



# Fun Activities with Babies & Kids

For Newborns to Three Months (and up)

1. Quiet Songs: Sing a lullaby to your baby at nap and bedtime.
2. Bath: Treat yourself to a soothing bath with your baby. (This is best done when there are 2 adults in the house.) Be sure the room is warm. You get in the tub first, then your partner can hand the baby in to you. You can snuggle the baby, and pour warm water over both of you. Ask your partner to warm two towels in the dryer to ease the transition out of the tub.
3. Dance with baby: Put on your favorite music, sweep baby in your arms and dance away.
4. Active songs: Bicycle kick the baby's legs while singing, Row, Row, Row Your Boat. Move their arms to Open Shut Them song. Do all the motions for the Wheels on the Bus.
5. Massage: Give your baby a massage, undress the baby in a warm room, leaving just a diaper on. Place a towel underneath the baby and gently stroke using olive oil or massage oil. Start with legs, then feet, toes, tummy, chest, arms, hands, face and back.
6. Texture exploration: Let your baby feel the different textures and surfaces to be found all around your house. Talk about what you're feeling (smooth, rough, cold, warm, soft, fuzzy). Touch everything from a mirror to the curtains to the chair fabrics.
7. Smell exploration: In the kitchen, hold things up to your child's nose. Some fun ideas to start with: Cinnamon sticks, cloves, peppermint candy, herbal tea bags, lemons and oranges, lavender, saffron, garlic, ginger, bleu cheese, bacon, and spaghetti-o's.
8. Swing Time: This improves a child's sense of balance. Lay your child on her back on a small blanket. You and your partner kneel on the ground, one grasps the corners of the blanket by her head, the other holds the corners by her feet. Lift the blanket a few inches, and then gently swing back and forth. Or slowly move the blanket up and down.
9. Up, Up and Away: This activity can soothe a colicky or overtired child. Hold your child in the "reverse breastfeeding position": head resting in the crook of your elbow, body supported by both arms, facing away from you, or on his belly facing toward the ground. Keeping him close to your body, gently sway from side to side. Over time, your child will lift his head, neck, and shoulders to look around which builds upper-body strength.
10. Simple Sit-Ups: Strengthen your little one's torso and upper body with this easy move. Lay your child on his back on a blanket and kneel, facing his. Grasp the edges of a blanket by his head with both hands, and rest your forearms along either side of his body. Pull up on the top of the blanket until he is at a 45 degree angle, then lower him back to the ground.
11. Tummy Roll: An infant needs time on his tummy to develop upper-body strength and muscle control. Roll up a towel, and place it on the floor. Lay your child stomach-down on the roll so that it comfortably supports his chest, stomach, and thighs. Be sure to turn his head to one side, then gently rock him from side to side.
12. Bed Bouncing Baby – Lay your baby on your bed and gently bounce the mattress.

### For Three to Six Months (and up)

1. Bumble Bee: Use your free hand as a buzzing bee while holding your baby. Make a buzzing sound as your finger circles the air. Land the bee with a gentle tickle on the baby. Next, take the baby's finger and help it circle as the bee and land it on your cheek.
2. Baby talk: Record your baby's sounds – all of them – the cries and the coos. Actually playing the recording back to your baby can engage and relax your little one. Bonus is that you have a record of these early months to listen to together years later.
3. Ball ride: Place baby, tummy down, on an inflated beach ball. Holding your baby securely, rock back and forth and side to side atop the ball.
4. Tootsie Roll: Place baby lying face up, get on your hands and knees above him or her. Smile and lower your head while you let your baby know you're coming. Say, "Toot, toot, Tootsie, here I come! I'm going to roll-I-I-I you over!" Then gently roll him over.
5. Who Do I See? Holding baby in your arms, stand in front of the mirror. Smile and say, "There's Abby and there's Daddy." Touch the mirror. Take your baby's hand and touch the faces in the mirror. Make a happy face and say "See the happy face." Make a sad face. Move to the side, then back into mirror view. Say, "Where's Abby?"
6. Toy Target Practice. Tie a small toy or wiffle ball with string and dangle in front of baby. Babies love to bat and kick at interesting items in their line of vision. *Caution: Never leave baby unattended with items on a string to avoid accidental strangulation.*
7. Bye-Bye: Practice waving good-bye to places and toys, as well as to people and pets.
8. Roll: Place child on his back on a blanket, and gently lift it a few inches so he rolls onto his side. (You may need to help him move his arms out of the way.)
9. Ball: Give your child a gentle massage and tactile stimulation. Lay your child on his back, then roll a small ball gently across his tummy and up and down his legs and arms.
10. Move and Groove: A simple chant and soft swaying are sure to please your little one – and encourage his listening skills. Stand with your infant facing away from you, holding him under the arms with his legs and feet dangling in the air. Gently swing him from side to side while singing Tick tock, tick tock, I'm a little cuckoo clock...
11. Pom Pom Drop: To encourage visual acuity, to delight, and to expose your baby to anticipated behavior, drop large, brightly colored pom poms (or rolled socks) onto your baby's stomach. Drop pom poms one at a time, making each drop an event. ("Here it comes. Watch the Pom Pom. Bong! I dropped it on you. Let's do it again.")
12. Look at me: Lie on your back, your baby lying face down with her head on your stomach. Sit halfway up and rest on your elbows and talk to your little one, "Look at me" giving a big smile. Your baby will lift her head to see you. Ten seconds or less is long enough at any one time in the beginning before you recline again so your baby can rest too.
13. Gotcha: Lie baby on the floor on a blanket. Smiling, come closer to the baby, with hands outstretched. Say softly, "Watch out. I'm gonna get you. Here I come!" Build excitement in your voice as you approach. Gently grab your baby, while you say, "Gotcha" in a louder voice. Laugh and hug her after each "gotcha", so the baby knows it is a game.
14. Flashlight Game: In a darkened room, perhaps at bedtime, turn on a flashlight and encourage your little one to track the light moving around the room. This can be a bit hypnotizing and can be a good game to soothe and relax your baby. Make it part of your own sound and light show with soft background music.

## For Six to Eighteen Months

1. Pudding art: place a piece of waxed paper or shelf paper on the highchair tray with a dollop of pudding (or yogurt). Show what fun it is to make designs on the paper – licking your fingers along the way. Once dried the artwork can be displayed on the refrigerator.
2. Song of the week: Each week, pick a new active song (e.g. Noble Duke of York). Every day, sing the song to your baby. Watch her face to see when she develops the recognition of the song to anticipate the active ending.
3. Opposites: Wander the house with baby and see how many opposites you can talk about with baby. Open a door and close a door, fill a cup of water in the bath (full/empty), turn a light on and off, put something on the table and under the table.
4. Notice sounds: Help baby learn to identify sounds around you by pointing them out:
  - What does the birdie say? Chirp, chirp
  - What does the wind say? Whoo-o-sh
  - What does the car say? Vroom...
5. Hat play: Stand in front of a mirror with several hats. Place on your head and baby's.
6. Target Practice: Eye-foot coordination is one of the first steps toward learning how to walk. Place your child on his back on the floor, then hold an aluminum pie tin within easy reach of his feet. Encourage him to kick at it, praising him whenever he makes contact.
7. Hide and Squeak: Make one of your baby's toys squeak, then hide it under a blanket while the baby is watching you. As your baby gets older, encourage them to find the toy, perhaps giving it a tell-tale squeak through the blanket.
8. One too many: Let your baby hold a small toy in each hand, then offer a third toy for him to grasp. This problem-solving exercise will take practice before your child learns to set one toy down before being able to grasp the third one or to hold two items in one hand.
9. Playing with pots: Place a cooking pot upside down on the floor in front of your baby. Encourage him to figure out which way is up and how to get it right-side-up. Then supply a lid and show how it fits. That coordination trick will demand practice and concentration.
10. Zoo Basket: Assemble toy animals in a basket. Pull each animal out of the basket and talk about it. Tell its name, the sounds it makes, how it walks or flies, and any other information that might appeal to your baby.
11. Blanket Fun – Your baby will love blanket rides along the floor, as long as your starts and stops are gentle. Incorporate regular blanket rides into laundry day as you are stripping the beds, give your child a ride from room to room.
12. Art: Tape down a piece of paper to the high chair tray and give the baby some jumbo crayons or finger paints.
13. Smash: Build a tower of blocks for your baby to knock down. Do it again!
14. Scarves: Play with scarves, waving them above baby's head, covering and uncovering baby's face and your face, and so on
15. Make faces: stick out your tongue, pout, smile, wiggle eyebrows. Give baby time to try to copy you. Say the "name" of an expression ("happy face", "sad face")
16. Labeling: Show baby several different colored objects, say the name of each color; then show baby big things/small things, soft things/hard things, etc.

## Toddler / Pre-Schooler

1. Grocery Store: For a week or so, save all your empty grocery containers (cereal boxes, milk cartons, yogurt tubs, etc. Wash them out if needed. Glue down box flaps if needed to make them look unopened. You now have supplies for a grocery store game. Paper bags and play money (or real money) add to the fun.
2. Obstacle Course: Boost your child's agility by building an obstacle course in the living room: crawling under a table or chair, slithering through a tunnel made by couch cushions, or stepping on "lily pads" of cushions set out on the floor.
3. Photo album: have a child make his own photo album. Using construction paper pages tied together with yarn, let your child glue miscellaneous pictures to each page; ask them to tell you a story about each picture and you can write it down for them.
4. Sand painting: Have your child draw an object on a piece of paper, then use a q-tip to fill in the object with a thin layer of Elmer's glue. Sprinkle sand over the glue and allow it to dry for an interesting textured painting. (You could use glitter or salt instead of sand.)
5. Doctor's office: Assemble a non-breakable thermometer, medicine dropper, medicine cup, ace bandages, band-aids, etc. Treat patients. (Dad, teddy bear, etc.) Note: we don't recommend candy as fake medicine – we don't want to encourage trying medicines.
6. Indoor 'snowball' fight: Wad up balls of paper and have an indoor battle.
7. Musical Games: Sing and act out songs like Hokey-Pokey, Ring Around the Rosie, and Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes. Play musical chairs or Freeze (dance till the music stops, then freeze in position.). These offer opportunities to practice listening closely and following directions, which are important school readiness skills.
8. What If? Ask your child "what would happen if..." (e.g. all the cars were gone? Everyone wore the same clothes? No one cleaned the house?)
9. Alphabet Store: During your next grocery trip, find the alphabet. Name a letter, the sound it makes, and an item that starts with that letter. (E.g., A, uh, artichoke, B, buh, banana)
10. Fort: make a sculpture, fort, or obstacle course by using everyday items in unusual ways (like turning a couch on its side, or bringing garden furniture inside.)
11. Potato-Head: Make real potato heads. Take large baking potatoes. Supply your child with clay, felt, buttons, slices of other vegetables, lettuce leaves... anything you find inspiring for facial features and accessories. They can attach things with toothpicks.
12. Placemats. To keep your pre-schooler busy while you finish dinner, try getting white disposable placemats at a party store (or just use big plain paper). Have your child decorate placemats for each family member, with a different theme each time.

## All Ages

1. Rainmaker: Punch holes in a plastic container. Fill it with water and give it to your baby/child to hold up. Good bath toy and outdoor toy.
2. Sparkle bottle: Make a visual toy by filling a clear plastic soda bottle with water, a squirt of dishwashing liquid detergent, a few spoon-fuls of cooking oil and a few drops of food coloring. Moving and shaking this colorful bubble bottle with delight and entertain.
3. Crinkles: Wrap crumpled waxed paper in a colorful square of fabric, tying the ends to secure the paper inside. Let baby experiment with crumpling it again and again.
4. Bubble Fun: Buy a container of bubbles, blow to entertain and delight your little one.