

Baby

MIND builders



Look, Baby, Look!

Find three brightly colored objects that you can hold in front of your baby. Lay your baby on her back and hold the objects, one at a time, about 10 inches away from her face. Hold up one object and talk about it with your baby.

What is it?

What are its color and shape?

What does it feel like?

Bring the object closer to your baby's hand, arm, or belly and let her touch it. Use a quiet voice and gently touch your baby while you are talking with her. Then move the object to one side and then the other and see if your baby will follow it with her eyes, or reach out and touch it. Do the same thing with the other two objects. See if your baby likes one object more than the others. You can play this quick game many times during the day. The older your child is, the more she will play WITH you, reaching for the object and following it with her eyes. You can also roll your baby onto her tummy and put an object just out of her reach. As she grows, she will begin to lift her head to look at it.

Your baby will become aware of you and your voice, and begin to understand there are differences between you and objects. Putting your baby on her tummy, with an object to look at, helps her neck muscles become stronger and helps her learn balance.



Knock, Knock, Knock

Take your baby on a listening walk around your home, yard or neighborhood. Hold your baby in your arms and carry him from place to place. Knock on different objects and let your baby listen to the noises they make. Count the number of knocks you make. Talk about the sounds with lots of excitement. Use words that will be fun for your baby to hear, like bang, pop, zoom, ding-dong! Let your baby touch the different objects, too, and name the object for him.

Your baby is learning to listen and become aware of different sounds.



A Counting Game

Each time you wipe your baby's hands after she eats, or when you wash her hands and feet in the tub, count her fingers and toes, saying each number out loud.

**Alex has five fingers;
let me show you!**

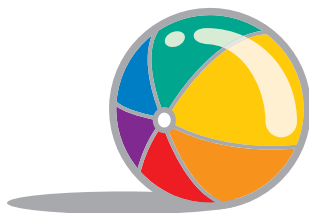
As you wipe each finger, say:

**One, two, three, four, five!
You have five fingers!**

Do the same for each hand, or for the toes on her feet. Or ask where her toes or fingers are and show them to her. For example:

**Where are Alex's toes?
I see your toes! Here they are!**

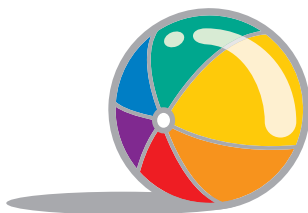
Even though your baby is too young to know numbers, she is learning the fun of sharing conversation. With time, she will learn the ideas of counting and numbers.



Making Eye Contact

One of the first things your baby will do to connect with you is to make eye contact. To do this, especially for a very young baby, your baby will need to have lots of chances to see your face and eyes up close! Find times during each day when you can be close to your baby, face to face, and look into his eyes. Look for those moments when your child seems interested in your face. You could be holding your baby, changing a diaper, or just spending some quiet time with him. When you are looking into his eyes, talk to him in a soft voice about how much you love him. Try to read your baby's clues, and if he is not ready, don't force it! If he seems to become uncomfortable, or looks away, he may be too stimulated and need a break. That's O.K. He is learning to interact at his own pace.

Your baby is learning to focus his eyes, and becoming aware of you and other people in his life.



Peek-a-Boo

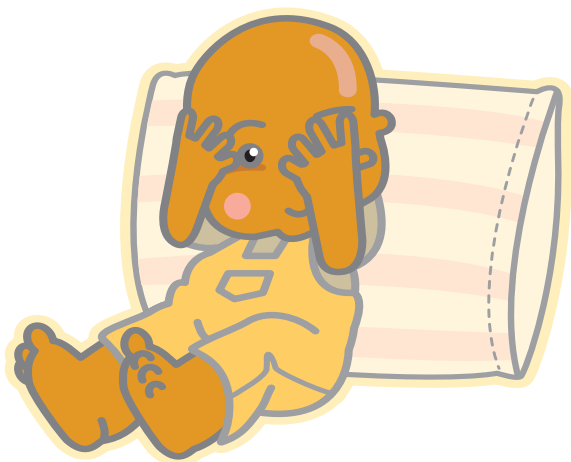
Sit close to your baby so that she can easily see your face. Take a soft cloth or blanket and cover your face. While your face is covered, say:

Where's Daddy?

(or Mommy, or Grandma).

Take the cloth off of your face and say Peek-a-Boo! As your child gets older you will find that her reaction will change. In the early months she may not react when your face is covered. In her mind, you have left and she does not understand that you are under the cloth. As she gets older, she will begin to understand that you are simply hiding and may even try to pull the cloth off of your face herself. Soon she will start to cover her face with the cloth and hide from you!

Your baby is learning that things are still there even when she can't see them.



Bubbles of Fun!

Buy an inexpensive bottle of bubbles at the store (when you run out, you can refill it with one part dishwashing liquid to three parts water). Bring your baby outside in the shade and lay or sit her on a blanket. Blow bubbles about a foot away from her, close enough that she can reach them, but far enough that they don't pop in her face. Talk about the bubbles.

Here is a big bubble!

Oops, it popped!

Show her how to pop the bubbles by poking them with her finger or clapping them between her hands. Each time you pop one say, Pop!

Your baby will enjoy seeing something she has never seen before. She will also get to experience a new texture and learn about cause and effect (touching a bubble and having it pop).





Little Dumper

Babies love to dump things out and fill them back up again. By storing your baby's toys in bins or boxes you will give him a chance to practice this skill. Once he is able to sit by himself, set him on a blanket with a container of blocks or balls. Another idea is to collect all of the baby rattles and toys he is no longer interested in and place them into a container. He will enjoy reaching in and taking each item out or simply turning the entire container over and dumping everything onto the floor! Help him put the items back into the container. Talk about the items as he handles them:

Here is a red block...

and now you have a green block...

and now a blue one!

Your baby is learning pre-measuring and pre-counting skills that will later help him in math and science. He will probably not know his colors at this age, but you are helping him get ready to learn.



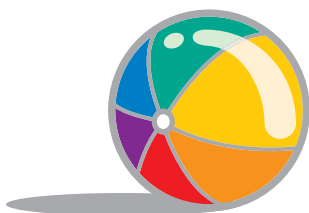
You Light Up My Life

A flashlight can be used to play all kinds of games. Lie on your back on the floor next to your baby and point the flashlight toward the ceiling. Move the light around and let him follow the circle of light with his eyes. When you have his attention, move the light around the room highlighting different objects while you name them. Roll onto your tummies and move the light on the floor. Move the light onto your face and onto his body and talk about what you see:

The light is on your foot!

If he is interested, let him touch the light and see it shine through his fingers. Be sure not to shine the light in your baby's eyes.

This activity will stimulate your baby's sense of sight and he will learn to follow a moving object with his eyes.



Down They Go!

Your child will enjoy this activity when she is six months or older. Select a number of soft toys, balls, and unbreakable objects from around your house. Buckle your child into her high chair and place the objects onto the tray. Take a seat nearby or on the floor and watch your child. Let her look at the items you have chosen and talk about the item she is looking at. Your child will eventually hand you toys or throw them over the side of the high chair. As she begins to understand the cause and effect relationship (when she throws, the toy falls to the ground) she will begin to look for the items on the ground. Use words to describe what is happening, such as:

You threw the doggie on the ground!
Where is the doggie? Here it is! or,
The cup made a loud noise when it
hit the ground!

Hand the objects back up to your child until she gets tired of the activity.

Your baby is learning that she can make things happen and that when she drops things they will fall to the ground.



Where's the Toy?

During this year, your baby will begin to understand that when a toy is hidden, it is still there – he just can't see it. Help him learn this concept by playing a "hide the toy" game with him. Put your baby in a sitting position on a blanket on the floor. If he needs help sitting up, prop him up with soft pillows around him. While he is looking, hide a favorite toy or stuffed animal under the edge of the blanket or under a washcloth. Ask him,

Where did the toy go?

Can you find it?

See if he will search with his eyes for the toy, or try to lift the blanket or washcloth to find the toy. If he does not seem aware of the hidden toy, help him find it.

Look Miguel, here is your toy!

It was under the blanket!

By looking for and finding a hidden toy, your baby is learning early problem-solving skills. He is also using his eyes to search for a toy and using his arms to reach.



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