begin to introduce toys into his bath: he can watch them float, tip water out of them, sink them and push them along the water. Some times you might like to hop in the big bath with him. Bubble baths are also lots of fun. He’ll enjoy hiding toys in the bubbles or watching you blow bubbles.

Dressing

When you’re dressing your baby, don’t forget to talk to him about what you are doing; “daddy putting singlet on, one arm in, other arm in, pull it down, there you go”. By doing this he will gradually learn the names of his clothes and the actions that go with dressing. You can also have a little conversation with him. For example: “you want shorts or jumpsuit today”. Pretend that your baby’s vocalisations are his answer eg: “you want shorts, ok”. Now that he is moving more, you’ll find that he’s a bit of a “wriggle pot”, squirming all around the place while you’re trying to dress him.

Meal times

Meal times are now becoming a lot of fun. Again, they provide you with an ideal time to interact with your baby. Over the last month or so, he may have started to eat small amounts of solids. Now that he is sitting and can use his hands more, he can also begin to learn to feed himself. Give him his own spoon to play with while you feed him with another. This will help to develop his independence. Remember to sit at eye level with him while you are feeding him so that he can easily maintain eye contact with you. This will not only help his feeding but will also enable you to have a “chat over dinner”. Talk to him about what you are doing “nice bikky, eat it up, all gone”, “more water”. When he has finished his dinner let him play with the spoon and empty bowl. He will enjoy hearing the sounds he can make.

Everyday activities that help baby to learn

Remember everyday activities provide your baby with an opportunity to learn. Don’t keep your baby in one room, take him around the house or outside with you while you do your chores. Here are a few examples of how you can do it.

Washing and gardening

When you are hanging out the clothes or doing the gardening, why not take your baby outside with you. This is a great chance for your baby to go outside and explore! Place a rug or a blanket near you on the grass, out of the sun. Sit or lie your baby on it with a few toys. Don’t forget that he will need a hat and sun protection. There are so many things happening outside. He can look around at the garden, listen to all the different sounds around him: birds, the neighbours talking, the man next door hammering, an aeroplane going over head. He can look at all the different things in the backyard, the flowers, clothes, grass and the sky. He can smell the neighbours freshly cut grass and the cake the lady next door has just baked.
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While you’re working, you can talk to him about what you are doing and all of the things that he can see, hear and smell: “look, here’s your jumpsuit, nice and clean”, “what’s that? it’s an aeroplane”, “can you hear the birdie?”.

Wait for your baby to say something and then continue on as though you were having a conversation about the things that you see.

Cooking and doing the dishes

While you are cooking or doing the dishes, you can sit your baby in his high chair so that he can watch you. Again give him a few things to play with, so he won’t get bored, but still show him and talk to him about what you are doing. For example: “daddy’s got nice orange carrot, peel carrot” “yum, baby like carrot”. The kitchen is a very exciting place for baby. Obviously some things in the kitchen are dangerous so it is important to keep them out of reach now that he is reaching. Your baby can hear, see and touch lots of interesting things in the kitchen, such as the sound of the dishes being washed, the sounds of pots and pans hitting each other, the smell of cooking, watching you peel and cut the vegetables, looking at all the different types of food and listening and watching mum and dad talking. To you the kitchen may be boring but to your baby it is “Aladdin’s treasure trove”.

Going for a walk

Remember to try to go out for a short walk each day. Your baby will enjoy being pushed along in his pram. Walking is relaxing for both you and your baby. As you walk along point out to your baby things that you can see and hear. “Look, there’s a puppy dog”. If you notice your baby looking at something, tell him what it is, “that’s a bird”. If your baby vocalises while looking at something, pretend that he has told you something or asked you a question and answer him.

For example: baby: bu (while looking at a car) dad: that’s a car, brm brm.

Visiting friends

Don’t forget that you need to have stimulation as well. Visiting friends is important for you and can provide

When outside

- point out to your baby things that you can see and hear
- if you notice your baby looking at something, tell him what it is
- if your baby vocalises while looking at something, pretend that he has told you something and answer him

your baby with yet another opportunity to learn. You will have noticed that lately your baby is less friendly toward unfamiliar people. As we have learnt, this is because he has started to develop little images in his mind of people who are familiar to him. It is important not to limit the access your baby has to other people as your baby may find it hard to interact with other people as he gets older.

Playing games with music

He will enjoy playing games that involve music. Try playing music on a radio or CD or music player, then turning the music off and waiting for him to do something before you turn it back on. In this way he will gradually begin to associate the action with the music coming back on. You can also help him to develop problem solving skills by gradually expecting more from him. Through waiting for him to give you eye contact before turning the radio back on, you are helping him to understand the connection between you and the music. In this way he is gradually learning to use you as a tool to turn on the music.

Watching television

Your baby may be starting to take an interest in your television. Although it is not good for your baby to sit in front of the television for more than a short period each day, it can provide useful stimulation to your baby if used properly for short periods of time.

You will find that your baby will became distressed if left in front of a television set for too long. Educational television shows made for young children such as Playschool and The Wiggles are of most benefit to your baby, especially if you join him and talk to him about what you are watching.

Reading books

Although your baby is unable to actually read, he is becoming increasingly interested in books. There are many benefits of reading with your baby at this age, can you remember what they are?

At this age your baby will be attracted to books with big, bright pictures. Try to pick books that have only one main
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picture on each page (this helps to focus baby’s attention) and the hard pages allow baby to turn them more easily. He may find cloth books hard to manipulate and will have difficulty turning the pages.

Sit your baby on your lap with the book in front or both of you. Tell your baby about the picture on each page and if appropriate make noises to go with the pictures, such as “moo” for a cow or “brm” for a car. Wait for your baby to do something (make a noise, hit or chew the book) before going to the next page. This will help to develop your baby’s cause-effect relationships and turn-taking skills.

You will find that your baby will not always listen intently, he’ll be pulling at the book, chewing the pages, but don’t give up, he is enjoying it.

Playing games and singing songs

Games and songs are special activities that teach your baby so many things. They teach your baby to:

- attend to what is happening
- to take turns
- join in an activity with someone else
- anticipate what is going to happen next

Through these games your baby will also learn more about cause and effect relationships (that he can keep the game going by doing something).

For those songs with actions you can help your baby to carry out the actions by moving his hands. After a few goes at doing this, stop half way and wait for your baby to do something before you continue. Remember to be close enough to your baby so that you can make eye contact.

Specific activities that help baby to learn

To encourage listening

- continue to talk to him about things that you are doing
- give him noise makers such as rattles to play with
- take him for walks so that he can hear all the different sounds in the neighbourhood

To encourage communication

- talk to your baby whenever you can
- remember to act as if he is trying to communicate with you
- encourage him to look at you while you talk to him
- take turns with him, make sure that he gets a turn in the conversation (remember his turn may be vocalising or moving his body)
- use lots of variety in your speech to maintain his interest
- encourage other people to talk to him
- remember that although he is now using vocalisations more as his turn in the conversation, he might still

To encourage looking

- continue to give him bright colourful objects to play with
- show him colourful pictures in magazines and books
- sit baby on your lap while you are reading, encourage him to look at the pictures
- take him for walks so that he can see all the wonderful things in his back yard and in the neighbourhood

Hand action rhyme

Open shut them

Open, shut them
Open, shut them
Give a little clap,
Open, shut them
Open, shut them
Lay them in your lap
Creep them, creep them, creep them,
right up to your chin
Open wide your little mouth
but do not let them in!

Note: The actions are explained by the words.
Open hands; then close hands. Clap hands. Lay hands in your lap. Creep them up to your chin. Pretend to put them into your mouth!

Books to borrow

- I Went Walking by Sue Williams
- Farm Animals by Lucy Cousins
- Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell
- Moo, Baa, La La Lai by Sandra Boynton
- Clap Hands by Helen Oxenbury

More action rhymes

The up and down song
Up and down, up and down
Little baby’s going round
Up and down, up and down
Little baby’s dancing round

The dancing song
Dancing, dancing, one, two, three
come along and dance with me
The wheels on the bus go round and round:
The children on the bus go up and down
up and down, up and down;
The wheels on the bus go round and round:
The children on the bus...
Learning to Communicate

sometimes only move his body
• wait until your baby does something before you have another turn
• get down to his level so that he can make eye contact with you

To encourage object permanence
• partially hide toys amongst the bubbles in his bath, encourage him to find them
• cover his toy with a see-through cloth while he is holding it
• cover a small part of a toy that he is reaching for with a cloth that he can’t see through. Once he gets the toy repeat this game, each time covering a little more of the toy until it is completely covered.
• play peek-a-boo with his face washer or bib

To encourage an understanding of cause and effect
• give him different toys to play with that he can shake and bang. Let him hear the many different noises that he can make through his actions.
• when he vocalises, go up to him and talk to him about what he is doing
• encourage him to kick his legs and bang the water with his hands so that he can see the splashes that he makes with his actions

To encourage problem solving
• place his toy just within reach so that he has to lean forward and reach for the toy to get it
• wind up a toy to activate it. Wait for him to make an action or vocalisation before winding it up again.
• give him a block to hold and then offer him a second one. Encourage him to take it in the other hand.
• give him a small ball to hold in one hand. Then give him a big ball to hold. Show him that he needs to use both hands to hold it.
• tie a string to his favourite toy. Put it out of reach. Encourage him to pull the string to get the toy

To encourage play
• give him toys that are easy to manipulate, particularly toys with interesting details
• place toys within reach. There is nothing worse than trying to reach for something you can’t get!
• encourage him to rotate toys to view their different sides, show him how it is done! Point out little details to him, such as a hole in his block.
• sit down and play with him, it gets a little boring playing by yourself sometimes!
• encourage his brother or sister or little friend to play with him. Babies love playing with young children.

To encourage imitation
• copy sounds that he makes, then wait for him to make the sound and repeat it
• copy actions that he makes - what a fun game!
• copy facial expressions that he makes
• sing songs with actions. Help him to also carry out the actions. Gradually reduce your help.
• make funny noises for him. Encourage him to touch your mouth so that he can learn how the sounds are made.
• help him to do different actions and gradually reduce your help

Use variety in your speech to maintain your baby's interest

Give your baby toys that they can shake and bang

Give your baby toys that encourage problem solving

Give your baby toys that encourage looking

Give your baby toys that they can shake and bang

Sit down and play with your baby, it makes play more interesting for him!

Copy sounds that your baby makes to encourage imitation
3. **THINGS THAT MAKE LEARNING FUN**

There are so many things that your baby will enjoy playing with at this age. Many of these things can be found around the house such as ice block containers, colourful plastic spoons and children's bangles, egg cartons and cardboard rolls from paper towels.

Play materials for 6 month olds should encourage your baby to:

- touch and explore
- manipulate
- discover details
- learn about cause and effect
- to solve little problems such as how to get something that he wants
- learn about object permanence

**Toys that are appropriate at this age include**

- colourful balls - small ones that can be held in one hand, and larger ones that need two hands
- roly-polies and chime balls
- a variety of different noise makers
- soft toys with different textures
- bath toys
- bubble makers
- coloured blocks with different shapes and colours
- wind up toys (you do the winding!)

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4. **YOUR BABY: PROGRESS UPDATE**

Date

Write down any new things your baby has done this month

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**Everyday household items that can make learning fun**

- plastic measuring spoons
- wooden spoons and spatulas
- small metal saucepans and their lids
- plastic/metal colanders
- plastic lunch boxes that clip
- plastic ice cube containers
- old cake tins
- anything that rolls: cardboard tubes inside rolls of paper towel or kitchen paper, large cotton reels
- large round objects like balls - balls of wool, oranges
- things that are light - sponges
- objects that have different textures eg felt, strips of fine sand paper
LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE

Part Five: 8 to 10 months

Your baby is getting ready to move!

Date
Write down any new things your baby has done this month
Learning to Communicate 8 to 10 months  Your baby is getting ready to move

1. TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

Life for an 8 month old infant is one great adventure. Your baby is getting ready to move! Now that she can sit by herself, she has much greater independence. Her understanding of the world in which she lives has significantly increased by this age. She not only knows that she can make things happen through her actions but that she can use other people to get things that she wants. Let us look more closely at the skills that she has at this age.

Motor development

By 8 months of age, your baby has much greater control over her body. Her muscles are much stronger and she no longer needs your support in order to sit. If she leans too far to the side when she is sitting, she has learnt to put out her arm to balance herself again. Look how straight her back can be as she sits playing with a toy.

As she begins to sit more steadily, she will also start to reach for toys that are not only in front of her but also to her sides, and sometimes behind her. Sometimes, she might turn all the way around. Since she no longer fears falling to one side, she can use her arms for playing rather than supporting herself. Sometimes she might even lean so far forward that she finds herself in a crawling position, without really meaning to. You can just imagine her saying “How did I end up like this?”

When your baby is lying on the floor, she may start to try to move! At first she will try to roll from her back to her tummy and later from her tummy to her back. Now that she is starting to roll you will need to be extra careful about where you lie her. Later she might roll over and over to get to something that she wants. Sometimes babies will learn to shuffle along on their bottoms to get where they want to go.

Crawling often starts with your baby pulling herself forward with her hands while moving her tummy along the floor. Sometimes she might go backwards first and seem a little confused about what she is supposed to be doing. Soon she will be getting up on her hands and knees to crawl along. Moving requires a lot of effort from your baby. It is very hard work at first and she’ll only be able to go a very short distance before she’s exhausted. Later it will be like second nature to her, and she’ll constantly be on the go. She needs lots of reinforcement at this stage. Give her plenty of cuddles and claps as she tries to move.

Remember that she will not move until she is ready to do so. Some babies take their time in becoming mobile, while others quickly learn how to put it all together.

As her hands are now free, she can use them to manipulate toys in many different ways. She now easily reaches for toys that she wants. Watch how she shapes her hand in anticipation. Soon she will start to use her thumb and index finger to pick up small objects. Remember you need to ensure that small objects are not left around for her to get at.

Your baby is now able to do much more with her hands. Her movements are now more accurate and precise. She is able to easily rotate objects, turning them over with her hands, in order to view their different sides. She is able to carry out many different sorts of actions with toys such as shaking, banging, crumpling, dropping, pulling, knocking them down. Watch how easily she can transfer a toy from one hand to the other. She can now hold toys in both hands (at the same time) and is starting to bang things together, which requires a much greater degree of co-ordination. These skills enable her to explore her environment more easily.

Looking

By 8 months, your baby is becoming very inquisitive. Her increasing visual skills enable her to explore her environment more easily. You will notice that as she can now see things at a distance more clearly, she has started to move toward things that are out of reach. At this stage she is very interested in details and likes to explore everything, turning things over and over to examine the other sides. Notice how she pokes her finger in any little nooks and crannies. She particularly likes looking at herself in the mirror. Watch how
Learning to Communicate

she gets excited and pulls faces at her reflection. “Who is that?” she says.

Your face is still very interesting to her. Notice how she now examines different parts of your face, poking her finger in your eyes, nose and mouth. One of her favourite things is just looking at you. You will notice that she now maintains much better eye contact with you, especially when you’re both having little conversations. Remember that eye contact is one of the most important parts of communication.

She is also starting to recognise familiar objects and people. Notice how excited she gets when she sees a favourite toy.

Listening

At this age your baby is becoming a very good listener. Watch how she stops what she is doing when she hears an interesting sound. She is starting to recognise some familiar sounds like your voice or the sound of the tap running for the bath. She now can easily locate where sounds are coming from and will soon begin to move toward them. She is particularly interested in voices. Notice how she prefers speech that has a lot of variety in it, and she doesn’t appear very interested in people with monotone voices.

She has lots of fun making different noises while she plays. What good noises she can make with her toys by banging and shaking. How clever she is to make all those different sounds with her mouth. Remember to talk to her about all the different noises that she can hear.

Understanding of the world

As we have said before, what your baby knows about the world will significantly affect her communication skills. Over the past few months, you will have noticed that there has been a major change in your baby’s understanding and her awareness of the relationship between things in her environment.

Object permanence

Now that she is 8 months old, she has learnt that things still exist when they are out of her sight. She easily follows moving objects and will have lots of fun watching her toys drop to the floor. Watch as she searches for toys that have fallen from view. Notice that she now doesn’t hesitate to uncover a favourite toy which is partially hidden.

You may have noticed that she is starting to recognise familiar people more. She will also become very excited when a favourite toy comes within her view because she now remembers what fun it is to play with it.

A favourite game at this age is peek-a-boo. Watch how she anticipates what is happening. She likes to join in too. Wait for her to pull down the cloth when it’s her turn in the game.

Cause and effect relationships

By this age, your baby has learnt that she can make lots of different things happen through her actions. She has learnt that if she shakes or bangs a toy she can make a noise; that she can make things move by pushing them; and that she can make mum laugh by doing something funny again. Watch the look of delight on her face as she drops a toy from her high chair to get you to pick it up!

Problem solving

Your baby is now becoming quite clever at solving little problems. She has learnt that she can use her own body to get things that she wants. She easily reaches for toys and is now starting to move toward toys that are out of her reach. She will push things out of her way or move over them to get to things that she wants. She is learning that she needs to use two hands to pick up larger toys and that she might have to drop one toy to pick up another when both of her hands are full. These are all quite difficult problems that she has to solve each day. She is also learning that she can use tools like a string or a cloth to get what she wants, so beware of table cloths! Watch as she pulls the string on her toy train to get it closer.

At this stage she is developing a connection between
Learning to Communicate

8 to 10 months

people and objects. She now realises that she can use other people to help her get what she wants. This connection has been developing over the past few months through her interactions with you. By responding to her actions, you have been teaching her that by reaching and using eye contact, she can signal to you to help her to get what she wants. Watch as she tries to get a favourite toy. At first she will try to reach it by herself. When she realises that it is out of reach, she will turn to you and will look from you to the toy and back again. Notice how she keeps doing this while reaching for the toy as if to say “can you get it for me mum?” She might also vocalise while looking back and forward between you and the toy.

Imitation

Through imitation your baby will learn the words that we use to communicate to each other. She is now becoming much more accurate in her attempts to imitate the sounds and actions that you make. She has lots of fun trying to copy you, especially when you copy her first! She is starting to copy more complex sounds and actions. She particularly likes joining in action games.

Play

Now that your baby has developed more skills with her hands you will have noticed a change in her play. She is now able to do lots of different actions with toys. She likes to turn them over, inspecting their different sides. She especially likes poking her index finger into all the little nooks and crannies. She is learning to use her index finger and thumb to pick up smaller objects (sultanas are good for this) and to manipulate smaller parts on toys. She likes to knock toys down and will soon start to put toys into other toys.

Gradually she is building up information about what objects are and what they can do. Remember that to your baby, play is everything she does whenever she is awake, it is learning about her world through exploring.

Communication skills

At this age, your baby is learning to truly communicate. She is learning that she can signal to you to help her get what she wants. She has been learning all the rules she will need in order to be an effective communicator. She is now using eye contact more in her communicative attempts.

Now that she has developed a connection between people and objects in her environment, she will also start to tell you about the things that she plays with, sees and hears. She is starting to use eye contact, gesture and sometimes vocalisation to signal to you in her communication attempts.

She is beginning to use these signals to express a variety of communicative functions including requesting, rejecting and informing.

Notice how she looks back and forward between you and her toy as she reaches for it. She’s requesting your help “get that for me, please mum!”.

You have probably noticed that when she is playing with a toy she now frequently looks at you and smiles, as if to say “look at this Dad”, “aren’t I clever”, or “see what I can do”.

Now when she doesn’t want something she will tend to look at you and pull her hands back and whinge. Sometimes she might even shake her head. She’s on her way to saying “No!”.

As your baby’s cause effect and problem solving skills have developed she has learnt to use eye contact, gesture and vocalisations more in her communicative attempts. Continue to encourage this by talking to her about what she is playing with and positioning yourself so that she can achieve eye contact with you. Remember to do this when she is reaching toward something; talk to her, position yourself so that she can achieve eye contact with you and give her the toy once she looks at you. This will help her to develop a connection between you and the toy.

Observe how easily your baby now takes turns. She now consistently responds to your conversations with her. She enjoys taking turns with you. Notice how she waits for you
to take a turn before continuing. Sometimes she also repeats her turn using a louder voice when you fail to respond, as if to say "Well come on, aren't you going to say something!". Occasionally she might even start to initiate conversations with you.

Your baby will still enjoy playing turn-taking games such as peek-a-boo or pat-a-cake. These games have been helping her to develop her turn-taking in conversations. She particularly likes banging games. Watch how she copies you banging on the table and then waits for you to take a turn before continuing.

You will have noticed that your baby is becoming much more vocal. She is now using a greater range of sounds, particularly consonants like "m" and "b". She is starting to string sounds together, such as "bubub"; "ah-oo". Remember that each baby is very different in the range and frequency of the sounds that they make. Try not to compare them. The important thing is that she is using more variety and is starting to join some sounds together. Remember that some babies are very quiet and others are noisy. It goes with their very different personalities.

She still finds her mouth interesting but she finds your mouth even more interesting. She will have lots of fun watching and feeling all the different sounds that you can make. Watch how she tries to copy you. Sometimes she might like doing this in the mirror.

She is now showing her emotions much more, she smiles and laughs and frowns when she is unsure of herself. It is important that you respond to these little signals. Say what you think she is feeling e.g. "that's very funny", "you like that?", "you're a happy girl today" or "are you worried". By interpreting her feeling you are teaching her the words to go with how she feels.

2. HELPING YOUR BABY TO LEARN

Although your baby can do more things by herself and is a little more independent, she still needs you and will often reach up to you to be picked up. She needs the security of knowing that you are there.

Where should baby play?

Watch how your baby uses you as a base from which to explore her world. Notice how she keeps checking that you're there. Set aside a play area for her where she can explore her world in safety. Place a small number of toys around her; some within reach and others just a little further to encourage her to move. Show her how it's done if she doesn't look like she is getting anywhere. Don't give her too many toys at one time as this can be a little overwhelming.

She will now tend to place herself in a variety of positions each day. She'll try to go from sitting to lying. Soon she'll roll and try to crawl. All of these activities are continuing to help her muscles to strengthen and develop.

She particularly needs to spend time on the floor at this age. Now that she is learning to move, she needs lots of opportunities to practise her new skills. Baby walkers may seem like a good idea but they do not encourage crawling and walking. By spending time on the floor, your baby is learning to use all the muscles she needs for crawling, rolling, standing and walking. Some babies don't like being on their tummies; however it is still important to continue to place them in this position, so that they can practise these skills.

Place toys around her, just a little out of reach to encourage her to move.

Your baby will still enjoy sitting on your lap. From this position she can see everything that is going on around her, particularly if you are out visiting!

She particularly likes sitting in her high chair. This enables her to get a very good view of what is happening around her. From this vantage point she can easily see what mum and dad are up to. She still enjoys sitting playing with her toys, dropping them on the floor for mum and dad to pick up for her!
Routine activities that help baby to learn

As you are now aware there are many routine activities that you carry out with your baby every day which are ideal opportunities for you to play with your baby and help her to learn.

Nappy changing

You probably feel a bit like a contortionist, trying to control this wriggling worm so that you can change her nappy.

There are so many things that she can now do with her body. She is easily distracted by things that she can see around the room. “What else can I see?” she says. Follow her lead. Talk to her about the things that she looks at e.g. “Can you see your toe? See it wriggle”. If you sound interesting, you might be able to get her to stay still long enough to get the job done!

While you are changing her nappy she will enjoy the opportunity to play with different parts of her body. She still likes to suck her toes (isn’t she clever). Watch how she inspects the different parts of her body. There are so many wonderful things for her to learn about her own body.

Continue to use this as a time to play little games like “round and round the garden”. But don’t forget to keep the nappy handy!

Bath-time

Bath-times are such fun. She can now do so many things in the bath. She likes it when Mum, Dad, brother or sister joins in too. She enjoys watching all of the things that they can do in the bath. She loves the feeling of the water on her body. She can splash and kick. She can watch the bubbles that Mum blows float through the air. She enjoys watching the water as it pours from a watering can. Watch the look of delight on her face as the toy you have pushed under the water re-appears. Bath activity toys can be useful to teach cause and effect skills.

Notice how she listens intently to you as you talk about what she is doing and seeing. She is learning the words that go with her actions and the things around her. Talk to her about her body as you wash her, so that she will learn the names of her body parts. For example, “mummy wash your face”, “clean those feet”. You can also play games like “this little piggy” or sing songs like “rub-a-dub-dub”.

Meal times

Meal times continue to provide you with an ideal time to interact with your baby. Now that she is eating more solid food, she’ll enjoy the opportunity to explore her food, feeling its texture with her fingers. This is also a good opportunity for her to practise her pincer grasp in safety, she will have lots of fun picking up small pieces of food with her index finger and thumb.

She will also enjoy trying to feed herself. Give baby her own spoon to play with while you feed her with another. This will help to develop her independence. Remember it is important to sit at eye level with her while you are feeding her so that she can easily maintain eye contact with you. This will not only help her feeding but will also enable you to have a “chat over dinner”.

Continue to talk to her about what you are doing “nice fruit, eat it up, all gone”, “more juice”. When she has finished her dinner let her play with the spoon and empty bowl. She will enjoy hearing the sounds she can make.
Everyday activities that help baby to learn

Gardening
Continue to take your baby outside with you while you hang out the clothes or do the gardening, don’t leave your baby inside. She really benefits from the opportunity to go outside and explore! Now that she is starting to move, you will have to keep a good eye on her; she’ll be off her rug before you know it. Place a few toys next to her to help to keep her occupied.

There are so many things that your baby can see and hear while she is outside. Watch as she listens intently to the birds singing above her in the tree. Remember to talk to her about the things that are around her “can you hear the bird? that’s a mummy bird... what a lovely song”. Wait for your baby to say something and then continue on as though you are having a conversation about the things that you see.

Cooking and doing the dishes
Don’t forget to let your baby watch you while you work in the kitchen. Now that she is starting to move, it is very important that she is restrained in her high chair while you are cooking. You probably don’t realise how many different actions you make while you cook: you stir, chop, cut, wash, wipe, twist, pull. As you talk about what you do, your baby is learning about all of these different actions.

Going for a walk
Notice how she now tries to tell you about things as you walk along. Even though she can’t yet use words, pretend that you understand what she is saying “yes, that’s a big car”. As you walk along point out to your baby things that you can see and hear. “Look, there’s a puppy dog”. If you notice your baby looking at something, tell her what it is, “that’s a bird”. If your baby vocalises while looking at something, pretend that she has told you something or asked you a question and answer her.

For example:  
baby: bu (while looking at a dog)  
dad:  that’s a dog, woof, woof

Playing games with music
Does your baby enjoy playing games that involve music? Notice how she wriggles and now looks at you when you turn the music off as if to say “turn it back on dad”. She is learning the connection between you and the music coming back on. She is learning to use you as a tool to turn on the music.

Reading books
Books are very fascinating at this age. Notice how she is starting to look where her own hand is as she manipulates the book. Encourage pointing, by pointing to the pictures as you read the book to her. Pretend that she is pointing when she touches the book. Talk to her about the pictures that she touches. You don’t have to stick to the words in the book, you can also make up your own story to go with the pictures.

Sit your baby on your lap with the book in front of you both. Tell her about the picture on each page and if appropriate make noises to go with the pictures, such as “meow” for a cat or “brm” for a car. Wait for your baby to do something (make a noise, hit or chew the book) before going to the next page. This will help to develop your baby’s cause-effect relationships and turn-taking skills.

Playing games and singing songs
Through action games and songs your baby can learn many different skills including:

- to attend to what is happening
- to take turns
- to join in an activity with someone else

**Everyday activities that help baby to learn**
- gardening
- cooking and doing the dishes
- going for a walk
- playing games with music
- reading books
- watching children’s TV shows such as Play School and The Wiggles
- playing games and singing songs

**Reading books**

**Playing games with music**

**Watching television**

**Playing games and singing songs**

**Books to borrow**
- Tickle, tickle by Helen Oxenbury
- Say goodnight by Helen Oxenbury
- Bouncy lamb (touch & feel book) by Caroline Jayne Church
- Oh dear by Rod Campbell
- Ten little fingers and ten little toes by Mem Fox

**Peek-a-boo**

Peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo, Who’s that hiding there?  
Peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo,  
Tom’s behind the chair  
Use this game with your baby and substitute your baby’s name in the last line.
Learning to Communicate

- to anticipate what is going to happen next

Through these games your baby will also learn more about cause-effect relationships (that she can keep the game going by doing something).

Help your baby to participate in the song or action game by gently moving her hands. After a few goes at doing this, stop half way and wait for her to do something before you continue. Notice how she is starting to perform part of the game by herself. Remember to be close enough to your baby so that you can make eye contact.

**Specific activities that help baby to learn**

**To encourage listening**
- continue to talk to her about things that you are doing
- make different noise makers for her to play with (try an old spoon and a plastic container for a drum!)
- spend time outside and in different environments so that she can hear lots of different sounds (the beach, a BBQ, shopping, going for a walk around the neighbourhood)
- read books and magazines to her
- sit her on your lap or near you when you are talking to friends
- let her talk to Grandma or her friends when you are on the phone
- sing songs to her, especially action songs, help her to do the actions
- say her name when you enter the room
- play music on the radio, CD/music player
- dance with her so that she can feel the beat of the music
- make funny sounds for her, such as raspberries
- talk to her about noises that are happening around her e.g. the keys rattling at the door. “Daddy’s home”
- continue to use lots of inflection in your voice

**To encourage looking**
- continue to give her bright colourful objects to play with
- point to different things in her books and in magazines
- sit baby on your lap while you are reading, encourage her to look at the picture
- point to pictures using her hands, talk about what you are pointing to
- take her for walks so that she can see all the wonderful things in her back yard and in the neighbourhood, point to different things that you see
- sit her on your lap while you watch TV, she’ll enjoy all the colours and movement
- talk about things that she reaches for, pretend she is pointing them out to you

**To encourage communication**
- talk to your baby!
- respond to each of her communication attempts, remember that she is now intentionally communicating with you!
- wait for her to look at you before you respond to her
- wait for her to look at you before giving her something that she wants
- wait for her to take a turn in the conversation before continuing
- use lots of variety in your speech to maintain her interest
- encourage other people to talk to her
- remember that she should be using vocalisations more as her turn in the conversation
- get down to her level so that she can make eye contact with you
- talk to her about things that she is playing with
- when she looks at you while playing with a toys, act as if she is telling you about it

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** Fish alive! **

One two three four five
Once I caught a fish alive
Six seven eight nine ten
then I let her go again

Why did you let her go
Because she bit my finger so
Which finger did she bite
This little finger on the right

** Baa Baa Black Sheep **

Baa, baa black sheep
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir.
Three bags full.
One for the master
and one for the dame.
And one for the little boy who lives down the lane.

** Two Little Hands go Clap Clap Clap **

Two little hands go clap,
clap, clap
Two little feet go tap,
tap, tap;
Two little eyes are open wide,
One little head goes side to side.
Learning to Communicate 8 to 10 months

To encourage problem solving
- wind up a toy to activate it. Wait for her to do make an action or vocalisation before winding it up again.
- give her a block to hold and then offer her a second one. Encourage her to take it in the other hand.
- give her a small ball to hold in one hand. Then give her a big ball to hold. Show her that she needs to use both hands to hold it.
- tie a string to her favourite toy. Put it out of reach. Encourage her to pull the string to get the toy.
- place a favourite toy on a cloth, encourage her to pull it to get the toy
- wait for her to look at you before giving her a toy that is out of reach
- place toys in open containers, encourage her to tip them over to get the toy out
- encourage her to move to get out of reach toys
- push an orange or ball along the floor to encourage her to move after it

To encourage play
- give her toys that she can manipulate, particularly toys with interesting details
- encourage her to rotate toys to view their different sides, show her how it is done!
- encourage her to put her fingers in the nooks and crannies of her toys
- sit down and play with her, it gets a little boring playing by yourself sometimes!
- play give and take games with her
- show her how to bang toys together
- blow cardboard tubes to make a good noise

To encourage object permanence
- partially hide toys amongst the bubbles in her bath, encourage her to find them
- cover her toy with a see-through cloth while she is holding it
- cover a small part of a toy that she is reaching for with a cloth that she can’t see through. Once she gets the toy repeat this game, each time covering a little more of the toy until it is completely covered.
- play peek-a-boo with her face washer or bib
- encourage her to search for toys that she drops
- place favourite toys in see-through containers

To encourage an understanding of cause and effect
- encourage her to play with toys that make different noises or that require different actions to make them work
- when she vocalises, go up to her and talk to her about what she is doing
- encourage her to kick her legs and bang the water with her hands so that she can see the splashes that she makes with her actions
- show her objects that do different things eg carousel
- give her a spoon to bang on a container
- build a tower of blocks and show her how she can knock it over
- encourage her to push to button on a Jack-in-the-box to make it pop up

• when she looks at you and pulls away from something she doesn’t want, say what you think it is that she is telling you “no mummy, I don’t want that”
• wait for her to look at you and move her body before picking her up - “up please?”
Learning to Communicate 8 to 10 months

To encourage imitation

- copy sounds that she makes, then wait for her to make the sound and repeat it
- copy actions that she makes- what a fun game!
- copy facial expressions that she makes
- continue to sing songs with actions
- help her to also carry out the actions
- gradually reduce your help
- make funny noises for her
- encourage her to touch your mouth so that she can learn how the sounds are made
- help her to do different actions and gradually reduce your help

3. THINGS THAT MAKE LEARNING FUN

Now that your baby is 8 months old, she will enjoy playing with lots of different toys. Toys at this age should encourage her to explore, take notice of detail, solve problems, learn about cause and effect and develop object permanence.

There are many things from around the house that will provide her with hours of enjoyment. Find an old bag or box and fill it with interesting things like old keys, colourful plastic bangles, plastic measuring spoons, scraps of material, empty egg rings etc. She’ll spend hours enjoying what she can find in her box of tricks. Later she’ll not only take them out but will try to put them back in! Ice block trays, empty cotton reels, and card board tubes are all fun to play with.

She will enjoy playing with many of her familiar toys but will benefit from some new ones. Remember to try your local Toy Library, they have lots of interesting toys for you to borrow.

Toys that are appropriate at this age include

- Toys to bang e.g. xylophone, drum, pegs
- Toys to push - balls, large plastic car
- Books to feel and look at
- Toys of different sizes and shapes - some that need one hand to hold, others that need two
- Colourful blocks to stack and knock over
- Bubble makers (for mum and dad to blow!)
- Interesting toys like carousels, pop-up-toys, Jack-in-the box
- Toys with buttons to push and knobs to turn, such as activity centres
- Toys to pull - like Walking caterpillars (or tie a string to any interesting toy that she can pull along)
- Music box

4. YOUR BABY: PROGRESS UPDATE

Date | Write down any new things your baby has done this month

Everyday household items that can make learning fun

Find an old bag or box and fill it with
- old keys
- colourful plastic bangles
- plastic measuring spoons
- scraps of material
- empty egg rings
- empty egg cartons

Brightly coloured fruit, such as oranges, will capture your baby’s attention. She will enjoy watching oranges roll around
Part Six: 10 to 12 months

This is the age of the true explorer. Everything is fascinating to your baby at this age.
1. **TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT**

   Many changes have occurred in your baby’s skills over the last few months. Most notably your baby is becoming much more active and is interacting more with his environment.

   **Motor development**

   At around 10 months, you will begin to notice a major change in your baby’s motor development. He is starting to move around more by himself. He can now get to where he wants to go by himself. He will often use a variety of ways of getting around, including crawling, rolling, shuffling on his bottom, and stepping around the furniture. You will notice that he rarely stays still for very long, his world is much too interesting for that!

   It takes a lot of effort for your baby to move around at first. It’s a bit like when you first learnt to drive a car, you needed to think about what you were doing, where to put your foot etc. As it was for you, it will soon seem like second nature to him.

   When your baby first starts to pull himself to standing, he will have difficulty getting down and may fall back with a thud. You can help him to learn to balance by encouraging him to pull himself up while holding on to a small chair or small table. Practising standing and holding on will help him to stand alone when he is stronger. You can also encourage him to take his first steps by holding his hands in yours and moving slowly backward. A baby walking trolley (that he can push) is very useful for encouraging walking. Remember to choose one that is very stable. He can use it to push around his favourite toys. If possible do not use the walkers that the baby sits in, as these tend to discourage him from supporting his own weight and balancing. They tend to hinder the baby’s walking rather than helping it.

   By 12 months, he may start to be more adventurous and take his first tentative steps by himself. This is such an exciting time for both baby and you. Watch the look of utter delight and surprise as he takes his first steps toward you. It is important, however, to remember that babies will vary in age at which they begin walking, it could be anytime from 10-18 months.

   **Using his hands**

   At 10 months, not only can he get around more easily, but he has developed much greater control over his hands. He can now reach and hold things much more easily. Again this enables him to explore things in his environment more. Watch as he holds his toys, bangs them, rotates them, swaps them from one hand to the other, drops them, shakes and performs many other different actions on them. Each day he learns something new that he can do with his hands.

   Because he is now able to explore objects more with his hands, you will notice that he doesn’t mouth toys as much as he did when he was younger. He will still put toys to his mouth, but will spend more time playing with them, putting his index fingers into their small holes, banging them together, rotating them to view their various sides, shaking them etc.

   As his hands become stronger, he will begin taking an interest in opening cupboards, doors and containers. He will also gain greater control over his fingers and will start to use his thumb and index finger to pick up small objects like peas rather than scooping them up into the palm of his hands. He will be fascinated by picking up small pieces of food and bits of fluff off the carpet. You need to watch him very carefully at this age, because he will tend to pick up small things and put them into his mouth. Make sure the family doesn’t leave little things around for him to find.

   At this age he is only just learning to release things. He may offer you toys but doesn’t yet realise that he has to let go of an object in order to give it to you.

   **Looking**

   This is the age of the true explorer. Everything is fascinating to your baby at this age. We tend to take most things in our homes for granted because we have seen them all so many
Learning to Communicate

10 to 12 months

times before, but to your baby, the kitchen, the lounge room, his bedroom, the yard, is like Aladdin's magic cave, with so many wonderful things to learn about. Now that he can move around more, he is able to explore his environment much more easily. From his different positions (sitting, crawling, standing) he can gain many different views of his world.

Remember that he can now easily get into places that he couldn't reach before and this can lead him to danger. Low cupboards with sharp objects or chemicals, stairs, appliance cords, the iron, table cloths dangling from the table are all things that now attract him. It is essential to ensure that he doesn't get hold of them. Cupboards need to be locked in some way, cords put out of reach and stairs blocked so that he cannot get near them.

His increasing visual skills also allow him to explore his surroundings more. He can now easily see quite long distances away such as across the room, or to trees when out in the garden. Notice how he watches people from a distance. He is now much more attentive to actions occurring around him and will crawl or move to join in. His developing hand skills enable him to explore objects more easily. Watch as he rotates toys, examining their detail. He will finger small holes and touch parts of contrast. He is taking much more interest in small details, like the eyes on a doll, or the coloured dot on his tee-shirt. He enjoys touching your face, feeling your eyes and mouth.

Over the next few months you will notice him beginning to attend to things for longer periods of time such as the dogs playing in the yard, dad washing the car etc.

He still enjoys looking at faces and now easily maintains eye contact with you when you are having little conversations. Notice how he is using pointing and eye contact more to direct your attention. He is also starting to look where you point. You will notice this occurring more over the next 2 months. 12 month olds are very good pointers! Over the next two months he will begin to take much more interest in books. He will not only enjoy touching the book as you read it but may also begin to look at the pictures as you point to them.

**Looking skills**

**at 10 months**

- is exploring his environment more
- is more interested in detail, rotates objects to view various sides
- can see clearly across a room
- is still attracted to your face
- is attracted to bright colours and contrasts
- is able to maintain good eye contact
- is using pointing and eye contact to direct attention
- is beginning to look where someone else points

**at 12 months**

- is looking to where someone else points
- is frequently directing other people's attention by pointing
- is very inquisitive

Your baby can now easily see quite long distances away such as across the room.

**Listening**

Your baby is still very interested in sounds at this age, especially your voice. He still prefers sounds which have lots of variety. He enjoys listening to you sing and talk. He now listens to and tries to copy a larger number of sounds.

He is now able to work out where sounds are coming from and will sometimes move to find the sound source. Over the next few months he will begin to recognise the different sounds that he hears. He will learn to distinguish people's voices and will remember the sounds of favourite toys or animals.

**Understanding of the world**

Over the last 10 months, your baby's knowledge of the world has significantly increased. His whole world is growing rapidly each day.

**Object permanence**

He now consistently looks for and finds objects which are hidden under a cloth. He will search for an object which he has dropped on the floor. This is a great game for Mum to play. He is starting to signal to others to get objects which have fallen from his view, and will point in their direction.

He will enjoy games where you hide toys in containers or bags and he has to put his hands in to get them out. He will also enjoy playing hide and seek. Over the next few months he will start to hide from you. Think of all the fun you will have chasing each other around the house, hiding behind the lounge or under the table.

If he hasn't yet developed this skill, you can help him by playing games like peek-a-boo or hide and seek. Partially hide objects and help him to find them. If he is holding a toy he likes, cover his hand and the toy with a cloth. In this way he can still feel the toy even though he can't see it. Pull the cloth off the toy while he is looking. You can also do this in the bath by helping him to hold toys under the water.

**Listening skills**

**at 10 months**

- prefers sounds with variety
- can work out the direction from which sounds are coming
- is attracted to the human voice
- is trying to copy sounds that he hears

**at 12 months**

- enjoys complex sounds
- is beginning to recognise different sounds and voices
- is becoming more accurate in copying sounds that he hears

**Object permanence**

**at 10 months**

- cries when you leave his sight
- has developed little “images” of familiar people/objects in his mind
- searches for objects that fall out of sight or that are partially hidden
- uncovers hidden objects

**at 12 months**

- easily recognises familiar objects and people
- plays hide and seek
Learning to Communicate

Cause and effect relationships

Your baby is still learning about cause-effect relationships. Every day he is learning more that he can have an effect on his environment, that by doing certain things, he can cause other things to happen.

He is now very busy working out what makes things work. Watch him as he explores a new toy, pushing a button that makes a noise. He uses his hands now in many different ways to find out what he can make his toys do. Roly-poles and jack-in-the-boxes are good toys for helping him to learn that if he does something he can make something else happen. Watch as he learns that if he blows in a paper tube he can make a good noise like a trumpet.

Remember that you can help your baby to understand cause-effect relationships by providing him with opportunities to experience them, such as giving him toys that he can easily activate and by responding to his actions.

By 12 months he will have a much better understanding of the effects he has on his environment. He will know how to attract your attention using his body and objects around him. He will repeat things that other people laugh at, sometimes much to your dismay!

Problem solving

Your baby’s ability to solve little problems has increased significantly over the last few months. He has learnt that not only can he use his body to get things that he wants, but that he can also use other people. He has developed a connection between people and objects and realises that he can use other people to help him to get what he wants.

He now knows that there are things that he does not want and will turn away from them. Sometimes he might push them away as he looks at you. He’s saying “no, I don’t want it, mum.”

He now not only reaches toward things that he wants but will move toward them if they are out of reach. Watch as he chases a ball that is rolled in front of him. At this age he enjoys following objects. A bright coloured car or a toy which rolls and makes a noise may particularly interest him.

Some toys need two hands to make them work. At first he might try to pick up a large toy with one hand but will quickly learn that in order to pick it up he needs to use both his hands. Again he has solved a little problem.

A favourite game is dropping things on the floor and signalling to Mum that he wants her to pick them up. Again he has learnt that he can attract Mum’s attention by dropping things on the floor.

By 12 months he will have learnt that he can get Mum or Dad to make interesting things happen again, for example, he will hand Mum or Dad a wind-up toy to make it play again.

There are so many little problems that he will learn to solve each day. He will enjoy solving them. He will learn that if he is holding something in both hands, he needs to drop one in order to pick up a third toy; or that he has to push one object out of the way to get another one, or pull a cloth to get what is on top of it; or pull string to get a toy tied to it.

Imitation

By 10 months you will notice that your baby is attending more to the sounds and actions you make and is trying to copy them. He enjoys copying simple sounds that you make such as “bubub” and simple actions like banging on the table. He is also starting to copy more complex actions and sounds. He enjoys playing copying games. Watch as he tries to join in the sounds and actions of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star or pat-a-cake. His attempts to copy you are becoming much closer to yours.

As we’ve said before, it is through imitation that your baby learns the words that we use to communicate to each other. You can play copying games anywhere - in the bath, splashing or pouring water, banging on the table, pulling different faces.

Problem solving

at 10 months
• is increasingly solving problems
• will crawl to get something that he wants
• turns away from things that he doesn’t want
• has developed a connection between people/objects
• now realises that he can use other people to get what he wants
• realises that he can use objects/toys to get other people’s attention
• often uses tools such as strings/cloths to get what he wants (eg. pulling a string to get a toy)
• learning to solve lots of different problems

at 12 months
• spends much of the day solving problems
• recognises that he can signal to other people to help him to get what he wants
• is much more independent
Learning to Communicate

Play

Now that your baby has gained better control over his hands, you will notice a significant change in his play. To him everything is a play thing including kitchen utensils, an old magazine, Mum’s knitting!

Remember that it is through play that your baby learns about the world. Initially your baby only used a few actions when playing with objects such as holding them or mouthing them. Now that he has greater control over his hands and is able to attend more to the detail in toys you will notice a change in his play. He uses a lot more variety in the actions he uses on objects, he will rotate them inspecting their various sides, he will shake rattles, push buttons, pull strings and cloths, finger holes and other details, crumples paper. He is starting to combine objects. He will enjoy playing with containers like card board boxes, egg cartons and ice cream containers. He can put lots of different things in them like dolly pegs, old keys, empty cotton reels and some of his blocks. An old tissue box will bring him as much joy as a post-box.

Communication skills

Expressive

By 10 months your baby has started to truly communicate. Over the past 10 months he has been learning the rules of communication. He has learnt the importance of eye contact and taking turns in a conversations. Watch him as he talks to you. Notice how good his turns are becoming. He is also using much more variety in his vocalisations and often appears to be copying the sounds that you make. You probably have also noticed that he practises his sounds while he plays. He spends a lot of time experimenting with sounds, learning how he makes them. At this stage he is using many more consonants and is stringing sounds together more. Remember that you can help your baby to learn about speech and sounds by:

- talking to him;
- letting him touch your mouth;
- encouraging him to touch his own mouth; and

Now that he has developed a connection between people and objects, you will notice that he is using a greater range of functions in his communication attempts. He will now request objects and actions, he will comment on things as he plays, he will reject actions and things that he doesn’t want.

Watch as he tries to signal to you to get something that he wants. He will reach toward it at first, if he isn’t successful, he will look to you and then reach back to it. Sometimes he might also vocalise to you as he reaches toward things that he wants.

He is also learning that he can use things to attract your attention. Over the last 2 months you will have noticed him talking to you more about what he is doing. Listen as he vocalises while playing with his toys. As he looks at you and vocalises, remember that he is telling you about what he is doing. Because he isn’t yet using words, it is sometimes difficult to tell if he is just commenting on something or asking for something. When he looks at you and points to a toy, he is most likely asking you to get it for him. If you wait before giving it to him and he doesn’t get impatient, he was most likely only commenting to you about it. Similarly, sometimes he might hold out a toy to you. If he lets it go, he is most likely giving it to you. If he won’t let it go, he is most likely only showing you.

Now that his communication skills are more effective, he will reject more effectively by giving you eye contact and shaking his head with a stern intonation. Sometimes he might push away an unwanted object while looking at you and shaking his head, or try to get away from you.

At around 12 months your baby may begin using his first words to signal to you in his communicative attempts. This is one of your baby’s most exciting achievements. He will start to use words to express all the different functions he previously expressed non-verbally, that is, with actions and general vocalisations. He is learning the power of words!

Imitation

at 10 months
- is able to copy simple actions such as banging
- is able to copy simple sounds
- is starting to copy more complex actions and sounds

at 12 months
- is able to copy more complex sounds
- is beginning to copy words, although not accurately
- enjoys copying more complex actions eg those which go with songs such as Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

Play

at 10 months
- is much more interested in toys
- is using more variety in his actions on objects
- is starting to combine objects, putting things in, taking them out

at 12 months
- is combining toys more in his play, putting toys in and out of containers
- is using more variety in his actions
- beginning to use functional play, eg pushing a small car, making a toy cow walk

at 10 months
- eye contact is continuing to improve
- is now aware that you can help him to get things that he wants
- is taking turns more in conversations and play
- is starting to copy the sounds and actions that you make more
- enjoys turn-taking games like pat-a-cake
- is generally making more sounds
- is making more consonants like “m” and “b”
- enjoys experimenting with sounds
- is interested in his own mouth and your mouth
- is beginning to understand some familiar words

at 12 months
- is understanding more words
- is starting to copy more sounds and words
- may have said his first word!
- enjoys experimenting with sounds
- is combining sound more with his play with toys
Understanding

By 10 months you will notice that he is starting to recognise some familiar words, such as mummy or daddy or his own name. He is learning to associate the words he hears with the things in his environment. Watch as he searches when daddy’s name is spoken. Through your conversations with him he is learning the connection between words and objects, actions and people. By 12 months he might be able to point to his nose or to the dog if you ask him. He might even be able to follow some simple instructions such as “give me the ball”. It is an important time to start talking about behaviour boundaries and safety issues so that he is learning how to protect himself.

Conversation

Your baby is continuing to develop his turn-taking skills. At 10 months, he is much more consistent in his turns, he is overlapping less with your turns and is also initiating turns more. He particularly enjoys playing turn-taking games such as peek-a-boo or pat-a-cake. These games will help him to develop his turn-taking in conversations. He is also starting to play more turn-taking games with toys.

His joint attention skills are also developing considerably by this stage. He now not only looks where his own hand is but is starting to direct your attention more. He is also starting to look where you point. By 12 months his pointing skills will be much more developed and he will easily look to where you point.

2. HELPING YOUR BABY TO LEARN

As you have learnt over the past 10 months, everything you do can help your baby to learn.

Where should baby play?

Playing near you is still very important. Although he is more mobile now and wants to join in things that are happening around him, he will develop and explore more if he is secure in the feeling that you are close at hand if he needs you. The best place for baby to play is still near you!

Remember that it is important that your baby has the opportunity to play in a variety of environments each day. Although a play pen is useful for keeping baby safe when you can’t keep an eye on him, he should not play in there by himself for long periods of time. Play pens can limit his ability to explore his environment and thus his ability to understand the world in which he lives.

Routine activities that help baby to learn

Your baby’s new found mobility will bring new challenges to routine activities such as nappy changing, bath-time, meal times. Sometimes it is almost like wrestling a monkey or a snake. Now you find that you have a squirming, wriggling little creature to deal with. Although these times still provide you with ideal opportunities to interact with your baby, they will be different because he is taking a more active role in them.

Nappy changing

Do you realise that you have changed at least 2000 nappies by now? What a lot of nappies! Think of all the things your baby has learnt during these times spent with you. He has learnt to look at you when you’re talking and to take turns in your conversations using his body and his voice. He has learnt to attend to you and to listen to your voice.

As you now know, nappy changing doesn’t have to be an unpleasant chore, it can be wonderful opportunity to talk and interact with your baby. Remember to continue to talk to him as you change his nappy, asking and telling him about his body and his actions. He still enjoys having a kick with his nappy off.

Bath-time

Bath-time with a 10 month old is one of life’s great joys! Your baby takes so much pleasure from his bath, that it is hard for you not to also enjoy it. Now that he is more active you will need to keep a very keen eye on him. He’ll try pulling himself up in the bath, rolling, sitting, crawling. Non-slip mats or stickers are essential for this age group.

Watch as he gets excited with anticipation as he hears the
Learning to Communicate

A favourite game is watching mummy or daddy blowing soap bubbles in the air. See how excited he gets as the bubbles float down. He may even try to catch them. Watch the look of surprise as the bubbles burst when he touches them. He may even look at you and vocalise in order to share this experience with you.

He will also enjoy splashing the water and will love to take turns doing it with you. Who can make the biggest splash? Remember, to talk to your baby about his body parts as you wash him, e.g., “mummy wash your face”, “clean those feet”. You can also play games like “this little piggy” or sing songs like “rub-a-dub-dub”. Bath-times are good fun.

There are lots of things your baby can learn while having his bath. He can learn about cause-effect relationships by watching the water splash as he hits it with his hands or kicks it. He now has lots of fun with toys in the bath. He can watch them float, tip water out of them, sink them and push them along the water, all kinds of ‘science and math experiments’.

Dressing
It’s a little hard at times to dress a 10 month old, as you’re probably now well aware. He’s much too busy to want to hang around while you put on all his clothes. He’ll wriggle and squirm, twisting to get away and into all the wonderful things around him. Try making it into a game, it may help to keep his attention longer. You can help him to develop his object permanence skills by encouraging him to watch for his hands as they slip through his sleeves or his toes as they emerge from the bottom of the leg of his pants. This will also help him to learn about his body parts.

Continue to talk to him about what you are doing, e.g., “daddy putting singlet on”, “one arm in, other arm in”; “pull it down, there you go”. It is through these games that he will gradually learn the names of his clothes and the actions that go with dressing. Now that he is more able to make choices you can encourage this by giving him a choice of clothes to wear. For example, “you want shorts or jumpsuit today?”, pretend that your baby’s vocalisation is his answer, “you want shorts, ok?”

Meal-time
By 10 months your baby will be much more independent in his eating and will enjoy trying different finger foods, such as toast fingers, slices of fruit, celery sticks. This will not only help to increase his experiences with different tastes and textures but will also enable him to practise manipulating things with his hands and fingers. He’ll have fun picking up squashed peas and other small pieces of food off the tray on his high chair. This will help to develop his pincer grasp. As we said earlier, he now enjoys picking up small things and putting them in his mouth. This is an important stage for him to go through in his motor development but it can be dangerous. What better way to let him do this safely then at meal times when you are present and can keep a watchful eye on him?

Meal times are generally very social times. The evening meal in particular is a time when most families sit down together and chat about the events of the day. Don’t forget to also include your baby in these activities. He’ll learn so much by sitting with you while you have your meals. Often babies are fed separately from the rest of the family. Sometimes this is done, so that Mum can have her meal in peace. Maybe you could take turns in feeding baby during the evening meal, Dad one night and Mum the next. If you need to feed him before the rest of the family have their evening meal, why not give him his dessert or some finger food while you’re eating so that he can join in too.

Everyday activities that help baby to learn
Now that your baby is more mobile he will tend to follow you around the house as you go about your normal activities. He will particularly enjoy the opportunity to go outside and play on the grass.

Gardening
Now that he is more active he will have lots of fun in the yard while you’re doing the garden. He will probably try to help.
Learning to Communicate

You will need to watch him carefully, as he will try to pick up bits of dirt and grass and put in his mouth. He will have so much fun in the garden looking at the plants and flowers, listening to all the wonderful sounds that you hear outside. While you’re working, you can talk to him about what you are doing and all of the things that he can see, hear and smell.

Cooking and the dishes

As you are well aware the kitchen can be a dangerous place for a baby, particularly one that is very mobile and inquisitive. Now that your baby is becoming stronger and starting to open cupboards and drawers, you will need to make sure that they are child-proofed. There is now a large range of safety catches available which you can use to secure doors and drawers. It is probably safest for your baby to be seated in a high chair while you prepare meals (don’t forget to put his harness on). This will not only keep him out of harms way but will also give him a good view of what you are doing. He’ll enjoy talking to you about what you’re doing. You can help him to learn about foods by showing them to him as you prepare them, talking about their characteristics e.g. “look, a big long carrot”; “yum”, “daddy likes carrots”.

The shopping

Although shopping is a little difficult with a baby in tow, (especially one who has started to grab at everything), an occasional shopping trip is good for your baby. It is best to try to pick a time when the store isn’t too crowded as most babies aren’t keen on crowds. Now that your baby is able to sit up steadily, you may be able to sit him in the shopping trolley with the harness secured watching him at all times. You will need to keep a very close watch on him as he can quickly fall out and seriously hurt himself if left unsupervised. From the trolley, he can get a good view of everything that is going on. He likes the feeling of motion as you push him around the store. Talk to him as you go round and select the items off the shelves, he will even try to help you sometimes!

Reading books

Sit your baby on your lap with the book in front of both of you. Tell your baby about the picture on each page and if appropriate make noises to go with the pictures, such as “oink oink” for a pig or “brm” for a car. Wait for your baby to do something (make a noise, hit or chew the book) before going to the next page. This will not only help your baby to attend to specific things but will also help him to learn other skills such cause-effect relationships and turn-taking skills.

Everyday activities that help baby to learn

- gardening
- cooking and the dishes
- the shopping
- reading books
- singing action songs
- going for walks and visiting friends

Sing in the Kitchen!

Wash the Dishes
Wash the dishes
Dry the dishes
Turn the dishes over

Do You Know the Muffin Man?
Oh do you know the Muffin Man?
The Muffin Man, The Muffin Man?
Do you know the Muffin Man that lives in Drury Lane?
Oh yes I know the Muffin Man,
The Muffin Man, The Muffin Man,
Yes I know the Muffin Man that lives in Drury Lane.

Singing action songs

Now that your baby is 10 months old, he will really start to enjoy participating in action songs. If you have been playing these for a while, he will probably start to try to carry out some of the actions himself, like wiggling his fingers to Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. He might even start to try to sing along with you. If he isn’t yet trying to join in with the actions, you can help him to carry out the actions by moving his hands. After a few goes at doing this, stop half way and wait for him to do something before you continue.

Children’s television programs such as “Play School” often have many action songs which you could play with your baby. He might also enjoy watching the programs with you for short periods of time.

Going for walks and visiting friends

Your baby’s world is gradually expanding. Through going out for walks and visiting friends, your baby is learning that his world is not limited to your home. He is learning that the world is made up of lots of different people, in different shapes and sizes, different animals, buildings, plants and so on. Therefore it is important for both you and your baby that you don’t stay at home every day. You both need to go for walks, to sit outside and to visit friends. By doing this you are enabling your baby to learn more about his world, you are providing him with opportunities to experience and learn new things.

Specific activities that make learning fun

There are other things that you can do to help your baby to learn.

To encourage listening

- talk to him about things that you are doing

Old MacDonald Had a Farm

Old MacDonald had a farm E I E O
And on that farm there were some ducks E I E O
With a quack-quack here
And a quack-quack there
Here a quack, there a quack
Everywhere a quack-quack

Substitute other animals: pig: oink etc

I’m a little Teapot

I’m a little teapot, short and stout
Here is my handle, here is my spout
When I get all steamed up, then I shout
Tip me over, pour me out.

I'm the Muffin Man

I'm the Muffin Man
With a cup of tea in my hand
I've had a nice cup of tea
And I'm the Muffin Man.

I'm a Little Teapot

I'm a little teapot, short and stout
Here is my handle, here is my spout
When I get all steamed up, then I shout
Tip me over, pour me out.

Old MacDonald Had a Farm

Old MacDonald had a farm E I E O
And on that farm there were some ducks E I E O
With a quack-quack here
And a quack-quack there
Here a quack, there a quack
Everywhere a quack-quack

Substitute other animals: pig: oink etc

= Everyday activities that help baby to learn
Learning to Communicate

10 to 12 months

• give him toys which have distinctive sounds such as a beeping toy telephone. See if he can recognise the sounds when he isn’t looking.

• take him for walks so that he can hear all the different sounds in the neighbourhood, bring his attention to the different sounds he hears e.g. “oh, listen dog woof”

• read books to him, make different sounds to go with the different things in the books

• have him join in evening meals so that he can listen to your conversations

• sing songs to him, especially action songs like Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

• call him when you enter the room

• play music on the radio or CD/music player

• dance with him so that he can feel the beat of the music

• make funny sounds for him, such as raspberries

• make sounds to go with different toys you are playing with e.g. brm for a car, moo for the cow

• make sounds with him while looking into the mirror

To encourage conversations

• talk to your baby whenever you can

• when he vocalises to you act as if you understand what he is saying and “interpret” for him e.g. “You want daddy do you?”

• expect him to give you eye contact when he wants something

• encourage him to look at you while you talk to him

• take turns with him, make sure that he gets a turn in the conversation (remember his turns should now always include vocalisations)

• remember to wait for him to vocalise before you take your turn in the conversation

• play turn-taking games with toys, such as talking on a telephone, pushing a ball, pushing a car, banging on the table

• encourage other people to talk to him

• when he is playing with toys, ask him about them

• if he looks at you while playing with his toys act as if he is telling you about them and again “interpret” for him, e.g. “oh, you’ve got a big block” or “you’re telling mummy about the car”

• if he doesn’t want something, wait for him to vocalise and look at you before taking it away. Again “interpret” for him, e.g. “no, I don’t want any more, mummy”.

To encourage looking

• give him objects with lots of detail to play with

• point to detail in pictures, show him different things in the pictures e.g. the man’s nose, the bird in the tree

• sit him on your lap while you are reading, encourage him to look at what you are pointing to and encourage him to point by moving his hand on the page

• take him for walks and point out the interesting things that you see, encourage him to point too

• sit him on your lap while you watch TV, again point out things that you see while you are watching, “Look, a big dog”

To encourage object permanence skills

• continue to play games in the bath, hiding toys amongst the bubbles

• blow bubbles in the bath, wait for him to indicate that he wants you to do it again

• play hide and seek around the furniture, you can take turns crawling after each other

• place blocks in different containers for him to get out,

BOOKS TO BORROW

• Time for Bed by Mem Fox
• Fuzzy Fuzzy Fuzzy! A Touch, Skritch, & Tickle Book by Sandra Boynton
• I See by Helen Oxenbury
• Whose Feet? by Jeanette Rowe

Give your baby objects with lots of detail to play with

Talk to your baby whenever you can

Play hide and seek around the furniture

When he is playing with the toys ask him about them

If he looks at you while playing with his toys ask him about them

When he is playing with toys ask him about them
such as old nappy wipe containers, tissue boxes and tupperware. Use solid containers that he can’t see into so that when he puts his hand into the container he cannot see either the block or his hand.

- encourage him to put toys into containers and get them out again
- hide toys under cloths for him to uncover

To encourage problem solving
- give him toys to play with that need an adult to wind them up. Show him how it works and then wait for him to look at you or give it to you before re-activating it.
- give him different sized toys (e.g. balls) to play with so that he can learn when to use one hand and when to use two hands
- place strings on toys to encourage him to pull them
- place toys in containers with lids (e.g. an old shoe box). Show him how to get the toy out and then wait for him to indicate to you that he needs your help. Later he might be able to work out how to get the toys out himself.

To encourage the development of cause and effect relationships
- give him toys to play with which require him to press a button, or push a lever to activate. Show him how they work.
- show him how to splash in the bath
- show him how to activate toys which make different sounds if you do different actions on them
- give him cardboard tubes to blow into to make into horns
- give him spoons to bang on different containers to make different noises

To encourage play
- continue to give him toys that he can manipulate, particularly toys with interesting details
- encourage him to put his fingers in the nooks and crannies of his toys
- sit down and play with him, it gets a little boring playing by yourself sometimes!
- play give and take games with him
- show him how to combine toys, for example: stacking them, putting them inside each other; putting blocks/ small cars in the back of a truck
- give him opportunities to play with children of the same age and slightly older
- show him how to bang toys together, take turns with this game
- blow cardboard tubes to make a good noise
- play games with toy animals: e.g. walk them, feed them
- play with dolls: e.g. feed them, walk them, sit them, put them to bed

To encourage imitation
- copy sounds that he makes, then wait for him to respond
- copy words that he makes, then wait for him to respond
- encourage him to copy actions that you make - take turns. What a fun game!
- encourage him to copy your facial expressions. Try using a mirror so that he can see your face and his.
- continue to sing songs with actions. Help him to carry out the actions. Gradually reduce your help so that he learns to do the action by himself
- encourage him to touch your mouth while you are talking
- help him to do different actions and gradually reduce your help

3. THINGS THAT MAKE LEARNING FUN

Toys are very important to the 10 month old. Toys at this age should encourage the development of problems solving skills, object permanence and cause and effect relationships.

An action song to encourage imitation

I have ten fingers
And they all belong to me,
I can make them do things
Would you like to see?
I can shut them up tight
I can open them wide
I can put them together
I can make them all hide
I can make them jump high
I can make them jump low
I can fold them up quietly
And hold them just so.

Note: The actions are explained by the words.
Hold up both hands, fingers spread.
Point to self, Make fists.
Open hands.
Place palms together.
Put hands behind your back.
Put hands over your head.
Touch the floor.
Fold hands in lap.
Learning to Communicate

We also want to encourage his functional play. He will have hours of fun finding out what he can make his toys do.

Appropriate play materials for this age group include:

- toy cars
- large rubber animals
- a doll of some description to feed, put to bed and give a bath
- action toys which require pushing, pulling or winding to activate
- a music box
- lots of different containers with different sorts of lids, for example, egg cartons, plastic nappy-wipe containers, old tissue boxes
- cardboard tubes out of which he can make trumpets (e.g. toilet rolls, old paper towel rolls etc)
- blocks to hold, throw, hide, stack, build
- books, baby ones, and homemade ones from cut out magazine pictures
- different size balls (to roll, throw, hide, roll)
- a toy telephone that rings
- a push trolley
- a cloth bag or old handbag with lots of interesting (but safe articles) such as coloured plastic bangles, crunchy paper, colourful lids, toilet rolls, old fashioned dolly pegs, spoons, plastic egg cups etc

4. YOUR BABY: PROGRESS UPDATE

Date  Write down any new things your baby has done this month

- Your baby will enjoy action toys, such as ride on toys
- Different size balls to roll are loads of fun!
- Your baby will enjoy sifting through a basket of toys

Parent Handbook: 10 to 12 months
Learning to Communicate Videos


These videos demonstrate how babies develop and learn through their daily contact and experiences with their families.

The program consists of an Introduction, followed by six parts, commencing when your baby is born and finishing when your baby is 12 months old.

After watching each video for your baby’s development stage you may like to see what things you can tick off on the guide on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part One: Birth - 2 months</th>
<th>Part Two: 2 - 4 months</th>
<th>Part Three: 4 - 6 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date completed ____________</td>
<td>Date completed ____________</td>
<td>Date completed ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby is communicating from birth - you are baby’s first and most important teacher</td>
<td>Baby is starting to take more notice of the world around him and begins to take turns.</td>
<td>Baby is learning to reach to get things she wants - she uses her mouth to explore everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Look for the messages baby is telling you when she cries.</td>
<td>☐ Baby turns to voices.</td>
<td>☐ Baby follows moving objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Baby likes to look at your face and eyes.</td>
<td>☐ Baby is starting to practise sounds.</td>
<td>☐ Baby joins in your talk and play in routine and everyday activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Have you held baby close and talked to her as though she understands you?</td>
<td>☐ Are you using lots of variety in your voice when you talk to your baby?</td>
<td>☐ Baby likes imitation games with noises and actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part Four: 6 - 8 months</th>
<th>Part Five: 8-10 months</th>
<th>Part Six: 10-12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date completed ____________</td>
<td>Date completed ____________</td>
<td>Date completed ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby is starting to respond to what is happening in the world around him. Including baby in family activities helps him to learn.</td>
<td>Baby is interested in everything around her and will want to talk to you about what she finds.</td>
<td>Baby is becoming a skilled communicator and is starting to learn his first words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Baby uses two hands to hold objects.</td>
<td>☐ Baby is starting to move around on her own.</td>
<td>☐ Baby starts to combine eye contact, sounds and body movements to communicate with you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Baby is turning his head or using his hands to tell you ‘no’ / they do not want something.</td>
<td>☐ Baby follows where you point.</td>
<td>☐ Baby starts using two hands to manipulate toys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Baby is sitting up and playing.</td>
<td>☐ Are you ‘listening’ to what baby is telling you?</td>
<td>☐ Have you shown baby how to combine toys eg stacking and knocking over?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Are you letting baby take turns when you talk and play with him?</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Are you reading picture books with baby that have simple stories?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dr Teresa Anderson is a Speech Pathologist with over two decades of clinical experience. She is internationally recognised for her specialist knowledge and skills in the assessment and management of paediatric and adult dysphagia, early communication development (particularly nonverbal / pre-intentional communication skills), early childhood development and early intervention. Dr Anderson is currently Chief Executive of the Sydney Local Health District.