



Helping Your Baby's Development

Starting Out

When your baby is born it seems that she or she can do very little. In some ways that is true, but he or she is already beginning to set out and learn and learn and learn. Just think how much most of them can do by their first birthday. Here's a just few of the things your baby may be able to do by his or her first birthday:

- Know his or her own name
- Understand simple requests like "give it to Daddy"
- Pick up small things like biscuits and crumbs
- Recognise familiar people from up to 6 metres away
- Crawl to retrieve a toy
- Babble (almost incessantly!)
- Pull himself or herself up by using furniture
- Walk forwards or sideways with his or her hands held
- Creep upstairs slowly
- Drink from a cup (sometimes with a bit of assistance)
- Play pat-a-cake
- Wave bye-bye
- Look at books with interest

But don't worry if he or she cannot do all of these by his or her first birthday. We all develop different skills at different rates. Some children never crawl for example but bottom-shuffle around. These are some of the skills that baby's learn in their first year. They are part of the normal developmental milestones reached by the end of the first year of life. But they don't come automatically. All of their early learning is through interaction with people, the environment and by trying things out.

Babies are born with a natural 'instinct' to learn; but left alone and unstimulated they will learn very little.

Stimulating babies is easy and its fun. It's what you do all the time with them.

On the next page are some ideas that might help you help your baby develop. You will be surprised at how simple and everyday they are. Enjoy your baby and have fun with him or her!

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Your baby is constantly learning about the world. Everything you do with your baby is a learning experience for him or her. You don't need to do special things or special training. Early learning is all about fun and games. Here are some ideas of just some of the things you can do. It would be a real surprise if you do not do some, or even most, of them already.

TLC

This is the most important ingredient of a baby's life. Show your baby how much you love him or her. When he or she is very young, put your face near to his or hers. Smile at him or her and make soft noises, laugh with him or her and don't forget keep giving lots of those lovely cuddles and tickles.

Talk to your baby

Right from the first moments of your baby's life talk to him or her. When you do something with or for them tell them about it. Say your baby's name when you talk to him or her. Say "hello" when you go up to him or her. Use the names of things you are playing with or using. For example, *"Hello Ella. Look what I've got, your lovely red rattle!"*

Playing simple games

There is no better game that we all love more than BOO! As they get older use finger puppets, hand puppets, favourite toys etc for playing BOO! Use finger rhymes; there are simple ones for babies, (like "Walky, Walky, Round the Garden" and "Knock at the Door") and more complex ones for slightly older toddlers (like "Ten Little Fingers".)

Just being stupid together!

Knocking things over (and when they get a bit older building them up together)

Getting physical

Babies love to touch and feel other people. There are lots of 'physical' games you can play. But, don't forget to talk and make noises when you do play these or other games:

- Tummy Bouncing: you lie down and lay baby on your tummy and bounce your hips up and down.
- Kiskey-Kiskey: lots of kisses on their necks and tummies.
- Blowing raspberries on their skin.
- Rocking and rolling together on the floor or couch or bed.
- Gently throwing them in the air and catching them.

Toys

First toys for babies should be simple to grasp and hold.

Find toys with different textures and contrasting strong colours.

As they get a little older use very simple pop-up toys, toys that have bits to lift and find things under.

Mobiles are great fun but the colours need to be strong and contrast with the background walls. Musical mobiles are great too!

**This is just a few ideas! You will have lots more even better ideas.
Enjoy playing with your baby as he or she learns.**